Comparative study of basic education in European Countries

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NEVER TOO LATE

Introduction

The research was conducted in three steps using a mixed method approach including desktop research (looking at important international and national documents), quantitative analysis of ELINET statistics and qualitative interviews:

a) Documents about basic skills education were investigated on three tiers:

   a. Global and programmatic documents such as UNESCO[1] papers

   b. European Documents such as the European Declaration of The Right to Literacy

   c. And national documents, (as far as they exist)

b) Interviews with teachers were conducted by the partners

c) Classroom observations carried out by some partners (due to Covid 19 based restrictions only online courses were possible which in turn are difficult to observe in the way the study had originally intended)

Finally, all data were analysed by the team of Lernraum.wien.

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[1] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The leading research questions are:

- Is there research on motivation for literacy courses on the learners' side?
- What are the societal motivations for literacy?
- Is there a different perspective on literacy than the focus on employability such as empowerment?
- Is there research work on literacy that focuses on the so-called wider benefits rather than the technical skills such as reading, writing, numeracy and basic technological skills?

The part of the report on concepts and policy papers is structured in a way that leads from global to European to national documents and then tries to answer the research questions. In addition to these programmatic texts we will also refer to the theoretical debates on literacy and some research that has been undertaken in the last decade and to a paper produced at an adult education conference in Cuernavaca (Mexico) in the Sixties by a group of theoreticians around Paolo Freire and Ivan Illich which will be the starting point of this text.

The interviews with learners were coded and then evaluated following the questions asked in the interview guidelines (see appendix), provided by Lernraum.wien. They are presented in a way so that learners get "voice", hence some longish passages are quoted, especially in the first section.

Basic (skills) education in theory

General considerations on the role of literacy and education

The issue of basic education is based in debates and theoretical considerations that are neither neutral nor apolitical. We can discern two major strands in the debate: the tradition of criticalliteracy (Doberer-Bey and Hrubesch 2013) Kastner 2011(cf. Papen 2005, Gruber 2007) and onthe other hand literacy as a technical skill that is mainly oriented towards the labour market and closely connected to the concept of life-long learning, which is also seen critically by someresearchers and theoreticians (Gruber 2007).

Literacy is also embedded in general debates on education and its functions as well as in some contexts of migration and the inclusion or exclusion of so-called marginalized groups, we canalso formulate this divide as basic skills education either for employability and further education, i.e. the completion of learners' educational paths within the educational system orfor empowerment.

The European Declaration of the Right to Literacy[2] maintains a fundamental right to literacy:

> *Literacy is fundamental to human development. It enables people to live full and meaningful lives, and to contribute towards the enrichment of the communities in which we live. By literacy we mean the ability to read and write at a level whereby individuals can effectively understand and use written communication in all media (print or electronic), including digital literacy[3].*

One main objective of literacy that is often stated is that of participation in society, yet the concept of participation remains vague and not defined. Very often it is linked to the idea of people being in jobs. Yet some statistics show that people with low literacy skills are in employment.(cf. Rosenbladt and Bilger 2011, Krenn 2013, Gächter and Krenn 2014, Aschemann 2015).

Collins (1995) states the functions of educational systems rather radically in the following: "educational systems produce stratified literacies: elites are socialized to an interpretative relation to texts and nonelites are socialized to a submissive relation to texts (Collins 1995: 84, quoted in (Blommaert 2008: 192).

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[2] https://www.literacyeurope.org/elinet-declaration-of-european-citizens-right-to-literacy/
[3] (http://www.eli- net.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/European_Declaration_of_t he_Right_to_Literacy2.pdf)

Societies demands on literacy change with time and place, whereas literacy in some countries still means being able to read and write, in Europe the scope has been widened to include handling, understanding and problematizing ICT. Europe is a so called "knowledge society" and thus demands much higher qualifications in terms of skills of its inhabitants and thus sets the literacy thresholds much higher as other places. The concept of knowledge society is, though, questioned by some researchers or theoreticians. For example, the German sociologist Bittlingmayer (2006) puts the concept of the knowledge society in perspective when he states that "Wissensgesellschaften erscheinen als nationalstaatliche Verkleidungen einer globalisierten Welt" (Bittlingmayer, Bauer 2006: 11) *Knowledge societies appear as a disguise for nation states in a globalised world (translation* TF). The demand on the individuals' literacy has increased due to the fact that most interactions in today's Western societies are based on written information, as Stoppacher (2010: 19) remarks:

> "In einer schrift- und wissensbasierten Gesellschaft bilden grundlegende Kulturtechniken wie Lesen, Schreiben, Rechnen ein unerlässliches Werkzeug, um ‚mithalten' zu können."
> "In a society based on script and knowledge cultural techniques such as reading, writing and calculating are indispensable tools to be able to keep up."

We should not, though, see a lack of competencies as an individual lack but rather one that is produced by society through various mechanisms of exclusion and segregation. Krenn highlights the danger of individualization of learning success or the lack of it rather than a result of societal processes. (2013: 29)

> "In diesem Zusammenhang besteht die Gefahr, dass individuelle Defizite als Ursache für soziale Probleme erscheinen, statt als deren Folge."

Another factor seems to be the linguistic competence in the language of the nation state in whichlearners are situated: The PIAAC study states that a low level of education, higher age and parents with a low level of education as well as a language other than the dominant / hegemonic language in the country are factors that generate a low reading competence (PIAAC: 43). Multilingualism simply is not measured and thus does not count. From this we observe that literacy is always bound to discourses of global economic discourses and thus never neutral.

One fundamental observation of this dates back to the Sixties and the declaration of Cuernavaca (2016) formulated by a group of educational theoreticians amongst others by Ivan Illich and Paolo Freire who states in view of the role education plays in the field on counteringunemployment:

> *"We maintain, however, that:*
>
> *a) the main cause of unemployment is that there are more workers than jobs;retraining cannot create jobs that do not exist;*
>
> *b) continued retraining helps to make skills obsolete, and so threatens job securityand seniority rights;*
>
> *c) all educational programmes help the privileged more than the poor and soincrease the advantage of the privileged over the poor;*
>
> *d) continued education can only improve the position of adults to the extent that unskilled and frustrating jobs are abolished; unless the working processis made very different, continued education can only be a way for a few to escape at the expense of others."*

The Austrian researcher Kastner states in her work that participation can be seen in threedimensions, as referred to by Krenn (2013: 54):

> *"Kastner hat dies im Konzept der vitalen Teilhabe gebündelt, das drei Dimensionen umfasst. Die erste Dimension bezieht sich auf einen Zuwachs aninnerer Sicherheit durch eine im Kurs erfahrene Stärkung. Durch die in den Kursen zustande kommenden intensiven Beziehungen zwischen TeilnehmerInnen und KursleiterInnen kann die Lerngruppe als soziale Ressource genutzt werden und dadurch eine Erweiterung der sozialen Teilhabe erreicht werden. Zum zweiten wirkt die Kursteilnahme als eine Art von Wiedergutmachung von erfahrenen Benachteiligungen durch das Erwerben von Fähigkeiten, die die Bewältigung von tatsächlichen oder gefühlten Ausschlussgefahren ermöglichen. Dabei geht es vor allem um die Be- und Verarbeitung von erlebter sozialer Beschämung und Entwertung. Als dritte Dimension fungiert die Kursteilnahme aus der Sicht Kastners als Bildungserfahrung, die einen Wert an sich für die TeilnehmerInnen darstellt."*
>
> *The first dimension can be recognized by an "augmentation of inner security", which is triggered by participation in courses and the intensive relationships established in these courses between learners and teachers. The group can beused as a social resource. This in turn fosters social participation. The second dimension consists of a rehabilitation of experienced discriminationand helps to cope with real or imagined dangers of exclusion. It also means processing the experience of social humiliation and devaluation. The third dimension describes the experience of participating in a course as a value in itself for learners. (*Translation by the authors*)*

It would be short sighted, though, to regard learners with low literacy skills as unsuccessful in life in general. Krenn (2013) clearly shows that among this group a considerable proportion has jobs, some may be low-skilled jobs, but it does not hold from this perspectivethat access to the labour market is only linked with competence. In a study that aims at adding to the PIAAC results from 2011/12 Krenn and Gächter state that social factors are more important for the fact that people do not have access to the labour market then their lack of skills.

Additionally, we want to mention research undertaken in Germany here that is based on Bourdieu's theory of milieu. This approach is based on the assumption that the use of literacy is dependent on the specific milieu that people find themselves in. So, for examplethe use of literacy of carpenters (Pape: 59) is different from that of other professions.

Literacy is always embedded in the societal context into which people are situated, or as Dell Hymes formulated it: "what is the particular place of writing in the sociolinguistic repertoire of people?" (Hymes 1996:36). Still Pape finds learners who belong to an educated milieu who still lack basic literacy skills. Both in PIAAC[4] and the LEO studies the higher levels of literacy include correct usage of orthography – with the question remaining whether Correct orthography is at all a relevantfactor in describing or whether it has the same role as style in oral communication[5].

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[4] The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is a programme of assessment and analysis of adult skills. The major survey conducted as part of PIAAC is the Survey of Adult Skills. The Survey measures adults' proficiency in key information-processing skills - literacy, numeracy and problem solving - and gathers information and data on how adults use their skills at home, at work and in the wider community.

[5] A brief aside seems to be interesting here: the question whether orthography is a viable element of literacy or a signal of belonging to the educated classes (see also Krenn's book title that includes the term "Bildungsdünkel" [roughly translated as arrogance grounded in education]) needs to bedebated.

Literacy programmes, like all educational programmes it seems have to prove their value in terms if efficiency and efficacy, learning outcomes defined by "outsiders" i.e. educational management have to be achieved and learning is being compartmentalized into clearly defined segments that can be achieved and ticked off as "learned". We maintain that the perspective of success in literacy learning needs to be rethought and freshly defined; a process that we can actually observe in the German debate at the time being with a shift from technical to empowerment and participation aspects of literacy.

The Panel study carried out in German Volkshochschulen showed that the levels of skills achieved by the learners were not "satisfactory"[6], progress is slow and learners stay in basic skills courses for a long time. What is also shown – and is wrongly formulated as a *minor* success – self-esteem rises (Rosenbladt and Bilger 2011).

We want to introduce the idea of a technical aspect of literacy and and empowerment function here. The first seems to dominate some areas of the discussion and is mainly used by the non-critical literacy theory and thus strongly links to aims of empowerment and educational careers, whereas the second is rooted in the understanding of literacy as a road to empowerment and a way to enable learners to participate in society, and thus links to the project. The technical aspect is also used in the Council of Europe project LASLLIAM. LASSLIAM is a project run by the COUNCIL of EUROPE in order to accompany the "Companion" – the follow up document to the European Framework and aims at defining four levels below A1 of the CEFR[7] describing literacy levels. Putting the problematic question aside why literacy is constructed as prior to basis language skills, and why we are dealing with levels *below* A1 and not parallel to it and other levels as well, we observe that the apparatus of describing literacy consists of the main dimensions: i) the technical (i.e. reading and writing – the classic alphabetization), ii) communicative language activities and strategies iii) digital literacy. These three dimensions are presented in scales in order to arrive at detailed and individual profiles of learners – for their own orientation or external measuring – this question will be answered in the future – but the lessons we have learned from the CEFR show that it will be the latter.

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[6] for whom? This question is neither asked nor answered in the study
[7] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR organises language proficiency in six levels, A1 to C2, which can be regrouped into three broad levels: Basic User, Independent User and Proficient User, and that can be further subdivided according to the needs of the local context. https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference%20languages/level-descriptions

This leads to an important additional aspect in the debate about literacy: the one of measuring skills. In many studies levels of attainment are introduced as a means of describing achievements and skills. (see LASSLIAM above) These levels seem arbitrary and, in most cases,do not show what learners really can do, they were, though, very important and instrumentalin attracting politicians' attention to the fact that not too small segments of society "lack" certain skills to function in society as valuable members of the labour force. This was a strategic endeavour as one of the authors of the very important LEO study in Germany states:"There was a need for political scandalising" (cf.Grotlüschen 2016). The term used for a long time to describe people with, as it is called now in the German debate, low literacy skills, was*functional illiteracy*. This term is two faced as it (originally) means people with literacy skills that do not suffice to read or write longer and more complex texts, but it can also be interpreted as describing people who do not "function" in society due to their lack ofcompetence. In the last few years the term "functional illiteracy" has been abandoned in the German debate and replaced by the term "people with low literacy levels" (see LEO 2018). Atthe same time, we observe a shift from technical aspects of literacy to a perspective on empowerment. (see Grotlüschen oral communication at the conference on politicaleducation, Germany, 5.11.2020).   Measuring skills seems to be state of the art at the moment, but we have to critically add that for many learners measuring their achievements comes too early in their learning process, as forexample Aschemann (2015: 10) remarks in a meta-analysis of European projects:

"Es besteht die Gefahr der Entmutigung durch zu frühe Testungen bei bildungsbenachteiligten Personen. Erwachsene mit Basisbildungsbedarf haben oft überdurchschnittlich hohe Prüfungsängste."
"There is a danger of discouragement of educationally disadvantaged leaners by testing too early. Adults with a need of literacy education show above average fears of exams." (translation by the authors)

Official documents on literacy and education

After these introductory theory and research based considerations we will take a cursory look at official documents from a global and European perspective.

The scope of the following section will be from the global perspective in section one, i.e. selected UNESCO documents, to selected European documents in section two and finally the country reports submitted by the partner institutions in section three which will be analysed loosely following the steps from an overview of the national structure of offers in literacy education including a view on who defines the standards), finances was well as addressees and aims

How is empowerment addressed and how strong is the emphasis on employability.

- **UNESCO**

The UNESCO Institute of Learning states that the two GRALE (Global Report on Adult Learning and Education) surveys 3 (2016) and 4 (2019) show the "profound positive impact participation in ALE (Adult learning and Education) can have on health, well-being, economy and social life of individuals and communities" (IL Policy Brief 10). Adult education and thus literacy education "promote citizenship and deepen learners' engagement in civil society, enabling them to contribute to addressing fundamental challenges such as rising inequality, poverty, climate change and the rise of populist politics" (ibid). At the same time, they state that certain vulnerable groups (they only mention women as a group) are left behind. Especially ALE for active citizenship seems to be the sector in which participation is rather low.

- **European Union**

The European Union states in its *Declaration to the Rights of Literacy* that literacy is a human right.
In a document in the series *knowledge for policy Literacy rates and access to education,* some numbers for youth literacy from a global perspective are provided: "The youth literacy rate increased from 83% in 1985 to 91% in 2018, while the number of illiterate youth declined from 170 million to 115 million".

Number of illiterate youth (aged 5-24 years) worldwide, 1985-2018, in millions
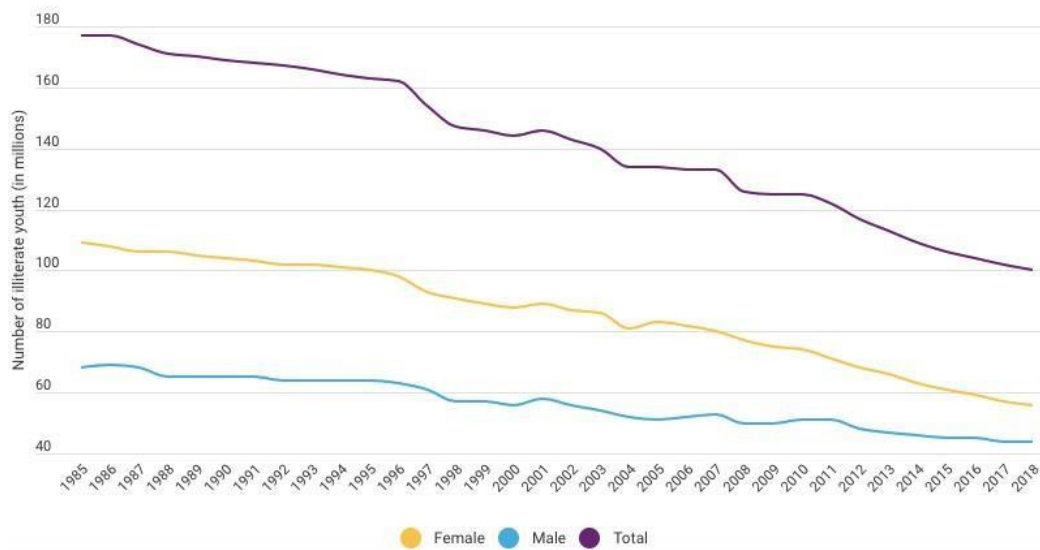
At this point, though, next step we intend to focus on the European level and include documents from European countries in the research. Although we can find an increase in the debate, analysis and research about literacy since the turn of the millennium, most of the publications try to extrapolate data and facts. This has had the effect - and here the numbers taken from the PIAAC´s (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) survey, commissioned by the OECD[8] - above all of drawing attention to the subject through alarming figures. This trend can also be seen looking at the first German LEO study, this move was justified by the strategic considerations of "scandalizing" and what the researchers called "strategic essentialism" (Grotlüschen 2019).

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[8] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

We will deal here with Europe-wide number-based study results on literacy in European countries and concentrate on the ELINET Report(s), which is on the one hand a meta collation of the different PIAAC surveys, but on the other hand had a broader focus because it takes all age-groups into account.

There is no doubt, that the publishing of facts and data is a necessary and understandable means of bringing the public to its attention. In addition, awareness of the issue is raised and this is often a prerequisite for public funding of educational measures.

At the same time, however, one must always ask how these figures were arrived at.

ELINET is the *Akronym for European Literacy Policy Network*. Its aim is to get a broader picture about Literacy in European Countries for all age groups. The Website informs about the content:

"We have screened a breadth of available qualitative and quantitative research data, compiled reliable and up-to-date reports and condensed the most relevant information on literacy performance and policies into an executive summary." (http://www.eli- net.eu/research/country-reports/ 04.11.2020)

Almost all of the European Countries are included in the Country Report. There exist country reports for Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal, i.e. all countries represented in the Project Never Too Late. But there are big differences in the performance. This is because the ELINET-report is linked to the PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) survey and not all of the above countries had taken part in the PIAAC survey. (so for example Portugal wasn´t part of it; Greece took part first in the second round, the other countries took part of the first round.) The first round of the surveys took place in 2011/2012, the second round in 2014/2015.

Facts and presentation are based on data from PIAAC the OECD's Survey of Adult Skill. This means, if a European country had not taken in any part of the PIAAC studies, there consequently are no data available for the ELINET[9] Report[10]. This concerns Portugal. The ELINET-Reports have been completed in 2016, the PIAAC´s survey was the most important source for the quantitative part of the ELINET Country Reports.

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[9] ELINET: European Literacy Policy Network
[10] https://elinet.pro/research/

To measure "literacy", environmental factors were also included in the surveys. Figures are available on parental education, books at home and the relation of test-language and the people's first language.

What is definitely interesting for the context of our project is the fact, that three groups are covered, (children, adolescents and adults) by the report. The PIAAC survey is a survey taking adults 16-65 into account, but the ELINET Reports try to have a broader perspective and include also children and adolescents, which is interesting for our project focus.

The are two strands in the ELINET Reports, one is literacy performance and the other literacy policies.

The chapter Literacy Performance is mainly about Levels. Here we can find some definitions about the technical skills. They are valued and described as "Sufficient Literacy Level" and "Average Literacy Level". The Average Literacy Level is marked as a (normative) standard, where it isn´t desirable to go below that or in other words say, below that literacy level there should be national effort to increase the literacy levels (and increase the called *human capital*).

Here are the definitions used for the ELINET report:

"At Level 1, adults can read relatively short digital or print continuous, non-continuous, or mixed texts to locate a single piece of information, which is identical to or synonymous with the information given in the question or directive. These texts contain little competing information. Adults performing at this level can complete simple forms, understand basic vocabulary, determine the meaning of sentences, and read continuous texts with a degree of fluency.

Below Level 1, individuals can read brief texts on familiar topics and locate a single piece of specific information identical in form to information in the question or directive. They are not required to understand the structure of sentences or paragraphs and only basic vocabulary knowledge is required."
(quoted in every country report).

Level 1 seems to be the minimum standard in our so-called knowledge society. Employability is a direct and indirect objective. The construction of a relation between Literacy Levels and Employability (despite the fact there is Unemployment and de-qualification of certain not- privileged groups in the population) is represented statistically. We can find data of certain groups - Employed/Unemployed/out of Labour force – and the amount of Literacy Rates in these groups. Of course, the point is to emphasize that the proportion of employment is higher when the level of literacy is also higher, as if there were a causal link between literacy and employment rates. But Literacy doesn´t create jobs, as we have seen in the statement of the Cuernavaca experts.

A concrete look at one of the participating countries shows that figures can also distort reality: "A few notable statistics mention that Greece appears to be the only country of the ones participating in the research that its adult population out of the labour force performs as well as those who are employed/job seekers. [….] Moreover, 28% of workers are over skilled (OECD average 10.8%), the highest of all the participating countries. That means that Greek workers are more proficient in literacy than what their job requires, and this also can be explained from the fact that almost half of the employed population (41.4%) is working in a field different from the one in which they earned their highest educational qualification (OECD average 39.6%)."[11]

We want to stress another few points, which are necessary to keep in mind, when we deal with the collected data. In difference to the PIAAC survey ELINET Report reduces Literacy "competences" on writing and reading skills, whereas the PIAAC study also includes Numeracy and Problem Solving in Technology-Rich Environments. As we know from the country reports the dimension of Mathematics and Digital Competences especially (which are always linked with other skills, especially reading) has become more and more important the last decade. Nevertheless, it becomes apparent that the concept of Literacy used is "Functional/Technical Literacy" in the meaning – as we mentioned in our introduction – of skills necessary to gain.

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[11] Desktop Research Greece, 2020, p.4f

Thus, on the one hand, it can be said that the spectrum of content is small, because it is reduced exclusively to reading and writing skills, and that the reports cannot make any statements about the social context and practice of literacies.

Another important point not to be underestimated is the fact that the Literacy Levels were tested in the dominant (in the meaning of socially dominant) so-called "national" language. This means that people who are sufficiently literal in their First Language but (up to the time of testing) not in the second (or further) language are likely valued below their literal competences. Interestingly the category "Test Language Not First Language" exists, but no consequences or difficulties for measuring are discussed in these reports. If there are averagepercent not speaking the test language as their first language (and numbers seem to increase) and the results of this group (not speaking the test language) are significantly weaker(as the results show), we have to be careful with interpretations about skills. Otherwise, it mayseem, that migration would have a causal relation to literacy.

The country Reports give some information (see later) about special offers for Second (or further) language learners. Measures in Portugal for migrants, for example, are highlighted.

The connection between Age and Literacy – in the countries taking part at the PIAAC study –is extrapolated. We want to show with all due caution - the "results" of some countries.

AUSTRIA

2.2   Age

The percentage of Austrians scoring at or below Level 1 increases with age: from 12% among the age group 24 and below to nearly 25% among those aged 55 plus. The international average is similar. Only in the age group of 45-54 year-olds the proportion of those performing at Level 1 or below is significantly smaller than in the comparable EU-17 group (16% vs. 18%).

Table 2.2 Age at Level 1 or below

Age	Austria	Std. Error	EU-17	Std. Error
24 or less	12 %	1.32	12 %	0.33
25-34	11 %	1.27	12 %	0.32
35-44	14 %	1.43	14 %	0.32
45-54	**16 %**	1.26	18 %	0.36
55 plus	25 %	1.84	25 %	0.41

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

GERMANY

2.2 Age

The percentage of Germans scoring at or below Level 1 increases with age: from 13% among the age group 24 and below to 24% among those aged 55 plus. The overall impression of these data shows that in Germany, age seems to matter a bit less than in other countries. In the age group of young adults (24y or less) the share of Level 1 or below performers is lowest (13%).

Table 2.2 Age at Level 1 or below

Age	Germany	Std. Error	EU-17	Std. Error
24 or less	13 %	1.46	12 %	0.33
25-34	14 %	1.38	12 %	0.32
35-44	15%	1.32	14 %	0.32
45-54	**21 %**	1.48	18 %	0.36
55 plus	24 %	2.17	25 %	0.41

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

ITALY

2.2 Age

The percentage of the Italian scoring at or below Level 1 increases with age: from 20% among the age group 24 and below to 41% among those aged 55 or older. The overall impression of these data show that in Italy, age seems to matter much more than in other countries. In the age group of young adults (16-24 years old), the share of Level 1 or below performers is lowest (20%).

Table 2.2 Age at Level 1 or below

Age	Italy	Std. Error	EU-17	Std. Error
24 or less	20 %	2.25	12 %	0.33
25-34	22 %	2.27	12 %	0.32
35-44	26 %	2.13	14 %	0.32
45-54	27 %	2.04	18 %	0.36
55 plus	41 %	2.40	25 %	0.41

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

SPAIN

2.2 Age

The percentage of the Spanish scoring at or below Level 1 increase with age: from 17% among the age group 24 and below to 46% among those aged 55 plus. The overall impression of these data show that in all age groups, the proportion of low literates is significantly higher than the EU-17 average. In the age group of young adults (16-24 years old), the share of Level 1 or below performers is lowest (17%).

Table 2.2 Age at Level 1 or below

Age	Spain	Std. Error	EU-17	Std. Error
24 or less	**17 %**	1.44	12 %	0.33
25-34	**20 %**	1.43	12 %	0.32
35-44	**23 %**	1.36	14 %	0.32
45-54	**30 %**	1.52	18 %	0.36
55 plus	**46 %**	1.88	25 %	0.41

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

As we can see, the literacy levels of the age group 24 or less are higher in relation to other agegroups. The reason for it may be, that school attendance is not so long ago and that quite a number of people in this age group are in training.

We can observe big differences between single countries, especially in countries of the European South the number of people with low literacy skills are higher (cf. the data providedabove and the individual country studies.)

There are big differences in the single counties – but especially in the southern countries are the results – weaker. (For further information look at the country reports).

Motivation

Let us take a look at the concept of motivation as this is one of the main emphases of theproject. We can detect on a few hints regarding motivation form the ELINET reports: Motivation in the ELINET Report is used in two ways:

One refers to the offers and the conditions, that make it possible to attend Literacy Courses: Policy Makers could enable attendance of Courses, if these conditions are fulfilled: "free tuition, free educational materials, and the fact that certification ceremonies are held, are allseen as incentives to learning. All adult learners […] obtain a cultural card which gives them free access to museums or – with some restrictions – to the Public Transport System (GSAE, 2008)", as the country report from Greece is claimed[12].

The other dimension of motivation is in the country report of Austria, referring to the curriculum, which was valid in the year 2011 until 2018. With a learner-centred approach andthe possibility learners decide what they learn, "Participants gain more self-esteem with learning, they try out things, they are not afraid of entering training or a course anymore." (Country Report Austria, p.15)

Interestingly there is although a link between reflection and motivation: "Reflection on learning outcomes is very important for the motivation and self-esteem of participants, especially people with low qualifications who are often not aware of the learning progress. Trainers and participants reflect together the learning outcomes, learning experiences and progress made so far. Trainers see themselves as facilitators or moderators of the learning processes." (Country Report Austria)

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[12] Country Report Greece, p.8

Selected Country reports

As already mentioned, four examples of the country reports produced by the partner institutions will be analyzed loosely following the steps from an overview of the national structure of offers in literacy education including a view on who defines the standards), finances as well as addressees and aims – and how is empowerment addressed and how strong is the emphasis on employability.

The four reports were selected as they exemplify - in our understanding- three different approaches to literacy education that are closely linked and interrelated, though: Spain can be seen as an example of literacy education more or less closely linked to the (formal) schoolsystem, Greece can be interpreted as a country on the doorstep of literacy education as an independent strand of education that is closely linked to empowerment of certain groups. Finally, Germany might be regarded as the country with the longest standing tradition of literacy education, a profound research basis, a strong political power behind measures for literacy education and a quite elaborated and professionalized approach. The situation in Austria is quite similar to the one in Germany and Italy can be regarded through the same lensas Portugal and Spain.

Portugal

The National structure and background to literacy education: In Portugal, the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for defining, coordinating, implementing and evaluating national policies for education, science and information society, articulating them with the policies of qualification and training.

Adult education and training in Portugal is divided into basic education and secondary education. Officially, there are five types of recognized adult education and training availablein Portugal: 1) National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (The Sistema Nacional de Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências - RVCC) 2) Adult Education and Training (AET) Courses (Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos) 3) Modular Training (Formações Modulares) 4) Recurrent Education Courses (Ensino Recorrente) 5) Paths to Conclude the Secondary Education Level (Vias de Conclusão do Nível Secundário de Educação) (ELINET, 2016)

Portugal has no historical tradition of adult education understood as a public policy or socialmovement or a specific sector in the sphere of a national system of education.

Adult education sector has mainly been forgotten or substituted for one of its constituted fields like second chance education or, more recently, vocational training (Lima, Guimarães,2004).

The New Opportunities programme was based on two pillars: to make upper-secondary vocational education a real and realistic option and to increase the education levels of the

working population, giving a new opportunity to the Portuguese to restart and complete their studies. With regard to education and professional qualifications for adults with little schooling, the strategy was supposed to capture the interest not only of unemployed adults but also those who are working in precarious situations due to their poor levels of qualification (Ministry of Education, 2007). Programme was interrupted in 2013 (Portaria No.135-A/2013) what led to reorganization and reorientation of the existing network of NewOpportunities Centres (452 Centros Novas Oportunidades – CNOs), replacing them by the Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional - CQEPs). The CQEPs are responsible for the development of Validation processes (RVCC), which has two main routes – academic and vocational.

According to the Adult Education Survey (2016), in Portugal 52.0% of adults (25-64) participated in job-related formal and non-formal education and training in the year preceding the survey, above the European Union average (47.2%) (Forti; Quintini, 2019).However, Portugal still ranks below the top performing countries.

Diverse adult education and lack of coherence between programmes

Various existing initiatives are not part of adult education policy, which allows the existenceof several types of provision without coherence and policy consistency (Guimarães, 2018).

Lack of common guidelines when it comes to the certification.

When it comes to recognition and certification of adult education, in Portugal's many certification agencies are disaggregated, confusion among providers, preventing a commonquality standard and inhibiting adequate resources to the providers they certify. Lack of common guidelines prevent appropriate monitoring and leads to inequality in resources between different regions.

Lack of a professional identity of adult educators.

This led to devaluation of work of adult educators, mostly working as freelancers or on a volunteer basis. Adult educators do not see themselves as a professional group, as there has never been a professional career for adult educators within the development of public policies' forms of provision; no higher education paths exist (on a Bachelor's level) specifically directed at training adult educators specifically, only general educator training and Masters programme are available; there are no

professional associations of adult educators or requests from existing trade unions for the professionalisation of adult educators; no special events or any type of social pressure in policy decision making thatwould favour Adult education as a field of professional practice (Guimarães, 2018).

In the context of disadvantaged groups such as socially unprivileged and/or immigrants reports recalls initiatives such as Programme Reading Metropolitan for disadvantaged groups (Programa Metropolitano de Leitura para Grupos Desfavorecidos) which was developed between 2004 and 2006, in the Metropolitan Area of Porto (AMP) and the Programme K'City – Community and Urban Development (K'Cidade - Programa de Desenvolvimento Comunitário Urbano) developed by the Aga Khan Foundation in 2004, withthe purpose of promoting the processes of social change that respect the communities, in a process of gradual autonomy and reinforcement of the different players.

Greece

Only the second chance schools (SDE) seem to be able to provide adults with basic education (defined in this research project as the learning of basic skills such as math, mother tongue and digital skill) as one of their primary goals. As stated in the Government Gazette (Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως, 1861/2014), the official journal of the Government of Greece, the aim of SDE is "the overall development of the trainees along with their fullest participation in the economic, social and cultural happenings, as well as their effective involvement in the workplace".

The SDE approach a great number of literacies and literacy practices such as providing the knowledge and developing the skills necessary for written and oral discourse in the Greek language (literacy in Greek) and in the English language (literacy in English), usage of numbers in everyday life (numerical literacy), usage of the computer and modern technology (digital literacy), learning about the natural science and environment (environmental literacy), culture (cultural literacy), art (artistic literacy), social science and how to be an active citizen (social literacy) and so on, as they want to provide a holistic educational experience. Not only that,

but the SDE are also trying to support their trainees in other aspects of their lives (how to face

difficulties in the family, workplace, their health and social environment). Furthermore, it is important to note that the person's needs and interests are taken into consideration while creating the lesson plans by conducting an initial identification of the trainees' needs regarding their knowledge and skills (Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως, 1861/2014).

While in theory there is forethought for covering the population's needs in basic education, it seems that the new KDVM prioritize vocational training, unlike what was happening with the KEE, and this is understandable considering the statistics that will be presented and discussed.

A few notable statistics mention that Greece appears to be the only country of the ones participating in the research that its adult population out of the labour force performs as well as those who are employed/job seekers. Higher proficiency in literacy and numeracy is not rewarded by earning higher wages and educational attainment has the strongest impact on the likelihood of finding a job (OECD, 2016a pp. 8-9). Moreover, 28% of workers are over skilled (OECD average 10.8%), the highest of all the participating countries. That means that Greek workers are more proficient in literacy than what their

job requires, and this also can be explained from the fact that almost half of the employed population (41.4%) is working in a field different from the one in which they earned their highest educational qualification (OECD average 39.6%). Consequently, it seems that skills are less recognized than educationalqualifications and that over skilled workers' skills are not valued (OECD, 2016a p. 11). Also, it may be important to note that Greece, along with Poland, are the only countries in which women produce better results in literacy than men (OECD, 2016a p. 6).

Following that realization and focusing on adult literacy, it is not surprising that the provision in Greece is not highly advanced and fostering it is not a policy priority. Furthermore,there is no national literacy curriculum framework for adults and even the continuing professional development of teachers is not obligatory (ELINET, 2016b). As it has already been mentioned though, certain encouraging actions have been taken, like the SDE, or, to name a couple of others, the HERON project that focused on the acquisition of basic ICT skills (2005/2006 –the first large-scale effort to equip citizens with basic ICT skills) (ELINET, 2016a, p. 6) or the ODYSSEYS project that focuses on the Education of immigrants[13] in the Greek language, the Greek history and the Greek culture (it consists of four levels and after each successful completion the trainees can take part in the respective Greek language examinations) (INEDIVIM, 2016).

Overall, adult education has transformed a lot from when it was first introduced in Greece. Itseems that there has been a shift of focus from the humanitarian aspect to a vocational one,considering, of course, the country's needs.

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[13] For younger migrants, Roma children and refugees that take part in the compulsory education, there is the provision by the government of creating special tuition classes (ΖΕΠ I&II, ΔΥΕΠ) that offer assistance into learning the Greek language.

Spain

In Spain, regional authorities are responsible for education plans but there are agreements with local councils and other organizations dependent from the Central Administration. Educational provision for adults consist of a wide range of activities within both formal and non-formal training. Formal training for adults is carried out in the Sections of Permanent Education for Adults (Educación Permanente de Adultos, EPA) and are aimed at population over 16 years, who did not finish their studies or do not have any academic qualifications. The offer covers basic education, so that students can get a Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate; basic professional training; courses of Spanish for immigrants and other non-formal education courses.

The Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education, in its article 67, establishes that teaching organization and methodology for adults will be based on self-learning and will take into account their experiences, needs and interests, being able to develop it through face-to-face teaching and also through distance education. In the case these adults need initial teaching on basic education, they will be intended to develop the basic skills necessary to access the Compulsory Secondary Education for Adults (ESA), as well as the acquisition of basicknowledge that enable their personal, social or work promotion.

In fact, nowadays, there are schools just for adults (Centros de Educación de Personas Adultas). Methodologies related to task-based, project-based learning, individualized learning or global integrative teaching are suggested. The cultural background and experiences of learners should be considered and integrated to achieve a more significant learning process.

The first level offered is called initial education, which comprises communication, maths skills, science and technology, and personal and work development. Once this first level is completed, learners will have access to secondary education. In the Secondary Education level, they will receive training on different areas of knowledge.

The report contains relevant information about literacy programmes for adults:

- The literacy curriculum for adults is similar to the one followed in Primary and Secondary Education. There is no adaptation for adults; the same happens with the materials, although they are being improved.

- Although education laws suggest some methodology approaches, no national quality standards for adult literacy providers at a national level have been established.

- The literacy needs for adults are usually identified by NGOs, or social services. Reports of drop-outs from compulsory education are also considered.

- Prior literacy knowledge and skills are measures through standard tests provided by the Ministry of Education, so that regional authorities have some guidelines.

- There are national and regional programmes to promote reading for pleasure among adults.

- There is a special interest in developing digital skills among all the population. There are web-based programmes for adult basic skills students, for example, CIDEAD (Centro para la Innovación y Desarrollo de la Educación a Distancia /Center for Innovationa and the Development of Distance Education)

- Regarding migrants, there is not a special literacy programme for them. Usually NGOs take charge of their provision.

Germany

The situation in Germany as far as basic education is concerned is divided into two main sectors: a) Literacy education for refugees and immigrants which is the domain of the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees) (https://www.bamf.de/DE/Startseite/startseite_node.html). This body has its own curriculumfor literacy courses (https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Integration/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/ KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-ik-mit-alphabet.pdf?_blob=publicationFile) and its own standards for teachers working in the field (https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/Integration/TraegerLehrFachkraefte/LehrFachkraefte/Z ulassungIntegrationskurse/zulassung-integrationskurse-node.html).

b) General adult education is funded by the Bundesländer (Federal Counties) and with some initiatives with federal money. The most prominent funding strand is the German decade for literacy and basic education (Nationale Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung / https://www.alphadekade.de). Federal money mainly goes into research (as for example the two LEO studies quoted in this report), public relations activities and development. This was the basis for the following curriculum:

The Curriculum for basic education was developed by the German Association of Adult Education (DVV) in 2013. It comprises framework curricula for reading, writing lessons as wellas calculating classes for adults. Additionally, the curricula includes learning materials relatedto the occupational fields: geriatric care, construction, building cleaning, hotel and restaurant

services, metalworking, and comprises materials to prepare the learners for secondary school completion certificate.

As most of adult education is depended on the Bundesländer, it is there that we see teacher training and development activities, such as for example EUROLTA run by the Bavarian VHS association, a teacher training framework originally designed for teachers of Foreign Languages, or the initiative of GrubiNetz (the trans-institutional network for literacy educationin Rhineland Palatinate which offers

teacher development courses for literacy teachers and counsellors in the form of BBQ which stands for Basisbildungsqualifizierung (https://www.grubinetz.de).

Summing up we can observe that the situation regrading curricula and literacy policies is diverse in Europe. One element that can be seen as an overarching concept, though, is the strong emphasis on employability which can be attributed to European policies.

The factor of teacher qualification is quite an open one (see the teachers interviews in this study report) and seems to reflect the position of literacy education in the countries, i.e. whether there is a strong tradition of adult education such as in Germany and Austria or not;whether literacy education is linked to the school system and has to fulfil compensatory functions as it were and build bridges for access to school systems, whether literacy educationis closely linked to volunteer and social work as in Greece and Italy. Professionalization of teachers is found in context in which literacy education is regarded as an educational entity inits own right and not as a feeding instrument to the general school system.

The link between literacy education and work, the often-mentioned principle and demand of employability, which sometimes is also linked to the above-mentioned feeding-in function of literacy education can be regarded as being in opposition to an empowerment drive approachbut could, in fact also be understood as an additional feature of empowerment work,

especially in cases such as Ar*beit und Leben* (Germany. https://www.arbeitundleben.de) where trade union-oriented problems of (equal) pay, working hours, safety regulations and responsibilities of the companies are being addressed.

Funding is again a fundamental element in the possibilities of literacy education. Even in situations of national decades local funding is hard to get, spending has to be justified and closely linked to "results", whatever they are and whoever defines them.

The question of motivation is lacking from the official documents, motivation is – perhaps – being thought of as self-fulfilling in a way that once a person has got a job, re-entered the educational

pathway, they will be happy. We will see glimpses of this in the learner interviews that follow this section, but on the whole we consider this fact as quite a considerable lack in research and pedagogical development and experimentation.

The main hook to which literacy education seems to be fastened is "work" – coming back to the manifesto of Cuernavaca we feel obliged to state again, that education does not really produce jobs – apart for a few educators – and that a grim perspective for the future does not constitute motivation, this must be seen in connection with negative experience that some people have made in schools and as a result to some discriminatory practices people have experienced.

But Motivation is key!

Interviews

Interviews were carried out by the partner organizations with a) learners and b) teachers, trainers. As is the case with all studies on learners the results below have to be considered with some critical distance as these people are already in courses and not the group of learners that need to be motivated. Nevertheless, we think that some of the information gained from both the learners and the teachers are relevant for future learners.

Interviews with learners.

A total of 26 interviews with learners were carried out and analysed centrally by lernraum.wien. The interviews are not analysed according to countries but along a series of keywords that were in turn gained from close scrutiny of the interviews. The coding of the interviews, though, allows for a "national" identification, which is not regarded as very relevant by the authors if this study, as far as learners are concerned, it is different with teachers as they reflect the overall situation of literacy education in the individual countries more. These questions that are used categories in the following analyses are the concrete questions in the interview guidelines.

Reasons for attendance

The first issue addressed in the learner interviews was the reason why people attended a course. The answers show a wide range, not untypical for adult education in general. The reasons vary from rather social ones like the following to concrete learning aims.

Communication with other people ranges high in the answers from Greece, but also in others. An additional piece of information might be added here, the interviewees are all members of the Roma community in Patras and surroundings and seemingly the courses were not only free but participants were offered financial compensation for attending (see extracts thee and four).

> *I mostly wanted to "escape" from the house and learn some more things because I was feeling drained. I also thought that it would be nice to learn some more things in order to be able to communicate better with my children and hopefully help*

somehow to take all the heaviness off of my daughter's back. Also I get to know morepeople and learn from them and their experiences, especially from other people my age that are going through similar situations.

I1G_2

I was really missing going out of the house and especially being part of a classroom, so when our community's president informed us for the seminars I really wanted to participate. Also because we were getting paid to be at the seminar, made it easier for me to participate because I would bring money to our house and I would be withmy people.

I2G_2:

When the president of the Roma community informed us, I was motivated to attendfor several reasons: The fact of the financial benefit as support to my family and alsobecause that other women would also be attending the course coming from the community.

I3G_2

The fact of the financial benefit as support to my family and also because that otherwomen would also be attending the course coming from the community.

I3G_2

Obstacles such as running a household and looking after children had to be overcome in order to "become more literate". This points at a high degree of motivation, the motivation being closely tied to the housework and care tasks. In addition to learning the courses also offered financial benefits for the learners which were of utmost importance for the group of addressees. Roma women are structurally and multiply discriminated against, thus financial benefits resulting from a woman's attendance in a course also helped to better their standing in the families (and perhaps the communities).

Although it was extremely difficult for me to attend due to the distance and additional needs of the household (medical care s^3to my son), I felt lucky for this double opportunity – both of the courses were financed so I had double motivation: learn and been paid. Especially concerning the learning aspect, I was enthusiastic because both of the courses for different reasons were replying to my personal needs: to become more literate in providing care to my child and also to learn how tocultivate plants in a small garden by producing basic products for the family.

I4G_2

From this interview we also see that there is additional value for the learners and their context, as learning about horti – and agriculture contributes to an amelioration of living conditions.

The following learners do not belong to the age group of the project but hint at another, very important group, those of the elderly who had missed out on education and wish to compensate this. LM and KS were taking part in a distance course and collaborated to overcome obstacles caused by the technology:

> *LM: Now that my grandchildren have started school I wanted to do something more with my day so I asked my neighbours who know about these things and they told me what my options were.*
>
> *KS: I participate mainly because of LM, because due to the covid-19 the courses were transferred online and since I can use the compute she was coming at my house to do the courses and this is how I got involved.*
>
> *I5G_2*

Learning the language of the country they live in seems to be the main factor motivating learners in Spain to attend courses. They show great enthusiasm for the language itself and for getting a job - through mastery of the language. Also, the fact that knowing and being able to use Spanish is seen as an entry ticket into society and living in Spain.

> *I like learning very much when I am happy. It is very important to practice with people from Spain. I like songs, but sometimes I don't understand.*
> *I1SP_4*
> *I love this language and I want to live here and have a job, that's why I want to take this course.*
> *I3SP_2*

The often propagated aim of "near nativeness" is taken on board by one of the learners when he mentions the "proper level of Spanish" (that he wants to achieve). Interestingly it is not only the language that is the aim of learning but also the social integration, here formulated as the goal of "behaving properly" (I10SP_4). Nevertheless, we sense a certain pressure that

is applied by the (majority?) society as this learner also mentions that he wants to adapt so as not to "not to get people angry, to learn the limits" (ibid)

Independence from others, e.g. husbands seems to be another motivating factor, especiallyfor women:

> *Every day it's my husband who does these things. I would very much like to do thesethings and not ask my husband if he can do these things.*
>
> *I10SP_2*

> *Mainly it is the challenges of daily life that motivates learners, as the statement formlearners in Germany show, in addition with the possibility to help others, in this case,the children:*
>
> *I want to be able to cope with the daily life in Germany and be able later on to helpmy children by homework.*
>
> *I1Ger_2*

> *I wanted to improve and extend my language competences and get in contact withother learners. Besides, my son faces difficulties at school and I want to be able to help him a little bit and cope with daily situation.*
>
> *I2Ger_2*

Summing up we can say that motivation is diverse but still centres around issues of daily life, speaking the language and also what we might call "integration" i.e. fitting in with society. Social contacts also seem to be of utmost importance for learners to attend courses.

Expectations

As mentioned in the section above motivations and thus expectations are diverse. Ranging from getting out of the house and helping the children to classic basic skills (seen from a technical perspective) like reading and writing as well as computer literacy (I1G_3 and I2G_3),to social interaction in the course (i.e. communicate with peers and the teacher (I2G_3).

More specific expectations include getting familiar with the eLearning platform provided by the German Volkshochschulen (I2Ger_3)and – specifically for online offers a – "flexible learning schedule" (I2Ger_3) and the preparation for the language exam that is mandatory inGermany (I1Ger_3).

But, again, it is the wish to know more about the country: "learn more about Germany and German people" (I3Ger_3) and communicating with German people, also in the regional variant of the German language. This is a quote from a learner at VHS Cham, a region in Bavaria, where German is used in a regional variant that differs from the so-called standard German, and an indicator of the wish to blend in and be integrated.

Language also ranks high in the interviews with learners in Spain with one astounding addition:to learn more about the history of the country, - a wish that might be traced back to the wishto become part of – or at least knowledgeable of the social narrative of the country.

In general, we can observe that these expectations are met in the courses in all partner institutions, at least to some extent.

What was missing

Not many learners found anything missing in the courses they attended with the exception of continuity, more time, also to keep in contact with other learners and the teacher, and perhaps certification of achieved goals. In the cases of online offers leaners missed the personal contact with others and the opportunity to interact with "locals" (I3Ger_7).

Motivate others to participate in a course

Most learners state that they would (strongly) recommend their friends to take part in a course. Learning as an adult is described by one learner as more open and his attitude as more open:

> *I sometimes compare my current self with my younger self and how I was perceiving education and I see that now my head seems a little more clear for some strange reason, like I can understand new information better or feeling more motivated to learn … I really do not know exactly.*

> I1G_8

Course attendance is recommended not only for learning but also for social contacts: "It is not only that you learn new things, it is also that you feel happy sharing and discussing" (I3G_8). Another Roma learner form Greece states that being part of a course makes a change to what they do every day (I2G_8) and that it makes you more satisfied and successful as a learner.

She says that learning gives you the:

> *"feeling that you make some progress"*

> I4Ger_8

Yet, again there is the wish to know more about the wider context people live in and the people from the majority population they encounter:

> *"you have a teacher who guides you in the learning process and provides valuable tips for living in a new country"*

> I3Ger_8.

Learning is also seen as a tool to structure life and learning: You learn to discipline oneself and set

learning objectives and work to attend these. (I2Ger_8) – and it is regarded as something that helps to turn form an outsider to an insider.

In general we can observe that learners in courses are very oriented towards achieving aims, establishing social contexts and to integration into the majority society. (eg: I10SP_18)

What can the institution do to motivate people?

The question that is most relevant to the present project is the one that asks about the institutions possibilities to motivate learners, again we are confronted with a wide variety of answers ranging from direct contact, better and more transparent advertisement of the courses and their contents. We also find some hints about course organisation such as shorteror different course times, a thematic topic for each week, more learning support and (probably) counselling for future learners, outreach and keeping in contact with former learners.

It seems that personal contact and relationships established to learners in the course could beof use for attracting new learners and – in any case more offers of courses and opportunitiesto learn. One Roma participant stressed the fact that their community is being discriminated against all the time – but not in the course and that this should also be made explicit.

Summing up we can state that learners seem to be highly motivated, connate the courses with positive experiences and above all an important step towards integration which is theirultimate aim.

Social contacts are important and missed in online course and the contact with the teachers as representatives from the majority society seems important. Courses seem to foster self- esteem especially with refugee and minority groups and learners regard themselves as ambassadors for a positive learning experience. Between the lines we see that discrimination and solitude are elements of many of the learners' lives and that they see thecourses as a means to escape this situation.

Interviews with Teachers

The teacher interviews are analysed in reference to the countries as they also reflect the situation of literacy education in the partner countries on a different level than the country reports to, they show some of the aspects of literacy education from the bottom, as it were.

A wide range of teacher qualifications

The teachers' qualifications obviously differ from country to country and seem to be in line with the general legal and programmatic basis for basic education in the countries (see also country reports section 3).

The only country that offers provisions for specialised teacher training for basic education seems to be **Austria** where the situation from 2013 to 2019 was very fruitful and rich for basiceducation and the training of literacy trainers, albeit that there is no university based literacyeducation for teachers. The Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung in St. Wolfgang has beenoffering training courses since the late Nineties. In Germany there are several universities thatoffer courses in so called Grundbildung (e.g. PH Weingarten), in addition there are initiatives in the framework of adult education which offer training (e.g. BBQ in Rhineland Palatinate).

This leads to a mosaic of qualifications from specialized training such as in Austria

(ITA1_8 Sprachkursleiterinnenlehrgang [a course offered by VHS wien/lernraum.wien for language teachers in adult education with an additional module for literacy]. Experience in working with second script learners; ITA2_8 Alphabetisierungsausbildung [literacy teacher training]. ITA3_8 My qualifications are two specific courses and a number of additional workshops)

Two teachers have an education in (applied) arts. All teachers have long experience in literacywork.

Italian teachers have qualifications for teaching in formal education (ITI1_8), degrees in modern literature (ITI2_8, and took part in evening literacy courses for adult migrants, runbythe Associazione Spaccio Culturale (ARCI Succivo). They have diplomas for teaching Italian as a Foreing language (DITALS) (ITI4_8).

Portugal. Teachers in Portugal differ to the extent that they have no qualifications in teaching adults and teaching Foreign or Second languages. They have experience in training children, young people and adults (ITP1_1), are sociologists (ITP2_1) or hold a master's degree in economy (ITP4_1).

Germany. Teachers in Germany show a variety of qualifications ranging from German as a Foreign language as well as additional training such as *"neurodidactics, intercultural competences* anddidactics" (ITGer1_8) One teacher holds University degrees (in Business administration, Computer science and in Linguistics), has participated in an international teacher training scheme form Foreign language teaching (EUROLTA). (ITGer3_8)

The teacher with the most specific qualifications is (ITGer4_8) who states:

> „I am a professional language teacher. I have completed B.A. and M.A. studies in Sibiu (Romania) and Regensburg (Germany), as well as an additional qualification (in Munich) as a trainer for German as a second language."

Greece. The situation in Greece Is comparable to that of Germany with teachers being certified adult educators or holding degrees in education as well as one in teaching Greek as a Second language. One teacher is qualified as an economist specialised in labour market integration of marginalised groups, hence highly qualified for the work s/he is doing.

Spain. The variety of teachers' qualifications is impressive: we find primary school teachers, PhD students with careers as a philologist, translators, teachers of Spanish as a Second language, psychologists, historians and music teachers.

The very colourful, diverse and sometimes surprising mixture of qualifications in the field ofbasic education seems to be the norm at least in Europa, if not globally. Basic education lacks professionalisation which can be seen as an advantage or a lack. The advantage is the manifold resources that teachers/trainers/facilitators bring along to the classroom which isstrongly depended on human interaction and learners' curiosity.

Austria seems to be the exception, but we have to take into consideration that professionalization in

NEVER TOO LATE

the field only lasted for some 6 years; what will happen in the future isstill open for debate

Learners as objects of curricula and books vs. Learners are creators of topics – participation

The answers to the question how learners are involved in deciding the context and methods of learning can roughly be divided between the two polar positions hinted at in the title of this section, and along a sliding scale between them.

On the one side we find answers such as "I do have a book to work with them"(ITGEer3_4)and "as the coursebook we have to work with doesn't offer many options" (ITGer1_4) that clearly indicated that courses are course book driven and that there is very little space of participation. On the other side of the spectrum we find answers such as "[…] the learners are not in a sense "involved in the topic of the lesson [mirroring then question] as they are the "creators of the topics" (ITG1_4).

In between these two poles there is a considerable range of methods and ways to actively engage learners in the learning/teaching process. Obstacles mentioned are the lack of a common language especially at a beginners' level and outside influences. Orienting the learning process on practical and daily needs is one way to achieve this. A further challenge, as it is called (ITA2_4) but really an opportunity is the inclusion of formal letters by the administration or diagnostic findings into the process. Interestingly it is also mentioned that in the context of project work topics of interest arise and can be dealt with.

Participation is not always considered in a positive way by some, especially elderly learners (ITP1_5) who, based on their assumed learning traditions. But in the end "they like it a lot" (ibid), believe that teachers and institutions should know what they want and need.

Some methods suggested are the "wall newspaper" as a means of expressing wishes or the reflection of what has been done in the lesson in the end – together with bringing in new ideas, methodologies (ibid).

Generally speaking, we can observe that achieving participation is not (only) a question of methodologies but one of attitudes of the institutions and the teachers. One teacher

stresses the importance of what she calls "the creation of safe spaces in which people feel free to express themselves beyond the roles imposed on them by their culture of belonging or arrival, by material economic and social conditions […]" (ITP1_5)

Methods applied

As mentioned in the last section methods, constituting the technical aspect of teaching, seem to be important and successful to varying degrees but nevertheless the underlying principles of working with learners can be considered to be the foremost factor of "success".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.)*

These overlap with principles, of course, which we can identify as[14]:

- 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 actualcodeciding environment" (ITG1_2)
- "I try to establish a hood relationship with them so that they feel secure andcomfortable, we do group dynamics and encourage them to express their emotions" (ITS_2)

At this point we would like to add some of the principles based on a former framework forbasic education in Austria as we consider these as also underlying some of the approachesdescribed in the answers. Learners are in the center of learning

- Learning as dialogue
- Active participation of learners in the process of deciding topics and methodsAutonomy and empowerment
- A critical attitude to hegemonic or received information

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[14] Some methods are here also list das principles which should reflect that they are teaching techniques but at the same time represent something more general and overarching.

Methods and learners

The good experiences with some approaches to teaching listed by teachers are – again and not surprising – manifold: the use of music and authentic materials, role plays are "very popular" and group work also seems to be a good idea. But what is most important is not a wide repertoire of methodological ideas but to find out what concrete learners like and need.

One teacher states that young adults react more directly to methodological interventions and proposed topics. Again it is all about principles and attitudes when a teacher states thats/he "act[s] non-traditionally so everybody is a learner, and everybody learns something" (ITG1_3). An important factor in the learning/teaching process is "active participation"

(ITI1_3) which seems to be counteracted by some activities in the "class"room for instance when learners get bored "especially when I have to use the more traditional methods, like when I teach them the alphabet" (ITG2_3) - the question here remains what is the reason behind the "have to" – is it the curriculum or the textbook that makes a teacher do

something or is it the "lack" of different approaches, especially when thinking of the same

teacher reporting that learners "seem to feel good when I apply these [new and interactionoriented] methods" (ibid). – And to push the question even further is it the teacher's fault not to know or is something lacking in training and in institutional backing.

Age seems to be a factor that makes learners hesitant to participate actively. We have seen above that younger learners very openly say what they do not like, on the other hand some teachers observe "especially in more mature students a resistance to participatory and collaborative methods [...] working with traditional methods seems more comfortable. (ITI4_3). From this we can deduce that methods on their own are not the magical wand to make learners learn and be "happy" (to quote one of the learners once more) it seems that it is more related to the general atmosphere – the "safe spaces", the respect – and the principles applied. As some teachers observe motivation cannot be generalized but has always to be seen in accordance to individual needs and wishes.

The Settings cosy, friendly or not

The question about the classrooms was asked in order to find out in which atmospherelearning takes place.

Ideally the class is as described by one Italian teacher (ITI1_5):

> *"A bright room, personalized room by teacher and students, with tables for workgroupsand plenary sessions".*

Or in another interview (ITI2_5):

> *"Welcoming, equipped with all the most appropriate tools to facilitate the practice of teaching and ensure the educational success of each learner according to his or her needs and characteristics. I try to use the spaces as didactic mediators and to make thecontext warm, informal and friendly, in order to put students at ease and make them feel free to express themselves and to test themselves without any performance anxiety".*

But this is not always the case, some teachers state that their classrooms are small, even dark, and that they cannot arrange them the way they want to. These are the exceptions, though. And this fact might reflect on the economic situation of some institutions organizingcourses.

Constraints, what constraints?

Most teachers do not see any specific constraints to their work, apart from the economic and social situation of the learners which is not surprising as most of the learning/teaching situations addressed in the survey are targeted at so called marginalised groups. The example of Greece shows that in some instance learners actually get financial support for attending courses. Major issues seem to be (not only in the courses referred to in the study) the possibility of child care for women, flexible time schedules and in in case of distancelearning – the technical infrastructure that learners have.

Technical infrastructure in the courses

All centers at which learners and teachers who were interviewed have a suitable and sufficient infrastructure with PC, electronic white board etc. What has not been addressed in the present study is the private and personal infrastructure learners have at home. We know from a different EU funded project[15] that many women belonging to marginalized groups have access to smart phones, but hardly ever to tablets and personal computers, and a considerable portion of the women were depended on their peers, husband and children to actually use the smart phones in learning contexts by , e.g. downloading and installing apps.

Job Satisfaction

Not surprisingly the job satisfaction with the teachers is high. They love their jobs – critically we could add, that they have to love them as both prestige as well as pay is not very high in this segment of education.

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[15] "Women Education (and) Strategic Approach for Training! [WE START!]" is a strategic partnership project for innovation in the field of vocational education and training (VET) lasting 35 months (September 2018-August 2021). https://westart-project.eu/

Closing considerations

Motivation

As we have seen in section one of this study research on motivation of learners in literacy education is scarce. The main documents on literacy campaigns and programmes do not tella story of individual motivation, they only focus on the societal and sometimes economic consequences of higher literacy standards in a society (see GRALE studies mentioned in section 1). On the contrary there is one major research work on refusing education by an Austrian researcher (Holzer 2017). The information we gained about motivation stems mainly from learners' interviews, which is not surprising and shows a clear demand for morequalitative research into learners, potential learners and non-learners of literacy education. An important factor for motivation, especially bearing in mind the socio-economic situation of potential learners: "free tuition, free educational materials, and the fact that certification ceremonies are held, are all seen as incentives to learning. All adult learners […] obtain a cultural card which gives them free access to museums or – with some restrictions – to the Public Transport System (GSAE, 2008)", as described in the country report from Greece.

The other dimension of motivation is in the case of Austria, referring to the curriculum, whichwas valid in the year 2011 until 2018. With a learner-centred approach and the possibility learners decide what they learn, "Participants gain more self-esteem with learning, they try out things, they are not afraid of entering training or a course anymore." (Country Report Austria)

Interestingly there is although a link between reflection and motivation: "Reflection on learning outcomes is very important for the motivation and self-esteem of participants, especially people with low qualifications who are often not aware of the learning progress. Trainers and participants reflect together the learning outcomes, learning experiences and progress made so far. Trainers see themselves as facilitators or moderators of the learning processes." (Country Report Austria)

We want to add two more examples that are not in the reports but exist in some countries, e.g. Austria and Germany: these are course times that are in synch with the daily routines of learners, as the example of "*Mama lernt Deutsch"* in Germany (e.g. Cologne) and Austria (Vienna) show, so that leaners can take part in courses in the times of the day when they do not have to look after the children, for example. Hints to this are also visible in the learner interviews from Greece.

Investment returned / participation gained

One aspect of literacy education that only seems to be of relatively minimal relevance for thisstudy but of importance to political debates is the fact that economic benefits can be garneredfrom a higher literacy rate in the country's populations.

Various OECD studies and other research claim to show that an increase of literacy by 1% results in an increase of productivity by 2,5 % and individual GDP by 1,5%. "Weak readers andwriters" result in 1,9 billion Dollars losses in the World economy (all quoted in Aschemann 2015).

If we only consider economic factors these data might be convincing but from a holistic and humanitarian perspective the growth in life satisfaction, political participation and democraticactivity by people seems to be the more relevant factor, especially for the group of addresseesof the present project – but always with the critical awareness that education alone does notchange 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.

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