

ESSENTIAL NEEDS OF EDUCATORS TO SUPPORT ADULT LEARNERS WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES



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Media Education – A challenge to Overcome

Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices

Strategic Partnerships for adult education

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Research leader	PETIT PAS Aps, Italy
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Authors	SIMONA LITVINIENE, GINTARE CERNIKIENE, MAYA DANOVA, SVETLA TAGAREVA, MARTA MUÑOZ, GONZALO, FABIOLA PORCELLI, AINHOA GANDARIASBEITIA, LIDIA and TANYA SLAVCHEVA.
Abstract	Media culture has expanded massively over the last decades and we are entering a multimedia environment which is increasingly enveloping, involving and experienced as an interconnected whole. The present report represents a comprehensive needs analysis report comprising several aspects of adult education from the needs of adults' educators in partner countries to methods to foster adults lifelong learning in the digital area. Based on the data collected, the research team concluded upon an innovative course framework to improve the skills of the educators and staff working with adult learners in the field of media education.
Key Words	Adult learners, Media Education, Lifelong learning, Digital education, educational context

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SUMMARY

Media literacy has never been as important as it is today. Media culture has expanded massively over the last decades and we are entering a multimedia environment which is increasingly enveloping, involving and experienced as an interconnected whole. Adapting with society is a must, and therefore, a quality digital education for adults that enables them to acquire media literacy is nowadays a priority. Because investing in one's digital skills throughout life is of the utmost importance.

From this perspective, the report represents a comprehensive needs analysis report comprising several aspects of adult education from the needs of adults' educators in partner countries to methods to foster adults lifelong learning in the digital area. The study is part of the Erasmus+ project "MECO - Media Education a Challenge to Overcome", implemented by a consortium of five partners from Italy, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Spain and Netherlands, aiming at providing new methods and tools to ensure quality learning opportunities for adult learners in the digital environment to achieve media literacy.

The present document is to provide not only a general insight into the matter, but also present some methods and tools that have been applied in Europe to foster media literacy in adult learners. The report is divided into three chapters comprised as it follows:

Chapter 1 presents the research methodology. This section summarizes the research methods applied to identify the needs of educators, the categories of respondents, the approach to interviews and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 gathers the national reports which set forth a range of country-specific aspects, with references to political frameworks, educational opportunities and potential barriers to adult learning and media literacy. Drawing from desk research and individual interviews, the report summarizes the challenges around adult education for media literacy, along with areas of improvement suggested by interview respondents. Each interview was guided to foster an understanding of what working with adult learners within the digital implies and what the educators need to consider.

Chapter 3 constitutes The European synthesis section that generates the basis for creating an innovative and inclusive educational context for media educators of adult learners. An array of educational instruments and initiatives are presented to underline the potential of transferring models and good practices across local communities. Currently, there are efforts at the national and EU levels to improve media literacy on adult learners. The analysis reveals that developing modern and effective cooperation models that enable networking is expected to improve the continuous professional development of staff by sharing and exchanging pedagogical models validated across Europe.

Based on the data collected, the research team concluded upon an innovative course framework to improve the skills of the educators and staff working with adult learners in the field of media education.



CONTENTS

SUMMARY	3
CONTENTS	4
INTRODUCTION	6
Background of study.....	7
Objectives of the study.....	7
Aim of research	9
Research methods.....	9
Report structure	10
Research boundaries and limitations.....	11
Desk research	11
Desk research areas.....	11
Data sources	12
Interview guidelines for needs analyses.....	13
Interview respondents	13
Interview questions.....	14
Data analysis.....	15
National report: Lithuania	17
Desk research results.....	17
Political Framework.....	17
Provisions for adult learners and adult educators	18
Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning	20
Interviews results	20
National report: Bulgaria	21
Desk research results.....	21
Political Framework.....	21
Provisions for adult learners.....	24
Provisions for adult educators.....	27
Initiatives to support adults’ media literacy and lifelong learning.....	29
Interviews results	31
National report: Spain	31
Desk research results.....	32
Political Framework.....	32
Provisions for adult learners.....	33
Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning	34



Interviews results	36
National report: Italy	39
Desk research results.....	39
Political Framework.....	39
Provisions for adult learners.....	40
Provisions for adult educators.....	42
Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning	43
Interviews results	44
National report: Netherlands	46
Desk research results.....	46
Political Framework.....	46
Provisions for adult learners.....	50
Provisions for adult educators.....	52
Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning	53
Interviews results	56
Political Framework: Media Education	60
Adult education EU.....	62
Adult learning and Covid-19	63
Supporting adult learning: Initiatives	65
Initiatives to support Adult Media Education	66
CONCLUSIONS	67
Recommendations of design for the training course.....	68
REFERENCES	69
ANNEXES.....	72
ANNEX 1: Media Literacy Education (MLE)	74
ANNEX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	76
ANNEX 3: INTERVIEWS ANSWER BY COUNTRIES	77
Interviews Lithuania	77
Interviews Bulgaria	81
Interviews Spain	87
Interviews Italy	94
Interviews Netherlands	99

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 emergency situation has changed relationships globally. Digital has taken on an extremely important role, however the benefits that citizens could derive from the use of digital technologies are limited by some concerns regarding privacy and security and by the lack of access to the Internet, the poor ability to surf on the Internet.

Media literacy concerns different media and distribution methods. It enables citizens of all ages to navigate the modern news environment and make informed decisions. Hence, it is a crucial skill for all citizens regardless of age, as it empowers them and raises their awareness. The rapid technological developments and the ever-changing social conditions shape diverse communication dynamics that give rise to several challenges such as mal-/mis/dis-information, hate speech and propaganda.

Media literacy education is intended to promote awareness of media influence and create an active stance towards both consuming and creating media. Education and lifelong learning are essential for all people, no matter the age, background or social statute. As set out in the Sustainable Development Goal no. 4, efforts shall be directed to Ensure an Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All.

In this context, adult learning seems to be an important enabler in terms of supporting individuals in becoming more critical and resilient against those challenges. It is important to strengthen adult's critical thinking, so they can judge and overcome the ever-present threats of fake news, cyber bullying, radicalization, cybersecurity threats and fraud. To this regard, news media literacy that draws from critical media literacy education can empower adults and promote the development of active democratic citizens.

Background of study

In a digital environment where the boundaries between the responsibilities of the various media players are in continuous development, it becomes increasingly important to ensure an adequate level of awareness amongst viewers. The Council of Europe has embedded Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in its Framework for Democratic Citizenship (2016) with an enriched set of indicators for competencies, beyond mere skills acquisition as they also embrace attitudes, values and knowledge.

According to the EU Media Literacy Expert Group (MLEG), media literacy “includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a citizen to access, have a critical understanding of the media and interact with it”¹. These capacities allow us to exercise critical thinking, while participating in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society and playing an active role in the democratic process. This concept covers all kinds of media interactions (broadcasting, radio, press, the Internet, social media) and addresses the needs of all ages.

During the first European Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Forum (held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in May 2014), the *Paris Declaration on MIL in the Digital Era* was adopted. The Declaration reaffirms the importance of MIL and calls for a renewed emphasis on MIL in today’s digital environment as well as cooperation among key actors and multi-stakeholder groups to advance MIL for all.

Objectives of the study

This study investigates the needs and challenges of educators and staff working with adult learners in five European countries. To allow for the integration of models and practices implemented at the EU level, the study addresses the European policies and strategies for fostering adult education, especially within the scope of media education.

The objectives of the study are:

- To determine the educational context for staff working with adult learners
- To provide an understanding of challenges encountered by those who work with adult learners and today’s problems
- To highlight the potential barriers with regards to adult education and media literacy
- To strengthen cooperation between organizations working with adults for further exchange of good practices
- To determine the areas of improvement in the field of continuous preparation and motivation of adult educators and adult organizations
- To provide an insight into media education for adult learners in the European framework as well as gather practices that enable and foster it.

¹ Carlsson, U. (2019). *Understanding Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Digital Age. A Question of Democracy*.



CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim of research

Media culture has expanded massively over the last decades. We are entering a multimedia environment which is increasingly enveloping, involving and experienced as an interconnected whole. Media literacy education is intended to promote awareness of media influence and create an active stance towards both consuming and creating media. It is important to strengthen adult's critical thinking, so they can judge and overcome the ever-present threats of fake news, cyber bullying, radicalization, cybersecurity threats and fraud.

The COVID-19 emergency situation has given to digital an extremely important role, however the benefits that citizens could derive from the use of digital technologies are limited by some concerns regarding privacy and security and by the lack or lack of access to the Internet, the poor ability to surf on the Internet. This makes investing in one's digital skills throughout life of the utmost importance.

MECO project aims to address these issues by providing adult educators innovative tools to promote media education among adult learners with fewer opportunities. Therefore, analyzing the common challenges that adult educators face in different partner countries, as well as the existing needs media education for adults' learners, is a priority.

By carrying out this research, the needs and challenges on media education for adult learners are to be thoroughly investigated in order to ensure that the course modules and scenarios created in the MECO project are fit for purpose.

Research methods

The ASSURE model is being employed as an overarching approach to the development of the "Essential needs of educators to support adult learners with fewer opportunities" study. ASSURE is a very successful tool to plan effective educational content. ASSURE is an instructional design model that has the goal of producing fruitful teaching and learning.

For the purpose of the current study, the model has been adapted and used as a guide. ASSURE is an acronym that stands for the various steps in the model.

These are the steps that constitute the model:

- **Analyse target group (learners) needs.**
- **State the objectives of the research.**
- **Select the research methods for desk research and interviews,**
- **Utilize media and materials for elaborating the report,**
- **Require target group (learners) participation,**
- **Evaluate (peer review with partners) and revise the final version before transferring to target groups.**

The research deals with the above-mentioned activities, focusing on the collection of primary and secondary data, and analyzing these for the elaboration of the report. In order to provide data of sufficient quantity and quality to enable course designers to create meaningful course materials later during the MECO project, the following three-steps research approach has been applied:

1. Data collection from international and national aggregated sources.
The collection of data envisages carrying out a preliminary literature review as a secondary research method to substantiate the interview questions. The literature review addressed political framework, provisions for adult learners with fewer opportunities, provisions for adult educators, initiatives to support learning and media education and potential barriers, as available from national and international reports, research studies, Eurostat data, as well as national and international laws and regulations. Based on this data, the questions for the interviews were formulated to be answered by educators/ facilitators/ social workers/ volunteers working with adult learners within the next step.
2. Data collection from national sources
The primary research methods are the conducted interviews, which are followed by further secondary research at the national and European levels. The desk research and interview activities are expanded upon later in the next sections of this chapter.
3. Compiling a complete and consistent study
Based on the data collected, the analysis has been completed by highlighting the key points, categorizing the results to meet the objectives of the study and by structuring those results to formulate conclusions and recommendations.

Report structure

The report comprises chapters, which are simply the results of the project or the processes in the project. That means a chapter can be something as big as the objective of the project itself or as small as a report chapter or data set.

The research team of the MECO project structured these chapters to meet the workflow requirements of course designers. Hence, the main sections are:

- Research methodology for desk research and interviews
- National needs analyses: Lithuania, Italy, Spain, Netherlands and Romania
- European synthesis report on essential needs of educators
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

Research boundaries and limitations

The current study is thought to explore the needs of adult educators to support learners on media literacy, then to explain why and how these needs should be addressed, in an explanatory approach. For this purpose, the research does not carry any statistical significance. Moreover, while an overview at the European level is provided, the research collects data mainly from four EU countries, namely Lithuania, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy and Netherlands.

The European Commission support for the production of this study does not constitute an endorsement of the contents. The content reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. The research is part of the “Media Education – a Challenge to Overcome”, Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership, ID 2021-1-LT01-KA220-ADU-000033396.

Desk research

The literature review sought to explore mainly documentary data from various sources, thus building on the initial secondary research carried out during drafting the MECO project proposal, when the main directions of research were formulated.

Recognizing the limitations and disadvantages of the secondary research, the secondary research is integrated into the research design together with the primary research, thus overcoming the possibility of the previously collected secondary data being inappropriate for the current research purpose.

Desk research areas

A) Political framework

- Adult education in partner countries – policy framework
 - o Media education for adults/ adult media literacy
 - o Lifelong learning
- National program and initiatives to support adult education and lifelong learning with special focus on media education.

B) Provisions for adult learners

- Statistics of adult learners in partner countries (evolution)
- Profile of learners (socioeconomic, gender, race, and other factors)
- Challenges
- Adult learning and Covid-19 (the rapid shift to digital learning/working due to pandemic)

C) Provisions for adult educators

- Target: educators, facilitators, volunteers and paid staff
- Information collected: where they work, what they do, payment levels
- Formal, non-formal and informal education opportunities for educators

- Volunteering opportunities to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning
- Challenges

D) Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning

- National, regional, local networks
- Websites to support adult media education
- Small scale project (EU, Erasmus, privately financed) implemented
- Good practices in terms of adult learning and media literacy

Data sources

While primary data can be collected through questionnaires, depth interview, focus group interviews, case studies, experimentation and observation, the secondary data can be obtained through internal sources (within the organization) and external sources (outside the organization).

For the MECO desk research, external sources were investigated to provide answers to the themes previously set out. The collection of external data is more difficult because the data have much greater variety and the sources are much more numerous. To cope with that, the project researchers identified a range of most relevant sources for this research, with a focus on publications not older than ten years:

- Publications from the European Commission
- National policy frameworks and guidelines
- European and national reports
- Annual reports and other census data
- Databases (including peer-reviewed scholar literature)
- Relevant textbooks
- European projects
- Professional social networks
- Global and local newspaper
- Adult organizations websites

These sources may be accessed using search engines such as Google, Google Scholar and any academic or training databases partners have access to. The reason for including such a wide selection of sources is to ensure that there is sufficient coverage of a complex topic that is differently understood across various stakeholders and countries.

To guide researchers during the desk research, the following keywords are suggested to be used, in English and partners' languages:

Adult learners, public policies for adult learners, adult organizations, national programs for adult education, adult educator, lifelong learning, media education, adults' digital education.

Interview guidelines for needs analyses

This study conducted through interviews aims to address the following question: what are the needs of educators working with adult learners on media literacy competence. The main purpose is to offer insight into different opinions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences of interview participants by conducting an interactive dialogue.

The basic principle behind interview research is to provide rich and detailed answers about the research topic. Consideration is given to the fact that new issues and ideas may emerge during interviews that could facilitate the analysis and, therefore, to help these new issues and ideas emerge, interviews in qualitative research such as this tend to be less structured. This flexibility broadens the possibilities for exploring different aspects of the subject matter while opening the door to new possibilities not initially considered by the researcher.

For the development of the present study, each partner is expected to undertake the following steps for carrying out the interviews in their local environment:

1. Translation of the interview question into local language
2. Conducting the interviews
3. Producing partial transcripts of the interviews
4. Coding data for confidentiality and anonymity
5. Analyzing data towards meeting the research aim
6. Conceiving the interviews results report, including an interpretation of data and conclusions drawn.

The aforementioned steps will allow the transferability of the research and allow everyone to benefit from this study, free of charge. This is one of the key features of Erasmus+ strategic partnership featuring innovation.

Interview respondents

Our preliminary literature review shows that adult education does not and must not take place in only in formal educational institutions. Instead, adult learning contexts and opportunities occur in many other areas of the community, also through non-formal and informal learning experiences. In this context, the educators are not just professional trainers, but people active in a wide range of disciplines, roles and institutions.

Apart from formal educators and trainers, the target group for conducting interviews include adult education organizations, volunteers, local/regional agency employees and policy makers.

Selection of the sample

Each partner is to select five interviewees matching the aforementioned description. When selecting the respondents, project partners shall consider gender equality, equal opportunities and relevance in terms of knowledge, experience, skills and line of work.

A pool of suitable interviewees is considered upon delivery of the interview methodology with questions. The potential interviewees are initially contacted directly or via email or phone. Following their preliminary expression of interest, the interviewees are provided with the interview sheets (Appendix 1) in electronic form. Along with interview questions, the interview sheet includes basic information regarding the project and the research study.

Upon completion of the contacting process, the interviewers require the interviewees' confirmation for participation and agreement with the associated arrangements. The interviews are then scheduled at the earliest convenient opportunity.

Confidentiality and anonymity

It is important to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. Therefore, the name of the interviewee will always remain coded with initials. The data will be collected by note-taking and in the case the researcher aims to audio/video recording, permission from participants will be requested before starting the interview.

The researcher of each partner country will make sure that the identity of the interviewee is protected and encoded in all the documents that are to be shared with the consortium of the partnership.

Interview questions

The research methodology envisages semi-structured interviews, with a key set of themes and a range of guiding questions relevant to those themes being formulated. It is expected that the researchers will conduct the interviews with flexibility, allowing the open discussion between the researchers and the interviewees.

Following the semi-structured interview form, the questionnaire includes both descriptive and explanatory questions to guide the interview:

1. Introduce yourself and your organization. How long have you been working with adult learners (with fewer opportunities)? What is your role and what kind of activities do you (e.g., education, training, counselling, social work, volunteering, public service, policy making, etc.)? Your organization: name, field of action, country, region.
2. In your experience, what do you think is the most common misconception about adult education (prejudices, role in society, importance given to the matter, ...)? What is the general perception media education for adults?
3. In your experience, what do you think are the most common challenges regarding adult education and media literacy for adult learners? What are the main difficulties encountered when working with adult learners?
4. What is the general profile of adult learners you usually work with? What are the main obstacles stopping adults from improving their media literacy (time, interest, economic factors)?
5. What are the main difficulties adults have when using the media? What are the main skills adults need to develop for acquiring media literacy using all forms of communication (e.g., awareness, access, safety, production, critical thinking)?



6. How do you think the Covid-19 pandemic has affected adult learning of media literacy? Has the pandemic aggravated the needs of adults to acquire media literacy skills?
7. What kind of relevant training have you received over the last 3 years to help you in your work? If so, what kind (e.g., face-to-face, conference, seminars, shadowing, written or video materials, etc.)?
8. What kind of training would be helpful to you in the field of media education for adult learners (e.g., what topics and delivery method)? What kind of material could be useful to help you in media education for adult learners?
9. Do you have opportunities to discuss and share ideas and good practices with other experts in the field at a local, national and European level? If so, please specify when, where, how, and with who.
10. Do you have anything else to add?

The interviews carried out using the above question-based framework may last for 20-30 minutes, with some degree of flexibility. The expectation is that the above questions could clarify the essential needs of educators and those working with adult learners in their line of work. Course modules and activities will be designed later during the project, to meet those needs.

Data analysis

Transcription of the interviews is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process but ensures the quality and authenticity of the data. Data analysis will be an ongoing process and in constant relation to data collection. The data collected during the interviews are intended for the results section, which emerge because of their high frequency and importance underlined by the interviewees. The use of any quotes from interviewees is classified accordingly to maintain the anonymity of the participants.



CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL NEEDS ANALYSES

Partners in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy and Netherlands carried out desk research and interviews aiming to collect knowledge on adult education and media literacy education for adult learners from studies, political discourse and practical experiences in their countries.

National report: Lithuania

Researchers: SIMONA LITVINIENE and GINTARE CERNIKIENE

Desk research results

According to Statistics Lithuania², Lithuania's population at the start of 2020 was 2794090 inhabitants. The population has been declining in recent years for various reasons, such as negative natural population change, mortality and emigration. The natural population change (increase/decrease) is still negative. The most populated areas are the counties of the biggest cities, Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda. The population density of these three cities at the start of 2019 was 83.3 inhabitants per square kilometer (inhabitants/km²), 69.4 inhabitants/km² and 60.8 inhabitants/km², respectively. The lowest population density can be found in the counties of Tauragė (21.3 inhabitants/km²) and Utena (17.7 inhabitants/km²).

Political Framework

On the Global Computer Literacy Program

Non-payment and lack of access to information technology in turn reduces access to the labor market, hinders access to digital market services (information networks, banking, electronic payments, electronic goods and services, the use of multifunction cards, etc.). In order to successfully use a new type of service, the population needs computer literacy skills and knowledge.

Residents of the Republic of Lithuania evaluate the information society positively, they associate its development with an optimistic perspective of a democratic society and hopes for a better life.

However, there is a lack of public campaigns, events, publications, quick-to-remember and easy-to-decode symbols that promote the idea of the information society in everyday life.

There is a lack of state-recognized professional qualification or certification requirements for employees of state and municipal institutions and establishments, which define the computer literacy of employees, as well as requirements for the application of specialized information technologies related to their specific activities.

There is a lack of a common database on all institutions providing computer literacy training services in various regions of Lithuania. There is a considerable diversity of institutions and curricula providing computer literacy training services. There is no guarantee that all of these institutions will provide an adequate level of computer literacy training.

² The Lithuanian Department of Statistics. Open data. Retrieved from: <https://open-data-ls-osp-sdg.hub.arcgis.com/>

The level of computer literacy of the population of the Republic of Lithuania depends on their place of residence (urban or rural area), age and income. The higher the education and income of the population, the younger they are, the more they live in cities and towns and their higher social status, the higher their level of digital literacy and the greater their desire to have it.

State institutions - the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, and the Ministry of Transport and Communications - solve the computer literacy problems of the population. However, their efforts in this area are insufficient. Local municipalities do not yet pay enough attention to computer literacy training in the local community due to a lack of specialists and resources in this area.

Representatives of the business show great interest in the competence of the society: they have established the association "Window to the Future".

In order to create conditions for all residents of the Republic of Lithuania to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge, it is necessary to take into account that:

1. the population is not systematically prepared to live and work in the information society, their computer literacy education is still rather fragmented, there is no coherent state strategy on how to develop citizens' computer literacy;
2. not all residents have the same conditions to acquire computer literacy and prepare to live in the information society.

The Law on Education (1991), describes all the functions of the education policy, including adult education policy. Law on Non-formal Adult Education and Continuing Education (2015) regulates non-formal adult education and continuing education, the basics of their structure, organization and financing. The Council of the Municipality appoints a coordinator of non-formal adult education to implement the action plan of non-formal adult education and continuing learning. Currently, coordinators have been appointed in all Lithuanian municipalities. Their institutional dependence is diverse.

Provisions for adult learners and adult educators

About 31 percent of Lithuanians have completed higher education which is more than the average of the EU, which is at 25.1 percent. In addition, the number of higher education graduates has increased by 50 percent in the last decade. Education in Lithuania is already doing well and continues to improve (Eurydice, 2022).³

In Lithuania, adult education may be formal and non-formal. According to this, the providers of formal and non-formal education are listed below. Institutions providing formal adult education: adult general education schools (education centers), general education schools with classes for adults; vocational education and training (VET) schools; higher education institutions (HEI) – colleges and universities. These institutions (except general education schools) offer continuing professional

³ Eurydice (2022). National Education Systems: Lithuania. Main providers. *EACEA National Policies Platform*. Retrieved from: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-providers-43_en

development and retraining courses, which are also an integral part of adult education (Eurydice, 2022).

State, municipal and non-state VET institutions provide vocational education and training. VET is their main activity. According to data from AIKOS, there are 64 state VET institutions and 5 non-state VET institutions in Lithuania. Since the start of the optimization of the state VET institutions networking 2018, regional needs and available study programs have been analyzed. There are more VET institutions in bigger cities, but it is possible to access VET in every municipality. Free-lance teachers and other natural and legal persons, for whom VET is not their main activity, may also provide VET. A company which has an education center would be an example of such a provider. There are more than 200 such providers.

Institutions of non-formal adult education, adult education centers, high schools, institutions providing continuing professional development, companies, non-governmental organizations, andragogy specialists, etc., may provide non-formal adult education. Employers can organize adult education and the learning process can be conducted at the workplace. According to AIKOS, there are 105 non-formal adult education schools. There is no data on the total number of all type so institutions providing non-formal adult education).⁴

According to the data of the adult education survey (2016), 38 % of population aged 25-64 studied in formal education institutions, courses and seminars organized by various training providers, as well as independently. Women studied more than men, urban residents more than rural residents. Younger people aged 25-34 (49%), as well as those with a high level of education (59%) and employed persons (46%) were the most likely to study. 31 % did not study anywhere (958 thousand) adult population, of which 7 % wanted to learn. The main reasons for not being able to study were over-employment and too expensive training⁵

The objective of establishing an effective system of lifelong learning is reflected in the National Education Strategy 2013-2022. The strategy states that Lithuania leads some Member States under a few indicators. In Lithuania, the level of attainment of tertiary education of youth (aged 30–34) was 51.3 per cent in 2013 and rose by two points in 2014 to 53.3 percent. Under the level of employable persons (aged 25–64) that have at least upper-secondary education Lithuania is the leader in the EU. However, Lithuania has been unsuccessful in its efforts to increase the percentage of adults in lifelong learning from 5 per cent to 15 per cent. This goal has been set in the Strategy of Securing Lifelong Learning. According to the Eurostat data, in 2019 just 6,9% per cent of adults (aged 25–64) had participated in adult education in the 4 weeks before the data was collected. (EU2019m. – 11,2%). In order to solve the above-mentioned issues, the following objectives are raised in the National Education Strategy 2013-2022 (more: National Education Strategy 2013-2022).

All education took place at a distance during Covid-19 period and the most of non-formal education activities were suspended.

⁴ Eurydice (2022). National Education Systems: Lithuania. Main providers. *EACEA National Policies Platform*. Retrieved from: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-providers-43_en

⁵ The Lithuanian Department of Statistics. Open data. Retrieved from: <https://open-data-ls-osp-sdg.hub.arcgis.com/>

Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning

It was predicted that the general media literacy level of the Lithuania's population, starting from the study conducted in 2017 (when the determined level was 37.9 percent), would increase every three years as follows: 39 percent in 2020 and 41.3 percent in 2023.

Interviews results

There was 10 respondents who answered the questions. Most of them working in the organizations/ adult training centers which give services for people with disabilities. They providing work integration training, social skills building activities, social and psychological counselling, social support. Most of respondents are project activities specialists and consultants and I have many experience in working with Human Resource Monitoring and Development.

Regarding the answers about the most common misconception of adult education most of respondents stated that sometimes people with fewer opportunities have good enough knowledge on using social media, but no skills for job-related tasks, some of people are good with smartphones, but have low skills using the computer. The level of knowledge vary significantly person by person - some do not have any knowledge at all, some use basic functions, some have quite good knowledge and skills but are not used to use it. Most common challenges is finding intrinsic motivation for learning. Difficulties are that many people have low self-esteem hindering their development. Also there was an answers like “The people I work with are often not familiar with things like emails, they are not aware of what are they for, so they need the very basic training to kind of get their heads around the very basic things to start with. A lot of the time they get overwhelmed with the very basic information, and give up”.

About the question what is the general profile of adult learners, most of respondents stated that they are unemployed, at-risk of poverty, facing learning difficulties, intellectual disabilities, they lack basic knowledge and that decrease their interest and motivation. Also don't have competences to introduce themselves; don't know how to introduce their competences; track information of new information, middle age, complicated growing up circumstances. The main difficulties adults have when using the media according to respondents are low capabilities for daily online tasks, lack of critical thinking and how to identify fake news also online safety and low motivation.

To the question “How do think the **Covid-19 pandemic** has affected adult learning of media literacy? Has the pandemic aggravated the needs of adults to acquire media literacy skills?” Most of respondents stated that there is a growing need for adults to learn media skills because of pandemics, because many of the governmental services now are operating online, some services can be acquired only by digital tools, a lot of fake news has been flourishing online since the pandemic started in social media and it asks for better identification of fake news and better critical thinking.

Regarding the **courses for staff** who work with people who have fewer opportunities, most of them attended online trainings of fake news, creativity building trainings, courses how to work in pandemic situation, seminars about suicide assistance and how to help Ukrainian people reintegrate into life in Lithuania, trainings about video materials and media literacy.

About the question “What kind of **training** would be **helpful** to you in the field of media education for adult learners (e.g., what topics and delivery method)? What kind of material could be useful to help you in media education for adult learners?” respondents stated that the most important is to organize media literacy training for people who do not have digital knowledge at all; online toolkit, face-to-face training, all kind of training about integration IT in daily and work life; how not to afraid introduce yourself in video version, some kind of practical tasks and easy explanations on theory things, training for ways of teaching educators to learn technical skills, computer literacy training, bullying and cyberbullying of disabled people in social media.

Most of respondents stated that they have an opportunity to change their experience during other Erasmus+ projects; multiplier events, national and international networks, National Anti-Poverty Organizations' Network, SFE CEFECE.

National report: Bulgaria

Researchers: MAYA DANOVA and SVETLA TAGAREVA

Desk research results

Adult education is becoming increasingly important for the socio-economic development of the country in modern conditions. Lifelong learning is becoming an inalienable need of all people, regardless of their socio-economic status, as the rapid entry of new production and information and communication technologies in the economy is already a fact and its general personal well-being increasingly depends and will depend on knowledge, skills and the competencies of economically active persons. They must therefore be applied various methodologies, as well as to be created and implemented specifically developed courses, activities and materials. In this context, teaching is turns into a socio-educational activity in which they mix formal and informal activities. The knowledge that learners acquire are important, but other skills, attitudes and goals such as socialization, integration, adaptation to society, active citizenship, etc. must be taken into account too.

Political Framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria guarantees the right of the Bulgarians citizens, regardless of their age, to acquire primary, secondary and higher education and to continuously improve their skills. Primary and secondary education in state and municipal schools is free of charge, including for adult learners. The state promotes education by creating and financing schools, assisting capable students, creates conditions for vocational training and retraining, exercises control over all types and degrees of schools

According to the data applied by Eurostat and the National Statistical Institute / NSI / definition "Lifelong learning covers all targeted learning activities, formal and informal, undertaken to improve knowledge, skills and the competence of the individual, both of professional and general interest personal and social goals " (NSI, Bulgaria, official site)⁶.

⁶ Republic of Bulgaria. National Statistic Institute. Survey on Adult Education. Retrieved from: <https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/3530/adult-education-survey>

Formal education and training in Bulgaria is defined as education in educational programs conducted in the system of schools, colleges, centers for vocational training, universities and other educational institutions. These programs are a set of increasingly complex training programs for children, adolescents and adults, leading to the acquisition of a higher next degree of education or a degree of professional qualification. According to the Bulgarian Legislation formal adult education and training covers individuals ages 16 and over enrolled in school education, other than the daily, in programs for acquiring a degree of professional qualification in the Vocational Training Centers, in all forms of training in vocational colleges and educational institutions of higher education.

Adult learner in Bulgaria is a person who has reached the age of 16 and is being trained in evening, part-time or independent form of formal education and training system. Persons studying in daily form of education in vocational colleges are also included.

Training providers are the institutions that conduct formal education and training and non-formal learning

An educational institution is defined as a center taking independent decisions, which performs educational services for persons and organizations and is created according to the regulations of the law. This means that the institution has a manager (director, rector or another manager), i.e. this is an independent educational institution. Dependent educational institutions are branches or units known under other names which are typically subordinate to an independent institution.

The academic staff are official persons who directly conduct the training sessions according to curriculum irrespective of whether they are full or part time employees.

Graduates are those students who have received a document for a completed level from a legitimate educational institution, containing all necessary records and stamps according to the law.

A student is every person enrolled in an educational program of formal education according to ISCED irrespective of the mode of attendance. Formal education includes the educational programs implement in the legitimate educational institutions created according to the existing legal order.

Organization of the education system and of its structure in brief are the following

School education in Bulgaria starts at the age of 7. At the parents'/guardians' decision, 6 year old may enter school if their physical and mental development allows this. The basic stage of education is divided into the primary stage (grades 1-4) and the lower secondary stage (grades 5-7). Secondary education is divided into the first secondary stage (grades 8-10) and the second secondary stage (grades 11-12). General upper secondary education is conducted in comprehensive schools (3 and 4 years of education) and in specialized schools (4 and 5 years of education)⁷.

Higher education in Bulgaria does not allow privileges and restrictions related to age, race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, social origin, political views and religion. It shall be acquired in accredited higher education institutions. Higher education institutions are universities, specialized

⁷ Eurydice (2022). Bulgaria: Organization of the educational system and its structure. Retrieved from: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/bulgaria/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure_en

higher education institutions and independent colleges. They are granted with academic autonomy. It gives expression to the intellectual freedom of the academic community and the creative nature of the educational, research and artistic process as supreme values. Academic autonomy includes academic freedoms, academic self-government and inviolability of the university territory. Higher education institutions provide education for undergraduate, postgraduate and graduate students. The forms of study at the higher education institution are full-time, part-time, evening and distance⁸. The higher education system organizes post-secondary education for the following degrees: Bachelor's degree and Master's degree

The efforts of Bulgaria and its formal educational system is to provide modern education while pursuing the preservation of national traditions and compliance with the European standards are continuing. At national level, the aim is to help students develop valuable and competitive knowledge and professional competencies for the labor market, incl. the possibilities within the lifelong learning programs.

The main goal of formal education in Bulgaria is to determine the current priorities of public education, to exercise control over the institutions giving educational degree and qualification as well as to analyze and plan future development of the system.

HIGHER SCHOOLS BY TYPE IN 2020/2021 ACADEMIC YEAR	
	(Number)
	2020/21
Total¹	54
Universities and equivalent higher schools	50
Colleges	21
Independent colleges	4
Colleges, at the universities and equivalent higher schools	17

¹ Includes universities, equivalent higher schools and independent colleges.

Figure 1. Source: Republic of Bulgaria. National Statistic Institute.

If we look retrospectively at the time 10-15 years ago, it was difficult to find the term "non-formal education" in Bulgarian, because this term had not yet entered the scientific community, and even less often to be the subject of special definition or analysis. It is currently widely used by researchers in many specific or interdisciplinary fields

Non-formal learning is also targeted and organized, but successful completion does not lead to the acquisition of a degree or a degree of qualification. The most common forms of non-formal learning are private lessons, seminars and workshops of a training nature courses, training of workplace etc. Successful completion of non-formal learning may or may not be accompanied by the issuance of certificate or other document.

In the minds of most adult learners, non-formal education supports formal education, is flexible, and works in the field of self-development and self-improvement. It is rather practical, it is open and voluntary, and accompanies lifelong learning. All non-standard ways of learning that are not related

⁸ Eurydice (2022). Bulgaria: Organization of the educational system and its structure. Retrieved from: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/bulgaria/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure_en

to the formal academic environment, but are nevertheless applied both personally and professionally, are forms of non-formal and informative learning.

An interesting point of view at non-formal education in the country give U-Report. It is a global platform of UNICEF and many partner organizations, launched in 2011 and in Bulgaria in 2020. It gives children and young people aged 14-29 the opportunity to express their views on issues important to them and in an accessible way. When asked whether they consider Internet resources to be non-formal education, 94% said yes. To the question What knowledge and skills do you not get from formal education, but are very important to you? The most important for 41% are "soft skills". These are the skills that can be applied in all situations in both career and personal development - such as speaking in public or critical thinking. In the next position 16%, they put civic education and financial literacy. Civic education is mainly expressed in the relationship between citizens and state institutions, our civil and labor rights, as well as knowledge of political ideas and systems⁹.

Provisions for adult learners

Licensed Vocational Training Centers (CPOs)

The centers for vocational training are state, municipal or private, Bulgarian with foreign participation and foreign. The state and municipal centers shall be established by the corporate bodies which were issued a license for carrying out vocational training or professional orientation from The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET). The private centers are established by the sole entrepreneurs or corporate bodies established as trade companies, co-operatives, associations and foundations with issued license for carrying out vocational training or professional orientation from NAVET¹⁰.

Employers' organizations

The employers 'organization (also called the employers' association) is a non-profit legal entity.

Trade Unions

Trade unions are created primarily to protect the rights of employees and have a new role as independent representative organizations. Aiming to improve their skills, they periodically organize trainings, seminars and conferences. Some of them have separate structures in which vocational education and training is carried out, language, computer and a number of other courses are conducted.

Community Cultural centers

The community culture centers are self-ruling Bulgarian cultural – education associations in the settlements, who implement also state culture – education tasks. The community culture centers are nonprofit corporate bodies. The community culture centers organize schools, circles, courses, clubs and other activities to achieve their goals.

Non-governmental organizations

⁹ UReport. Bulgaria. Retrieved from: <https://bulgaria.ureport.in/about/>

¹⁰ Eurydice (2021). Bulgaria. Institutions providing adult education and training. Retrieved from: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/institutions-providing-adult-education-and-training_en

NGOs, foundations and associations, governed by the Associations Act, regulating the legal status of non-profit organizations in Bulgaria.

Employment Agency

The Employment Agency (EA) is an executive agency under the Minister of Labor and Social Policy for the implementation of the state policy on employment promotion, performing functions related to vocational guidance and adult education. Implements a number of national programs, as well as projects with state and European funding, related to the acquisition and improvement of qualifications in professions in demand in the labor market and providing lifelong learning opportunities for unemployed people from disadvantaged groups.

The international PISA survey, measuring by various indicators functional literacy of students around the world speaks eloquently about the crisis in schools. Data from 2019 show that 47% of Bulgarian ninth-graders do not cover the minimum level of literacy. That means almost half of them do not understand what they have read. It turns out everyone - both formal and non-formal education, and we as a society need to fill a huge one emptiness before we start building anything¹¹

In the same time, according other PISA research in Argentina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Peru, the Slovak Republic and the United Arab Emirates, a typical disadvantaged student has less than a one-in-eight chance of attending the same school as high achievers¹².

Bulgaria occupies a place near the bottom of the media literacy index for 2021 – 30th position out of 35 European countries, and falls into the same group as Greece (27), Romania (28), Serbia (29), Turkey (31) and Montenegro (32). Developed by the European Policies Initiative (EuPI) of the Open Society Institute, Sofia, the index assesses the resilience potential to fake news using indicators for media freedom, education and trust in people. The countries that top the media literacy rankings enjoy free media at the same time, combined with a high level of education and great trust among citizens. A good education system and widespread critical thinking skills among citizens are seen as a key tool for countering fake news and countering the information war against the country. At the same time, countries with low levels of media literacy are characterized by less educated citizens and higher levels of mistrust.

In Bulgaria education is perceived as one of the factors for economic, social and personal development and here is the place to mention that media literacy is a result of the process of this education, which in turn develops all the basic indicators: motivation, contact, information, perception, interpretation, evaluation and activity. Media education is the responsibility of various departments in the Ministry of education, but there is no specialized department to deal with this issue. There are no official government media policies in our country for the role of teachers in the field of media literacy - as for their own qualification and re-qualification, as well as their role in the training of students. In general, we can say that the emphasis on media literacy is concentrated

¹¹ Non-Formal Education Research (2020). *Collection of research materials*. University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski": Sofia, p.7. Available at: <https://unipress.bg/image/catalog/1pdf/0909.pdf>

¹² OECDiLibrary. PISA 2018 Results: Effective policies, successful schools. Volume V. Retrieved from: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2018-results-volume-v_ca768d40-en;jsessionid=EL6Rfmcz1BG7kCl7O6iW6KiW.ip-10-240-5-153

mainly in Bulgarian universities. Profiled higher media education, in the form of bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs, as well as specializations and individual disciplines in the field of media, journalism or public relations are offered in the largest state and private universities SU, UNWE, New Bulgarian University, Southwestern University, American University, Burgas Free University.

Recent University activities

"Development of the level of media literacy in Bulgaria and the possibilities of the project" European Initiative for Media Literacy Training (EMCI) "is the topic of the upcoming national webinars, scheduled for 07.04.2021 and 14.04.2021. The events are part of a three-year international project involving Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania, consulted by the European Consumer Protection Association (EAVI). The Bulgarian side is represented by three faculties of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", namely the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication (FJMK), the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology (FCNF) and the Faculty of Education and Arts (FNOI). The project, based on the best practice in media literacy in Europe, the Dutch Media Coach initiative, focuses on developing a comprehensive training program, training more than 100 qualified trainers able to apply it in different contexts and among different target groups, and creating an environment of sustainable development for the systematic and upward development of media literacy in the participating countries¹³.

On November 11, 2021, the New Bulgarian University organized a public lecture on "Digital Health Literacy in a Pandemic". The lecture will discuss global trends in the development of digital health literacy of consumers and presented the results of a three-year study on "Online search for health information among young people", which covers two periods: before and in a global pandemic.

Generation Z training: Building resilience to misinformation in tomorrow's leaders will take place in Sofia on 27-28 April 2022. The initiative is supported by UNWE. This project initiative aims to:

1. Provide media literacy skills to identify false information on social media;
2. Building skills for using various tools for analyzing media content on political, economic and social topics in order to become active citizens in the digital world;
3. To study the use of memes in social media for disinformation purposes;
4. Study of the media environment and freedom of expression in Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia.

National programmes. State efforts to support adult education and lifelong learning, especially in media education.

At a time when large groups of people remain permanently outside the labor market, taking measures to increase employment and prepare training for retraining and motivating the unemployed is of paramount importance. Trainings are carried out through the Employment Agency (EA) and are organized by the Directorates of the Labor Office. They are financed from the state budget and European funds. The active procedures under the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" (OPHRD), the websites of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) and the Employment Agency and the Labor Offices (BT) are the opportunities for unemployed people to be informed and receive funding. their desire to be trained and retrained in accordance with the needs of the labor market. Some of these trainings are aimed at the media, the

¹³ Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. Faculty of Educational Studies and of the arts. Website: <https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/?lang=en>

work in the digital environment, but it is not specified where and how the media literacy trainings take place. The topic of adult education is also enshrined in the Employment Promotion Act. The activities related to adult education are carried out by the Employment Agency (EA), the Vocational Training Centers and other institutions specified in a law or an act of the Council of Ministers. The essence of adult learning is to assess and recognize the knowledge and competencies of adults acquired through non-formal learning. Employment mediation services offered by the Employment Agency are organized and provided by the directorates "Labor Office"

Employers who wish to receive financial support for adult training can also submit their applications to the labor offices in the country. One of the possibilities for financing is when through it, the Employment Agency stimulates the parallel conduct of theoretical training by a training institution and the acquisition of practical training in a real work environment under the guidance of a mentoring unemployed person to work on the already popular "dual training system". For this purpose, funds from the state budget are provided on a monthly basis for basic wages for each employed unemployed person and his / her mentor, and this continues throughout the training period, but for no more than 36 months. In addition, the costs of training in the profession required for the specific job are borne in full and for each person. The employer has the right to choose the training institution and to agree with it the curriculum and the program for conducting and optimal combination of the learning process and the work activity of the employees for training through work. At the same time, the Employment Agency expects applications from employers who want to hire unemployed people after they have acquired a profession necessary for the specific job.

In this form the training of the unemployed is financed 100% of the state budget, and for the period of training the students receive daily scholarships and means of transport, in case their place of residence is in another settlement. The employer chooses a training organization with which they jointly form the training schedule and conduct the selection of unemployed persons to be trained and subsequently employed for at least 6 months.

Financial support for conducting trainings on key competencies of their employees can also be received by micro, small and medium enterprises, as the support amounts to 50% of the value of the training. In this form, too, employers choose the training organization, curriculum and training schedule. Many Bulgarian companies, including those dealing with media, information technology, digital education and journalism, took advantage of these opportunities, especially during the Covid 19 period.

The website of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training provides public access to useful information regarding continuing vocational training and lifelong learning in the country and in the EU. The main goal of NAVET is to ensure and maintain quality in vocational education and training of young people and adults, adequate to the needs of the labor market and the development of the competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy and expanding access of unemployed and employed to vocational training. The main goal of the Operational Program is to increase the quality of the workforce, which is why it invests in human capital. One of the main investments is in better and more accessible education.

Provisions for adult educators

One of the main reasons a training is not effective is that the attitude of the trainer is not relevant to the trainees. When conducting trainings on adult learners should take into account the specifics of these groups. Adult learners have more life and learning experience, which is of different quality for

different learners. This means that to a large extent they are themselves the richest source of knowledge one for another. In practice, this means that trainers need to use it more widely methods and techniques for group work, individual tasks and learning projects. Adult learners should generally show a higher degree of responsibility and willingness to learn if they realized they needed to do or not learn something that will improve their lives. Their training is problem-oriented, aimed at finding answers to the questions that led them to the course or to the university¹⁴.

In Bulgaria we can distinguish several main groups of trainers, and each group has its own characteristics. The first group includes adult teachers at universities and colleges. These are people with experience, accustomed to working with diverse groups of students with experience and working with disadvantaged learners. The second group is very diverse and includes teachers in non-formal education. There are also no accurate statistics on the number of people dedicated to adult learning and lifelong learning. This includes some of the teachers involved in formal education, who take the time to be lecturers in various programs and projects related to education, professionals with the necessary educational qualifications, who are also part of non-formal education as lecturers, but also as mentors and experts. The third group includes volunteers who have the experience, qualifications, desire and time to be part of an initiative that they consider important. Increasingly, adult education is involving company managers who want to share their experiences with a large group of people, finding room for expression in both formal and non-formal education. They also form the fourth group of trainers.

According to a survey on salaries in higher education institutions, the average salary of employees at universities in Bulgaria is BGN 1,350, the highest is at the Medical University in Sofia, around BGN 2,228. It is interesting to note that assistants in medical universities take more than professors at other universities. Pay inequalities are due to differences in the funding of vocational higher education. Rectors and other senior executives receive significantly higher salaries, this is due to the way salaries are formed in universities - allowances for positions, degrees and titles - which give a great advantage to older lecturers, who take many times more than their young colleagues¹⁵.

After a meeting of the European Commission in 2020, it was reported that efforts to modernize the education and training system continue in Bulgaria, but improving its quality, relevance to the labor market and inclusiveness remains a challenge. Demographic trends and growing skills shortages mean that Bulgaria needs to invest more in qualifying its current and future workforce. The need for training and retraining of the elderly population is great, but participation in adult education is low. As the workforce in the teaching sector ages, there is a shortage of teachers. Almost half of the teachers are over the age of 50 and are therefore likely to reach retirement age within the next 10 years¹⁶.

¹⁴ Ministry of Transport and Information Technology of the Republic of Bulgaria (2015). Handbook for conducting special training developed program for 21 trainers. Sofia. Available at: https://www.mtict.government.bg/upload/docs/2015-11/MTITC_D8_Narachnik_ObuchenieObuchiteli_n.pdf

¹⁵ OffNews (2019). Salaries in our universities vary between BGN 800 and 7,000. Retrieved from: <https://offnews.bg/obshtestvo/zaplatite-v-universitetite-ni-varirat-mezhdu-800-i-7000-leva-706757.html>

¹⁶ News.bg. (2019). The EC reports problems in Bulgarian education. Retrieved from: <https://news.bg/education/ek-otchita-problemi-v-balgarskoto-obrazovanie.html>

Initiatives to support adults' media literacy and lifelong learning

There has been a lot of talk in Bulgaria about educational reform for a long time, various proposals for changes are being made, but the real reforms at this stage are partial. There are a number of analyzes of the situation, accompanied by recommendations for improvement, as well as attempts of active citizens engaged in Bulgarian education in their roles of teachers, consultants and public persons who constantly dialogue for the goals and vision of Bulgarian formal and non-formal education. The main issues in the various public debates are most often the need for innovations in education and the possibility for them to be tested, validated and implemented; participation and partnership with business and, the link between education and professional realization. Alternative methods certainly have a place in teaching and education, but they should not be an end in themselves, according to representatives of independent NGOs. In media education policies, a series of European recommendations relate mainly to teachers and learners related to teaching and the study of media literacy. To the representatives of the non-governmental organizations are given a much smaller role. Here we must note the role of the Ministry of Education in disseminating and creating a number of documents related to the problem, including as an initiator and mediator for organizing various seminars, competitions, project proposals, etc. in the field of media literacy. Within European recommendations on media literacy at government level have been adopted a series of strategies, manuals, presentations etc. The role of media literacy is recognized and promoted mostly by researchers, teachers, employers and independent organizations.

The Media Literacy Coalition brings together organizations in the fields of education, journalism and civic participation, academics and media literacy experts. The Coalition is open to joining all organizations that support the mission and are active in the field of education. The Coalition works to integrate media literacy fully into the educational process and to increase media literacy in society. The aim is to develop critical thinking and creativity, first of all, for children and young people in the digital-media world, but also for all other age groups in Bulgaria¹⁷. Their objectives are:

- Developing digital media literacy from the beginning to the end of the educational process.
- Building partnerships and cooperation with all organizations and institutions relevant to education and media literacy in Bulgaria (ministries, non-governmental organizations, media, etc.).
- Promoting the importance of digital media literacy among different target groups (parents, teachers, media and the general public).

The Bulgarian Center for Safe Internet has been operating since 2005 with the partial financial support of the European programs "Safe Internet" and since 2014 - "Better Internet for Children". It is coordinated by the NGO Applied Research and Communications Foundation in partnership with the Parents Association and the DeConi Advertising Agency. Some of the main activities of the Center include: developing and conducting various trainings for children, young people, parents, teachers and other professionals; development of various materials aimed at raising public awareness of the risks to children when using the Internet, social networks and mobile devices, as well as ways to

¹⁷ Media Literacy Coalition. Webpage. <https://gramoten.li/>

prevent and seek help. The center is a member of the European network of 30 safe Internet centers Insafe, as well as the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE, which unites 42 countries¹⁸.

The Media Democracy Foundation was founded in 2007. Its main goal is to promote the democratic functioning of the media environment in Bulgaria. The mission of the foundation is convinced that transparency and providing a critical perspective on the phenomena in the media sphere are the main prerequisites for the development of democratic publicity. That is why the leading activities of the foundation are aimed at building independent and effective monitoring of the Bulgarian media environment; diagnosing key issues of publicity and initiating public debates; promotion of civil actions in cooperation with Bulgarian and foreign institutions in the media sphere; stimulating the self-criticism of the Bulgarian media¹⁹.

AKRO is a training organization working throughout Bulgaria and internationally. TEACHING THROUGH MEDIA LITERACY project aim to impose media literacy training and through media literacy in the formal education system in Bulgaria through training of university professors, teachers and media literacy experts. The project is implemented with the financial support of the US Embassy in Bulgaria. MEDIA LITERACY AND 21 CENTURY SKILLS project has the main objective of the project is to promote and foster media literacy education in Bulgaria in both formal and non-formal educational institutions. A media literacy training course will be designed based on the MediaLit Kit™ developed by the Center for Media Literacy (CML), USA²⁰.

Project "Get your facts straight!": Media literacy in the family. Bulgaria Foundation participates in the implementation of a project for media literacy in the family - "Get your facts straight!". The project is funded by the Media Literacy for All Program, co-financed by the European Commission. The broad partnership includes 9 organizations from 8 countries: 2 European networks focused on digital competences and media literacy and 7 national training organizations, key media literacy stakeholders with experience and ability to achieve a systemic impact through their activities²¹.

The learning platform „**Ucha se**” is very popular in Bulgaria. It publishes video lessons for children on the study material for the year, various manuals, tips for parents, tests and fully adapted content to help students and parents. They themselves have publications on media literacy, and the information reaches a huge number of users - both children and adults²².

¹⁸ The Bulgarian Center for Safe Internet. Webpage: <https://www.safenet.bg>

¹⁹ The Media Democracy Foundation. Webpage: <http://www.fmd.bg>

²⁰ AKRO. Webpage: <https://akroassociation.org>

²¹ Global Libraries. Webpage: <https://www.lib.bg>

²² Ucha.se. Webpage: <https://ucha.se>

Interviews results

The interviewees are from different professional fields and different fields of work. For this reason, it provides a broader view of the problem area under consideration and allows the scope of the study to be expanded.

About the common misconceptions one of the main factors is the underestimation of the capabilities of adult learners. Also, that education must be acquired at a certain stage of life. That they cannot perceive information objectively and are easily misled. This is often due to problems with the perception of one of the senses. In many cases, however, older learners show much more ability than other learners.

The most common learning problems are related to difficulties in dealing with information flows and problems in handling information depending on the disease. Another interesting problem is related to helpers and caregivers of disadvantaged people. In other cases, however, depending on the experience and preparation, adult learners are confident and capable.

The main problems are related to concentration depending on various diseases. On the other hand, there are economic problems that limit access to different media environments. Effective absorption of matter is also a problem. As in other areas, extracting the essence from the content is a problem. The problems related to the trainers are the time and effort they have to devote to specialized training. This is in many cases due to the lack of specialized training to work with people with special needs.

Disadvantaged people need monitoring to use the media safely. This is due to various forms of dentistry that make it difficult to perceive. There are difficulties with the use of applications or online materials, and hardware that require specifications for the respective needs of use. Access is relatively easy, but content filtering control is required due to problems distinguishing between reality and media content.

The pandemic has the same effect on a large part of society in the field of accelerated digitalization of education. This necessitated the acquisition of additional skills for both learners and trainers. On the other hand, the pandemic has contributed to the development of critical thinking and the ability to filter information.

Most of the training that the trainers received was personal. In some cases alone or on the basis of good practices and foreign experience.

Specific training with specialized software - applications and applications, as well as training platforms and specialized hardware - would be appropriate. Specialized training for content filtering. Also introduction of specialized methodology in training. Such training will help to overcome specific diseases.

National report: Spain

Researchers: MARTA MUÑOZ and GONZALO

Desk research results

Political Framework

Crucial to the system of education in Spain is that educational powers have been decentralized and transferred to the governments of the different Autonomous Communities or Regions. Their duties include the development and the application of the respective regulations with regard to adult education. Therefore, Spanish general statutes on education are composed by framework laws, establishing general principles which each Autonomous Community has to develop, according to specific local needs.

Media education in Spain has never received a public acknowledgment according to its importance within our time's society. While the presence of media education in the curricula of European countries was growing during the 1970's, Spanish scholars refused to grant this topic a priority attention. Alternatively, they let the task of raising awareness about the need to develop a critical and creative media education system in hands of other professional groups, like journalists or teachers.

By that time, the increasing interest towards media productions –mainly audio-visual– was faced from two different poles: on the one hand, an education exclusively focused on technology and, on the other hand, an education placing critical media analysis and creativity at the forefront of their claims and pedagogical practices.

The more conservative approach of educational technology, represented by pioneering associations focused on the role of technological devices, were in favor of an instrumental use of media, while the other approach was in favor of stimulating the students' creativity fostering a critical attitude towards media. Some of these experiences were encouraged by two of the more salient initiatives of Pedagogical Reform in Spain: Acción Educativa, based in Madrid, and Rosa Sensat, located at Barcelona.

However, the educational model has changed during the last years, slowly moving towards the promotion of participatory culture and civic media literacy. Nowadays, current Spanish school curricula integrate information and digital skills at all levels. Even it takes into account the views of the European regulatory framework; the role of media literacy promotion is still limited to the achievement of the general objectives foreach educational level.

Consequently, Spanish school curricula do not contain specific courses focused on this topic of growing importance and the implementation of media literacy has largely depended on the capacity and willingness of individual teachers. In fact, it has often been the case that the pressure to complete the mandatory school curricula discourages many teachers from devoting class time to media literacy content.

Today, after several decades of international recognition and support, adult education continues to be a subject of special relevance and topicality for Spanish society. The concept of Lifelong Learning appears in the education laws; however, its implementation is not developed in the same way. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the normative development, since it will help us to develop policies that improve the coverage of this educational sector

To sum it up, one can claim that relevant legislation on the Spanish education system does cover the acquisition of digital competences. However, the current framework does not regard as mandatory the implementation of courses on media literacy, as it has been recommended by the European Parliament. As explained above, the current educational framework in Spain regards media education as a subsidiary, transversal subject that plays a supporting role in the achievement of the core contents of the school curriculum²³.

In short, adult education is being developed in parallel with the official education systems, which leads to a loss of quality and of the normative officiality of the initiatives carried out in this area. From an educational point of view, it is crucial to address this need for improvement and to provide educational processes that are adapted to the demand of individuals and groups within a society in which continuous training is increasingly in demand.

Since the 1990s, a wide array of Masters programs has placed the relation between communication and education at their forefront, so they are dealing in one way or another with main axis and specific modules devoted to this field of knowledge and practice. Consequently, one can find presence of educommunication courses or, more precisely, about media competences' education in various universities, like Autònoma de Barcelona, Complutense de Madrid, Huelva, UNED, Oviedo, Valladolid, Carlos III, Rey Juan Carlos...²⁴

In this subject, the trajectory of both the main open university in Spain (UNED) in the field of teachers' education in digital competences and media, led by Roberto Aparici and Sara Osuna, and the organization of numerous courses and workshops by the CEP about teaching audio-visual media and digital technologies should be highlighted.

Provisions for adult learners

Tertiary education attainment among 30-34-year-olds (41.2%) exceeds the EU average. However, differences in attainment remain, for example, by gender (47.5% among women compared to only 34.8% among men) or place of birth (45.2% among Spanish-born compared to 25.1% for non-EUborn). Tertiary graduates face difficulties finding adequate jobs, and both over- and under-qualification are widespread. The share of tertiary graduates employed in jobs that do not require higher education was 39.7% in 2016 (compared to the EU average of 23.5%). Across the Spanish workforce, some 25% of workers were over-skilled in both literacy and numeracy in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills, compared to the OECD average of 16.4%. Under-skilling was also widespread, ranging from 15% of workers in numeracy to 17% in literacy competencies (the OECD average was 9% in both areas). At the same time, low-skilled workers also face significant difficulties in accessing the labour market²⁵.

²³ Espigado, G., y Cabrera, B. (2016). Las leyes educativas de la democracia en España a examen (1980 – 2013). Historia y Memoria de la Educación, (3), P. 7-14.

²⁴ ANR TRANSLIT and COST (2014). "Transforming Audiences/Transforming Societies. Media and Information Literacy Policies in Spain". UNIVERSITY OF MURCIA AND VALLADOLID.

²⁵ Cedefop ReferNet Spain (2017), *Common digital competence framework for teachers*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/spain-common-digital-competence-framework-teachers>

The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Spain is among the highest in the OECD, and NEET rates are significant as well. The main reason for the persisting large share of poorly qualified youth is that the early school-leaving rate from secondary education remains too high. Despite recent improvements, the OECD has identified persistently high rates of early school leaving (18.3% in 2017). This has implications for skills, employment outcomes, and the efficiency of education spending. The proportion of tertiary graduates employed in jobs that do not require this type of qualification has been consistently higher than most of the rest of Europe over the past decade, indicating that this is a structural problem²⁶.

Profound imbalances in access to digital education and training remain. Adult participation in learning activities slightly improved from 10.5% in 2018 to 10.6% in 2019 (EU average 10.8%). In 2019, 43% of people aged 16-74 lacked basic digital skills (EU average 42%) (European Commission, 2020b). The main challenges for digital education are to provide adults with devices and quality internet access and to improve teacher training for the digital education of adults.

Numerous measures have been taken to support the continuation of education online during the COVID-19 crisis. The Centre for Innovation and Development of Distance Education (CIDEAD) was active in providing distance adult education. ‘Aula Mentor’ provides a non-formal, flexible online training programme for adult learners to develop personal and professional competences via a catalogue of courses which includes web design, environmental issues, culture, health, etc²⁷.

Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning

Identification of the most significant media literacy projects that had been delivered in Spain since 2010. They were also asked to select the most appropriate category for project type for each of these ‘featured’ projects, the sectors responsible for the projects, the type of media literacy skills that were addressed in the project, and the reason the project was significant.

Some of the selected media literacy projects could fit into more than one category (for example, Resources and Research). In some cases, this may have affected the numbers of certain project types being represented. Almost half of the projects were categorized as ‘Resources’. The next most common category of projects is ‘End-user engagement’, projects, while ‘Research’, ‘Networking Platforms’, ‘Campaigns’, and ‘Policy Development’ each account for one project.

The sectors involved in the ‘featured’ media literacy projects from the following list of categories: Academia; Audiovisual content provider; Public authorities; Media regulatory authorities; Online platforms; Civil society; Cross-sector collaboration.

Networks operate on a national and are: As some networks operate on a project-by-project basis, or media literacy is only a part of the remit of the network, this information is intended to be indicative, rather than exhaustive.

- Cinema Hall (Junta Andalucía)²⁸;

²⁶ Cedefop ReferNet Spain (2019), *New measures to support quality vocational training for jobs*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/spain-new-measures-support-quality-vocational-training-jobs>

²⁷ Cedefop ReferNet Spain (2020a), *Promotion of training in digital skills for workers*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/spain-promotion-training-digital-skills-workers>

²⁸ Cinema Hall. Webpage: juntadeandalucia.es/culturaydeporte/auladecine/

- The Magic Lantern²⁹;
- The Association of Ibero-American Educational and Cultural Television (ATEI)³⁰;
- The Atresmedia Foundation³¹
- Alfamed Network, international scientific forums; and with colleagues from other countries, from the Université de la Sorbonne; from the Universidade do Braga; from the University of Krems in Vienna. Among others, in international congresses, for several editions.³²

Summaries of the five most significant projects in Spain

Observatory for News Innovation in the Digital Society - Oi2

The purpose of the Oi2 project is to observe the narrative information in the digital society and analyse the possible social, business, industrial and economic implications of any changes, and identify potential opportunities for new innovative business models in the sector. RTVE, the Spanish public television, promotes the adaptation of this evolution serving as a meeting point with other actors who are promoting innovation in news formats: universities, business schools, and technology companies, amongst others. Oi2 translates these reflections to society and allows them to visualize RTVE as an actor and a leader in innovation.

Emedus Project,

The EMEDUS project is an extensive review and a deep bibliographical analysis of three major lines related media literacy across Europe. Firstly, an analysis was made of the inclusion and presence of curricular media literacy in the curricula of 27 countries of the European Union (EU). The study also analysed educational initiatives in the formal and informal sector, and groups at risk of exclusion. The analysis was carried out by the Office of Education and Communication of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) 11. It describes the results achieved in the field of formal education and the relationship of media literacy with formal European education systems and specifically in this case in the Spanish one. This analysis includes a descriptive comparison about the way media literacy has been included in the national curriculum, a reflection on the skills of teachers in relation to their training in education media, as well as a brief reference to the identification of tools for measuring the media skills of students.

Chaval

Since 2002 chaval.es has been developing relevant work in the media literacy field, encouraging safe practices amongst children. The aim of the project is to alert parents, educators and children about the risks of new technologies. It also aims to educate and train children about the correct use of new technologies and present them with new challenges and contents. The project is designed to encourage children to ask for advice from parents and educators when they face a problem or anomaly regarding content in their use of new technologies and promote the communication between themselves and parents and teachers on this subject. The difference between virtual reality and reality is also explored. This project is carried out by Red.es, which is the statutory institution

²⁹ The Magic Lantern. Webpage: - magic-lantern.org

³⁰ ATEI. Webpage: - magic-lantern.org

³¹ Atresmedia Foundation. Webpage: antena3.com/fundacion/

³² CICID. <https://cicid.es/>

entrusted to implement the digital agenda in Spain and is part of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism (MINETUR)

TVE Defence of the Viewer

This project was launched to address all the comments and questions of viewers of public service television. In addition to providing responses to comments and questions from the viewers the project also provides interviews answering viewer's questions on issues of particular interest to the audience. Videos are created to explain how television programmes are made, looking at the production and editorial processes.

Digital Citizenship - iCmedia Digital Citizenship 2020 is an initiative from iCmedia whereby training sessions, taught by experts on digital content and tools for the new digital citizenship are offered to parents, teachers and children with a view to: Facilitating the informed use and consumption of audiovisual content, appropriate to the needs of each group; Reducing the "digital gap" separating parents and children; Contributing to the empowerment of citizens. Since 2012, iCmedia promotes a training program for parents, educators and families aimed at increasing user information audiovisual content and thereby the protection of children as final consumer.

Platform E-learning project³³.

ECO Digital Learning project, based on Open Educational Resources (OER) with free access to a list of MOOCs (Open Online Massive Courses) in 6 different languages, with the aim of expanding access to education and improving the quality and profitability of teaching and learning. The purpose of some of them is the application to media education.

Interviews results

The interviewees' perception about media literacy is that it is totally necessary, and more so at this time where digitalization has gained a majority importance and most of our adults have surely not received the necessary training to face these new realities.

In addition, they must always consider lifelong learning and the opportunity for professional retraining for many people in adulthood who are looking for a new job. They feel that Media education is not necessary, it is not sufficiently enhanced by public policies. Much more preponderance should be given, given that we are in an era of information pollution and disinformation.

Furthermore, within the field of adult education there are many prejudices since most people who go to adult schools do so with first scarcity of information since there is no information on the subject is a non-taboo but almost taboo subject because very little is said about it and people have very little information about it, then people who approach adult schools come with fears, with preconceived ideas that are not true and that does not favor our education at all.

³³ ECO Digital E-Learning Project. Available at: <https://eco-learning.eu/?lang=es>

As for the foreign staff who approach the schools, many also have prejudices and it is difficult for them to enter, it is difficult for them to approach, they find it difficult to ask for information then their own religion or the rules of their culture also prevent them from accessing and the fact that they are connected to us in the school that hinders the process and makes it difficult and long.

The **challenges** are surely having grown up in an era where not only was it not necessary but there were almost no technologies. A large gap has been generated that hinders in the first place the desire of adults to train in this type of media literacy and secondly also makes it technically more difficult.

Other challenges are to apply the framework of the competence dimensions set by the European Union in DigCom, where indicators and fields are applied, not only instrumental or technological, but also ethical and protection against harmful content.

The main difficulty is their level of media literacy in terms of use and management of tools.

Another of the most important challenges they see would be to attract the largest number of people for this we have to do a great job of publicizing our work and our work, that is, a recognition of the work of adult educators because as I have already commented previously there is a shortage and lack of information on the subject.

As for the problems that they also see of the literacy of adults in these times they would say that the main problem is the digital age or the new technologies in which we are immersed is worth that is because it is an obstacle for the generation of adult schools generating fears shame frustrations that prevents many people from going and showing rejection to schools for not being able to face that fear.

The **profile** are teachers working in primary or secondary education. AN age range between 25 and 55 years. The main difficulty in this group is the lack of time to learn in a deep way. The trainings usually fit in the few free times they have and the predisposition at first is not usually the best since the stress and anxiety for the daily work pending is latent, something that does not facilitate being open to training and its need. It is difficult for them to see the benefit in the medium and long term, since in the short term the emergencies are other.

Another profile are adult students (over 25 or 40, within 10% of my classes) and 90% over 20 years, are usually people who study second careers, in the first case and that is their first degree, in the second.

Older people tend to have an interest in media literacy, requiring more time than their peers. But what has been demonstrated, over the years, is that those who are "digital immigrants" do not have to have fewer skills, Prensky's concept has been overcome, some older people are wiser in an integral sense in the management of equipment and in the rest of the skills that are required for an optimal management of the TRIC (Relationship Technologies, Information and Communication).

In other schools the profile of students we have is mostly women and between 55 and 80 years the fact that we do not have men in school or just men is an aspect that we have not yet studied and of which we do not have much information but it is a curious fact and there I leave it, the factors that influence that these people can achieve the proposed objectives are mostly economic factors since they do not have access to these devices or new technologies and that influences the teaching process.

The **main difficulty** they don't think is the ability to communicate, but the way in which to communicate. How to use these new technologies to be able to express oneself is usually the main problem to do so in an effective way, and to be aware of new forms of communication that are emerging such as Discord, Twitch or similar.

As has been demonstrated in various investigations in which they have participated on digital competences, the dimensions in which they have more difficulty are those related to aesthetics and languages. Therefore, the main skills they must develop are precisely those related to production, without forgetting safety. The main problems that adults have to face the media would be the lack of self-confidence, the lack of awareness on the part of the importance that the media can have and the low self-esteem faced by people who usually go to adult schools because such profiles, that other years we have analyzed we have realized that they came with low self-esteem and with little interest in the proposed activities.

Of course, if the whole issue of **the pandemic** has harmed all people to gain in more distrust, more insecurity, lower self-esteem and that now falls to us teachers a more laborious job of trying to overcome this situation, which is already being developed through an emotional education plan that is being worked on in the center to try to put a solution and help people to change aspects of your life and be able to face situations in a different way and have another point of view.

The pandemic has further accelerated the need to use these new technologies on the one hand and on the other has widened the digital divide since the acceleration in the inclusion of these technologies has been faster than the time it takes to be prepared and trained to use them. On the other hand, it has become clear how necessary they can be and has also been a revulsive or incentive for those adults who did not want to take the step to train and finally have done so. Indeed, the lockdown entailed the requirement of needing to have skills to be able to relate to the rest of the people, as a window to the world. Many adults had to learn against the clock to manage tools and resources to be able to connect with their families and for work and leisure uses.

Some **trainings** were received as; a preparatory and skillful master's degree to do a doctorate, which has allowed me to know and deepen the way in which academic research occurs and finally communicates. There is little interest in the work of adult schools since we are not provided with courses, workshops, seminars. Then they would like the situation to change and that we will also be told the opportunity to train and learn more to be in continuous educational progress in order to give the best to our students.

The respondents agreed in the need of reaching new people into media education trainings. Also, the use of the materials that it was prepared from the ECO Digital Learning project, based on Open Educational Resources (OER) with free access to a list of MOOCs (Open Online Massive Courses) in 6 different languages, with the aim of expanding access to education and improving the quality and profitability of teaching and learning. The purpose of some of them is the application to media education. Available at: <https://eco-learning.eu/?lang=es>.

It is interesting to work on issues in the face of social communication that people learn to relate, learn to express their feelings, can learn to be able to transmit what they want to convey in each situation in which they find themselves, then also acquire skills for work, social skills, relate to others, how to face a job interview, it would be interesting if there was information about it to be able to give them to our students these tools.

National report: Italy

Researchers: FABIOLLA PORCELLI and AINHOA GANDARIASBEITIA

Desk research results

Political Framework

According to the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), lifelong learning consists of 'any activity undertaken by persons in a formal, non-formal, informal way, at different stages of life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within a personal, civic, social and employment-related perspective' (Law 92 of 28.06.2012, article 4, paragraph 51). In line with what has been established by the European Council, "Adult learning is an essential element of the lifelong learning cycle..." (European Council Resolution 2011/c 372/01 published in the OJEC of 20 December 2011).

Adult education is promoted by the CPIAs - Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti (translated into Provincial Centers for the Education of Adults) established by Presidential Decree 263 of 29 October 2012. They constitute a type of autonomous educational institution with its own staff and a specific teaching and organizational structure. CPIAs are divided into "territorial service networks" structured on three levels:

Level A) Administrative Unit. It is a service provided by the regions which consists of a series of offices where first-level courses and courses in literacy and Italian language learning are carried out.

Level B) Teaching Unit. It refers to the second-level school institutions that deliver second-level adult education courses, identified by the regions.

Level C) Training Unit. It refers to an extension of the training offer by stipulating agreements with local authorities and other public and private entities, with particular reference to training facilities accredited by the Regions; these are initiatives to enhance citizenship skills and thus the employability of the population.

Adult learning is a decisive factor for Europe's economy and society. Therefore, the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR) collaborates on initiatives and projects to develop adult learning and has developed tools to promote the linguistic and social integration of foreign adults.

Each year it also provides guidance on how to enroll in adult education courses. National system measures guide the updating of all the staff of the Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA). Italian and foreign adults who want to obtain a qualification can enroll in first and second level adult education courses. Foreign adults who want to obtain a certificate attesting to their knowledge of the Italian language at least at A2 level can enroll in literacy and Italian language learning courses³⁴.

³⁴ Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (MIUR) (n.d.). *Istruzione degli adulti*. <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/istruzione-degli-adulti>

In order to encourage and support the implementation of territorial networks for lifelong learning, the MIUR has promoted the National Plan for "Guaranteeing the competences of the adult population", shared in the "Interinstitutional Table on Lifelong Learning". It aims at defining the necessary devices for the production of the Individual Training Pact; designing the system measures necessary for the connection between the first-level and second-level pathways; and carrying out research, experimentation and development activities and measures to broaden the training offer.

Digital gap in numbers

According to the last report from Istat (2019) "Citizens and ICT", there is an existing gap on the use of digital resources which is based on different generational and cultural factors. There is still a large digital divide among households, mainly due to generational and cultural factors.

Almost all households with at least one minor have a broadband connection (95.1%); among households composed exclusively of people over 65, the figure drops to 34.0%. Indeed, while almost all 15–24-year-olds surf the Net (over 90%), among 55–59-year-olds the share of Internet users drops to 72.4% and reaches 41.9% among 65–74-year-old³⁵.

Another discriminating factor is educational qualification: 82.9% of those with a high school diploma surf the web, compared with 51.9% of those with no more than a secondary school diploma. More than one in two households do not have Internet because they do not know how to use it, identifying lack of skills as the main reason (56.4%)³⁴.

The most popular activities on the web are those related to the use of communication services that allow you to get in touch with several people at the same time. Also widespread is the use of the web to read information and news (57.0%), to download images, films, music and/or games (including gaming) (47.3%) and for banking services (46.4%). More than half of Internet users aged 14 years and over bought online (57.2%, or 20 million 403 thousand people)³⁴.

The Italian Digital Agency (Agenzia per l'Italia Digitale, AgID) is the technical agency of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers whose task is to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the Italian Digital Agenda and to contribute to the spread of the use of information and communication technologies, promoting innovation and economic growth. It supports digital innovation and promotes the dissemination of digital skills, also in collaboration with international, national and local institutions and bodies.

Provisions for adult learners

According to the OECD³⁶, in Italy the number of annual hours of participation of adults without an upper secondary education in formal and/or non-formal education and training is comparatively low to other European countries (60 %, rank 20/24, 2016). More than a quarter of the adult population

³⁵ Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT). (2019, 18 December). *Cittadini e ICT* (Press Release). <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/236920>

³⁶ OECD (2019, a). *Skills matter: Additional Results from the Survey of Adults Skills*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1f029d8f-en>

(aged 16-65) report having no previous experience with computers or very basic computer skills (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC, 2012).

New technologies are changing jobs and skill needs, both in Italy and in the rest of Europe. On the one hand, these new technologies may free workers to perform more productive and less routine jobs, but on the other hand, they are likely to change many of the existing jobs and the skills needed to perform them. Indeed, recent research suggests that 15.2% of jobs in Italy are at high risk of automation, meaning that many individuals will need to reskill to cope with change³⁷.

While Italy has made major progress in the past decade to up-skill its population and workers, further efforts are needed to improve access to good quality adult learning opportunities. Training Funds (i.e. fondi paritetici interprofessionali per la formazione continua) represent one important tool through which Italy could face the pressures brought about by the mega-trends, and equip adults and workers with the skills needed to thrive in the labor market and society³⁶.

In Italy - like in other countries - the vulnerable employees (e.g. the low-skilled; older workers) generally benefit less from training opportunities. Looking at socio-demographic characteristics, older people, women, lower-skilled and low-wage workers in Italy are less likely to take part in adult learning. For instance, only 8.3% of older people (55 and over) participate in training compared to 23.9% of the prime age population (25-54). Also, the unemployed, the long-term unemployed, temporary workers, and workers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are less likely to take part in adult learning³⁶.

According to the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), many adults (around 67%) in Italy are not willing to train. This might be because they are not aware of the need for training and are not convinced of its effectiveness on career progression opportunities. Other obstacles preventing adult learners from participating in life-long learning are: family responsibilities, cost of training, lack of time, lack of employer's support and lack of prerequisites³⁶.

Adult learners and Covid-19 pandemic

In Italy, a short survey was conducted of school leaders responsible for the training provision for adults, managed and coordinated by the MIUR - Ministry of Education (offering training to approximately 260,000 learners). The survey examined how teaching activities were reorganized during the COVID-19 crisis. The survey showed that distance learning covered all educational pathways offered but for learners without devices or connections, alternative materials were only in place in 72% of cases; and no specific materials were prepared for students with disabilities in about 24% of the cases that would have required it. It is concluded that generally, adult learning providers have been disrupted, but have found ways to continue their training online³⁸.

³⁷ OECD (2019,b). "The context: why is adult learning important in Italy?" in *Adult Training in Italy. What role for Training Funds?*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311978-en>

³⁸ European Commission (2020). *Adult Learning and COVID-19: challenges and opportunities*. A report from the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning. European Union, Brussels. Retrieved from: <https://inapp.org/sites/default/files/Rapporto%20Adult%20Learning%20and%20COVID%2019%20challenges%20and%20opportunities.pdf>

A key challenge is the issue of equal access to learning opportunities. The shift to online delivery has caused difficulties for adult learners from specific vulnerable groups. Learners lacking digital competences, and/or ICT tools, as well as those that face health-related challenges cannot always find and access adult learning activities online.

In Italy, adult prison education faces many difficulties in providing distance education particularly because internet access is prohibited for this group of adult learners. In 20% of cases, it was not possible to produce specific activities or materials to make up for this. As a solution, the vast majority of teachers adopted video-recorded materials or expressly commissioned TV channels to air educational classes³⁹.

Provisions for adult educators

Adult learning providers have also faced challenges linked to the online training capacities of staff and providers. In Italy, the COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that it is necessary to invest heavily in the skills of teachers, in terms of digital skills, upskilling on specific teaching methodologies, and on the way in which adapting educational materials can be planned and implemented³⁸.

With regard to the educational and professional profile of staff working in adult education, one can say that we are dealing with a very heterogeneous group. In programmes aimed at degree attainment, the teachers come from the education system and thus the information on teachers' continuing professional development applies to them. In programmes for the development of basic skills and socio-cultural competences, external experts are often employed and involved depending on the type of course being considered. It is therefore not possible to provide information on their continuing professional development, given their heterogeneous backgrounds.

The reform of adult education (Presidential Decree 263/2012) stipulated that the transition to the new system should be accompanied by national initiatives to update the staff of CPIAs (Provincial Centres for Adult Education). The Activity Plan for Innovation in Adult Education (Paideia), which started in 2014, has as its strategic objective in its first edition that of consolidating and updating the staff skills required at the various levels, with the aim of supporting and encouraging the implementation of the new organizational and didactic structures applied with the birth of the CPIAs. The Plan's implementing bodies are - in addition to Indire and Invalsi - the Regional School Offices⁴⁰.

AIF – Associazione Italiana Formatori⁴¹

AIF is a non-profit organization, founded in 1975, to which more than 2,000 consultants and company managers throughout Italy, professionals in the field of training, organizational strategies and learning and development processes of the Individual, belong.

³⁹ European Commission (2020). *Adult Learning and COVID-19: challenges and opportunities*. A report from the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning. European Union, Brussels. Retrieved from: <https://inapp.org/sites/default/files/Rapporto%20Adult%20Learning%20and%20COVID%2019%20challenges%20and%20opportunities.pdf>

⁴⁰ Eurydice (2022). Italia: Sviluppo professionale continuo degli insegnanti e dei formatori dell'educazione degli adulti. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/continuing-professional-development-teachers-and-trainers-working-adult-education-and-33_it

⁴¹ AIF. Webpage: <https://associazioneitalianaformatori.it/aif-associazione-italiana-formatori/>

The association collaborates with other organizations across the country to offer support and training opportunities for educators.

Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning

CRCItalia: Coalizione per le Competenze Digitali⁴²

The Coalition for Digital Skills is based on the collaboration of national and local public institutions, professional communities, non-profit organizations, employer and trade union associations and other private actors and is framed within the framework of the 'Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs'.

Also, through the contribution of the Italian Digital Champion, the Coalition promotes and enhances the activities and projects carried out by the various components, with a view to collaboration and sharing.

MED – Associazione Italiana Media Education⁴³

The MED, founded in 1996 by a group of university lecturers, media professionals, teachers and educators, deals with training and research in the field of Media Education.

As stated in Article 2 of our Statute, the MED is inspired by the values of the person, dialogue and solidarity, and privileges the strategies of education and training, proposing the following aims (among others):

- to work to connect those who are sensitive to the problem of media education for young people and adults, as well as those who are committed to a new quality of communication, respectful of the dignity of the person and open to solidarity
- to promote the training and updating of media educators and animators of communication and culture
- to promote the study of communication and the media in an educational function; the experimentation of media education curricula in schools; the design and testing of media education methods in families and communities

ISFOL – Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori.⁴⁴

ISFOL is a public research body supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. ISFOL conducts scientific research on the topics of vocational training, labour and social policies; it provides technical and scientific support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and operates in support of the State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces, local authorities, national public and private institutions.

In the context of adult education and lifelong learning, ISFOL contributes with the development of a series of activities such as the monitoring of lifelong learning policies; surveys on the training

⁴² Official webpage:

<http://www.crcitalia.it/content/coalizione#:~:text=La%20Coalizione%20per%20le%20competenze,Grand%20coalition%20for%20Digital%20Jobs%E2%80%9D>.

⁴³ MED. Webage: <https://www.medmediaeducation.it/chi-siamo/>

⁴⁴ ISFOL. Webage: https://www.isfol.it/temi/Formazione_apprendimento/formazione-degli-adulti

behavior of workers and enterprises; the management of the permanent monitoring system of training activities financed by Interprofessional Funds; policies for the participation of adults in lifelong learning.

FMD – Fondazione Mondo Digitale⁴⁵

Fondazione Mondo Digitale (FMD) is a private-law, non-profit legal entity based in Rome, working towards an inclusive knowledge society by blending innovation, education, inclusion and fundamental values. Its mission is to promote social learning, social innovation and e-inclusion with special attention to categories at risk of social exclusion.

FMD promotes innovation in training and education through the use of new technology and project-based methodologies, including inter-generational and peer learning, and develops its interventions in different sectors: ICT for accessibility, students with special needs, inclusive active ageing, equal gender opportunities, integration of immigrants and refugees, 21st century education, volunteerism, global education and e-inclusion.

Interviews results

In Italy **Petit Pas** interviewed a variety of experts working in the field of adult education and media education - local adult associations, non-governmental organizations, educators and volunteers. Most of the interviewees have been working with disadvantaged adults for more than three years so that they can bring the MECO project the voice of experience.

The first topic addressed during the interviews regarded the **common misconceptions** about adult education. The respondents agreed on the fact that we tend to assume that adults are too old to learn, especially in digital areas and that they are not interested in taking training courses. It has become clear during the interviews, however, that professionals working in the field think that the key for adult learnings to be successful is to find how to motivate adults into the training. Moreover, one of the respondents claims that adult learners are even more committed to the learning process than anyone because they have identified education as an opportunity to improve their professional life and are therefore engaged and motivated.

Therefore, when talking about **challenges** in adult education, the need to break with the misconception that an adult cannot be a learner because his or her development is complete stands out. The concept of lifelong learning must be promoted. Unemployed adults, in particular low-skilled adults, do not always understand the importance of training and they are often discouraged and inactive. It is difficult to reach them to make them understand that they need to update their skills and their personal and professional profile, especially because they tend to state that they lack time for training, even when they are unemployed. Likewise, when it comes to the digital, one interviewee stated that if the adult has the ability to use technological gadgets, he or she does not always understand the need of learning how to access, manage and critically use the digital content. As

⁴⁵ FMD. Webpage: <https://all-digital.org/digital-world-foundation/>

educators, they agree on the importance of not taking trivials for granted because sometimes adult learners lack even the most basic knowledge on the topic.

One of the interviewees works with adults with severe motor disabilities and she stated that in this case, the main obstacles are the lack of autonomy and independence of the users which prevents successful adult training.

Regarding the **profile of adult learners**, in general the respondents work with unqualified or poorly qualified adults that aim to improve their working condition, which in many cases is long-term unemployment. Thus, they have very specific expectations from learning activities and are likely to drop out of learning if these expectations are not met. Also, a couple of respondents stated that they work with seniors, pensioners, and although they do not search for better job opportunities they do have goals. So, in all cases the main obstacle is the idea of not succeeding.

From the interviews conducted, it can be concluded that the main difficulties in relation to the use of **media** are technical but the main skill which has to be improved is awareness. It has been mentioned that the senior learners need to develop technical abilities that enable them to improve their everyday activities by changing their current lack of practicality and mental flexibility. By clicking on online advertisements, downloading content, installing apps or just consuming and sharing news online, adult users are constantly at risk. Awareness has been identified as the main skill to be improved. Respondents have stated that “adults need to be supported so that they can develop critical and responsible thinking about the media. In addition, media education can support processes related to distance learning and thus could extend the possibility of training to more adults, compatibility with their work commitments.”

The Covid-19 effect. All interviewees stated with one voice that **the pandemic** has accelerated a process of digitisation, forcing users to improve their digital skills quickly in order to be able to participate in society. Therefore, one of the interviewees highlighted “the importance of a systematic approach to developing media literacy, the importance of collaboration between online platforms, experts and competent authorities, the importance of educating oneself and being aware of the choices one makes on the web.”

The experts involved in the interviews have participated in different **training** in the last few years, including computer training, master degrees, conferences and seminars. Also, books and podcasts were mentioned as learning providers. However, none of them asserted to have taken specific courses or participated in learning experiences regarding media education. As a response, “continuous training courses would be helpful”. Other respondents stated “I would like to find a simple and effective way to teach adults the skills needed to critically read and interpret news on the web, and the importance of protecting their social media profiles” and “I would need to train on specific topics, in a simple way, to be able to pass on this knowledge to my students”.

Finally, interviewees talked about their work and support networks. Some reported having contact with other educators and professionals with whom to share experiences, both locally and online. However, in general, none claimed to have a structured network or good practice to follow as an example in the field of adult media education.

National report: Netherlands

Researchers: LIDIA DIMITROVA and TANYA SLAVCHEVA

Desk research results

Political Framework

Since 1 August 1986, all forms of training and basic education in the Netherlands have been brought under the umbrella term "adult education". In 1996 the institutions were separated from the municipalities and welfare institutions, to be clustered in Regional Training Centers (ROCs). The ROCs are until present are responsible for adult education. Due to the government differences in structure, financing, objectives, didactics, regulation of attainment targets and examinations, there are few interfaces between adult education and vocational education within the ROCs.

The Dutch Government has a number of policies related to different types of (generic) adult education. There are opportunities for instance, related to private, non-subsidised, secondary general adult education (VAVO), for higher education at the central register of higher education programs (CROHO) and for senior secondary vocational education at the central register of vocational training (CREBO). There are also other initiatives by private and public foundations and organisations, such as the higher education for the elderly (HOVO). This initiative created and managed by a local foundation partnered with various institutions from across the Netherlands and is offering a variety of study opportunities, lecture series and courses in the fields of art, culture, history, technology, philosophy, literature, law and social sciences.

Educational institutions for vocational education and adult education receive 1 amount for personnel and materials: the lump sum. Vocational education schools also receive extra budget for quality agreements, such as the professionalization of teachers and school leaders. The government determines the lump sum for secondary vocational education (MBO) and adult education. The board of the institution itself determines how it spends this money. In this way, institutions can better tailor their policy and education to the situation of the school. For example, on the number of students and the need for materials. There are also opportunities for public funding for adult educational institutions for regional training centers (ROCs), vocational schools and agricultural training centres (AOCS).

Schools in adult education are themselves responsible for the quality of education. Education at a VAVO school is usually small-scale. Lessons are taught in small classes, allowing time and opportunity for personal attention. Naturally, there is a mature atmosphere and a certain degree of independence is expected. This also means that the learner is held accountable for his/her own responsibility. There are also numerous support options through mentorship or more specialized channels.⁴⁶

The VAVO is the successor of the former day and evening schools for secondary education. The VAVO ensures that people can still obtain a diploma or partial certificate of a theoretical learning path. Via the Rutte route (named after Mark Rutte who, as Secretary of State, has instituted this scheme) 16

⁴⁶ Vavo Scholen. Retrieved from: <https://www.vavoscholen.nl/w/>

and 17-year-olds can also visit the VAVO. Some courses offered at the VAVO aim that the learners achieve a minimum level of self-reliance, for example in the field of math or social skills. Other courses are more specified to a discipline.

Media literacy consists of the knowledge, skills and mentality needed to deal consciously, critically and actively with digital media. How media-savvy people are increasingly determines whether they can survive in the digital society and to what extent they can take advantage of the opportunities offered by digitization. Research conducted in the Netherlands shows that a large group of citizens are concerned about the increasing digitization. A quarter of the Dutch find it difficult to keep up with developments on social media and many of the respondents have doubts and fears about their own online behaviours. For example, one in five Dutch people say they are afraid of doing something wrong online. The vast majority of respondents look to the Government for a helping hand with media literacy: 78 percent of the Dutch think that the government should do more to help people find their way in the digital world.⁴⁷

The term digital awareness used in the Netherlands seems to be most in line with the critical side of media literacy. The critical aspects of the four core skills are defined as follows:

- A. Critical operational skills are about understanding that media, platforms or formats are designed in a certain way and that the different properties have consequences for the way users behave.
- B. Critical information navigation skills are about evaluating information and in digital media and platforms also includes understanding how algorithms work and what consequences they have on the way information is presented.
- C. Critical interaction skills include, for example, being able to make comments appropriate to a particular situation, understanding the (psychological and social) impact of messages, or making ethical considerations when tagging, sharing or posting photos.
- D. Relating critical content creation skills to how media, platforms or formats are produced. Think of understanding that ads have the goal of convincing someone to buy something, or that certain content is popular because it conforms to certain norms and values (for example, stereotypes).⁴⁸

In the Netherlands the topic of digital literacy is not taken into consideration often, especially for NEETS. Learners in special education are a forgotten group when it comes to digital literacy. These people often appear to be vulnerable on the internet. For example, students with a mild intellectual disability (LVB) are more often victims of cyberbullying, manipulation and sexual abuse via (social) media than other people. However, they cannot keep staying away from digital and social media. The media has become an integral part of their lives. Because who doesn't want to watch movies, listen to music, play games and text with others?

⁴⁷ Dutch Media Literacy Networks. Retrieved from: <https://netwerkmediawijsheid.nl/5-miljoen-nederlandse-volwassenen-zijn-niet-mediawijs/>

⁴⁸ Universitet Twente. MEDIAWIJSHEID: CONCEPTUALISERING EN BELANG IN EEN GEMEDIEERDE SAMENLEVING Lacunes in bestand onderzoek en beleid. Available at: <https://www.utwente.nl/en/centrefordigitalinclusion/Files/mediawijsheid-conceptualisering-en-belang-vandeursen-helsper.pdf>

Media and digital literacy across the Dutch population is not an end goal in itself, according to research. It is about the important role that media literacy plays in promoting the well-being of a person in society.

Media literacy stands for autonomous and responsible handling of (traditional, digital, and/or converged) media, platforms and formats. Furthermore, the media landscape is not separate from the society in which it is created and used and that its different elements can be unevenly distributed based on historical processes and current political, economic and cultural structures. The implication is that media literacy should always be understood in this context; Media literacy alone is not enough, but it builds on (unequally distributed) access to media, platforms and formats and on different attitudes and motivations of people. Nevertheless, media literacy is a determinant of enabling content, services, and interactions with others that one would otherwise not have access to. Media literacy is also key to translating media use into positive outcomes and avoiding negative outcomes. Research shows that media literacy plays a greater role in achieving positive outcomes than a person's background. The central role of media literacy also suggests that interventions have the greatest impact here. In other words, media literacy is fundamental in modern society in a more practical sense for solving problems, but it also has far-reaching consequences for citizenship and participation. Therefore, media literacy is not just about an individual's skills, but is part of a collective awareness of the pros and cons of the mediated society and the norms and values involved.

A collaboration between ministries, industry, technology developers and other stakeholders is needed to combat inequalities that are exacerbated by differences in media literacy⁴⁹.

In terms of Lifelong learning, the Dutch Government and local municipalities invest a lot of resources. There have been a lot of national programs and opportunities. The government encourages development during one's career with measures, experiments and subsidy options. The Dutch Government has a vision that is that there is a need for development in one's lifetime. The national government stimulates adult learning and development and digital and media literacy for various reasons:

Changing labour market

The labour market is changing rapidly in the Netherlands. Old professions retire and new ones take their place. The world of work consists of making apps, programming robots or developing nanotechnology. But also, for example, the challenges that the climate transition entails. This requires that people constantly acquire knowledge and new skills.

Consequences of the corona pandemic

The corona pandemic has significant consequences for the type of work the population of the Netherlands and across the world does. In some sectors in the Netherlands, there was temporarily less demand for workers, while in other sectors it was the opposite – there was temporarily more demand for workers. The way citizens' work also changed, for example now that citizens work remotely more often. By continuously learning and developing, the Dutch Government keeps the

⁴⁹ Universitet Twente. MEDIWIJSHEID: CONCEPTUALISERING EN BELANG IN EEN GEMEDIEERDE SAMENLEVING Lacunes in bestand onderzoek en beleid. Available at: <https://www.utwente.nl/en/centrefordigitalinclusion/Files/mediawijsheid-conceptualisering-en-belang-vandeursen-helsper.pdf>

economy agile. It also offers workers more flexibility - when necessary, workers can then more easily change their job or the sector in which they work.

International influence

Companies and organizations are spreading more and more worldwide. Competition is increasing, also internationally. This requires flexible and agile companies and workers. The type of work or the amount of work can change quickly.

Labour shortage

In some sectors there is a shortage of labour. Think of healthcare, education, ICT and technology. That is why the Government encourages training in these sectors.

Complicated society

Society is getting more and more complicated. Workers must be able to do more and more. It is therefore important for everyone to be able to work well with, for example, language, mathematics and computers.

Hereby some examples of Government subsidies and initiatives that stimulate the continuous improvement of the skillsets of the Dutch population⁵⁰:

The Netherlands continues to learn

As previously mentioned, the labour market is changing and jobs are uncertain. Due to the corona crisis, companies sometimes had to close their doors. At the same time, new jobs were being created elsewhere. It is therefore important for the future that citizens continue to develop. In this way they strengthen their position on the labour market, the Dutch Government suggests. This subsidy scheme helps citizens achieve this. This programme offers a number of digital and media literacy educational opportunities, such as four tools for effective communication; mobile acquisitions; job applications through social media; media training; making infographics with Adobe Illustrator, making animations and videos for social media, publishing online. The Dutch Government also offers a “study choice” assistant based on the citizen’s background⁵¹.

Lifelong Learning Credit

The Dutch Government also has a vision that those who want to continue to develop should not experience a financial barrier to do so. That is why the central government made the lifelong learning credit available. This credit is intended for people who are no longer entitled to student finance and are between the ages of 18 and 56. From the 2024-2025 academic year, the age limit will be raised to 57 years. This is related to the increase in the state pension age⁵².

STAP budget for training and development

⁵⁰ Rijksoverheid. Retrieved from: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/leven-lang-ontwikkelen>

⁵¹ Mministerie van sociale zaken en werkgelegenheid. Retrieved from: <https://vindjeupdate.hoewerktnederland.nl/>

⁵² Mministerie van sociale zaken en werkgelegenheid. Retrieved from: <https://vindjeupdate.hoewerktnederland.nl/keuzehulp/>

Workers and job seekers can also apply for a STAP budget of up to €1,000 per year for training and development. Citizens can use this subsidy for a training, course or education. The subsidy is called STAP, which stands for Stimulation of the Labour Market Position. The government wants citizens, as workers or job seekers, to be able to decide about their development during their career. This gives them more chances to keep their job or to find a new job.

Provisions for adult learners

In the mediated society, policies, whether economic, social or cultural, cannot be designed or implemented without taking into account how (unequally distributed) media literacy plays a role in successfully implementing these policies.

Nearly a fifth of adults in our country follow an education, course or workshop. In total, more than 1.7 million Dutch people between the ages of 25 and 65 follow some form of education, according to figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). This can be a workshop of a few hours, a course of a few weeks, but also a multi-year professional or university course. Compared to the rest of Europe, the Netherlands scores quite high: in 2017, almost 11 percent of adult Europeans were educated. Only the Swedes, Finns and Danes attend school more often. In 2017, 23 percent of adults took part in such a short education or course. The number of people in education in the Netherlands continues to increase every year.

Almost 40 percent of the Dutch population aged 15 to 74 years has secondary education diplomas. This group has constituted the majority for years and its size has been relatively stable throughout. Simultaneously, the share of people who have completed higher or university education has increased over the last few years. And of course, there are also citizens, whose highest attained level of education is primary, prevocational secondary, the lower years of senior general or pre-university education, or lower-level secondary vocational education.

About 200,000 adults annually attend adult education at the ROCs and the overall number of university students since the year 2016 continues to increase. Educational enrolment especially increased between 2019 and 2020⁵³.

Almost every Dutch person (93 percent) interacts with online media on a daily basis. More and more business is done online also these days. From booking a holiday to doing banking or filling out the tax return. But also, in areas such as healthcare or mobility (public transport card) more and more is happening online and this requires an increasing degree of media literacy. The survey looked at the demographic characteristics of the respondents in order to gain insight into the groups that are ahead and behind in terms of online media use.

⁵³ Statistika. Number of university students in the Netherlands from 2016 to 2020. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/782018/number-of-university-students-in-the-netherlands/>

Berkhout (Program Director Network Media Literacy) emphasizes that it is important that all Dutch people become media literate.

“Our research shows that the Dutch population can be divided into four groups in terms of media literacy: from frontrunners to vulnerable. The latter group is a considerable risk group: they are not media literate and much more often do not know where to find help. This group of vulnerable people in particular needs urgent attention”

Media literacy prior Covid-19

Almost half of the adult Dutch population is not media literate. This is apparent from research published in 2018, commissioned by Mediawijzer.net and carried out by Kantar Public (former TNS Nipo). The study, conducted among 1,800 Dutch people aged 18 years and older, showed that no less than 42 percent of adults are not media literate. That equates to about 5 million Dutch people. A large group of citizens appears to be concerned about the pace at which society is digitizing. For example, almost four out of ten futures think they should arrange more business online. Prior to the parliamentary debate on digitization, Mediawijzer.net is presenting a petition in which the government calls for media literacy to play a prominent role in digitization plans.

“The government's digitization plans form the basis for a healthy, prosperous society and a well-functioning democracy. But they can only be realized if sufficient attention is paid to the development of media literacy in the elaboration of the plans. Catching up is needed and that requires government-wide action, so that every Dutch person is or is in the process of becoming media literate by 2025” (Berkhout)

Adult learning and Covid-19

The corona crisis has a major impact on work and the labour market. It is precisely now that it becomes clear how important it is that we continue to focus on lifelong development. With the Lifelong Development Action Agenda, the Social and Economic Council (SER) in the Netherlands offers a large number of inspiring initiatives that have been set up throughout the Netherlands for workers and job seekers.

“We had to learn in a short time to practice better hygiene and to work from home; In the near future, a lot of attention will also have to be paid to the need for training, retraining and learning new skills” - Mariëtte Hamer, chair of the Social and Economic Council (SER)⁵⁴.

Despite the limited offer for this target group (NEETs in adult education), some organizations help educators on their way with the continuous development line, so that they can get started with digital literacy together with their students.

The SER website⁵⁵, for instance, includes many of examples of initiatives aimed at Lifelong Development. Such as TalentZ, an online platform where students, employers and job seekers can

⁵⁴ HR Academy (2020). Coronacrisis maakt belang leven lang leren duidelijk. Retrieved from:

<https://www.hrpraktijk.nl/topics/loopbaan-opleiding/nieuws/coronacrisis-maakt-belang-leven-lang-leren-duidelijk>

⁵⁵ SER Website. Available at: <https://www.ser.nl/llo>

make a match for an internship, job, voluntary work, reintegration process or training. Or Career Central, an online platform to gain insight into the next career step. There is also information about Make IT Work, in which highly educated people without an IT background are retrained for a position in IT. Or the WijkLink learning network on which nurses/carers, students and teachers exchange knowledge and experiences and ask each other questions. The initiatives shown indicate how their approach has been adjusted since the corona crisis.

Provisions for adult educators

During the interviews the local team interviewed adult educators, which are business owners, online educators, trainers, lecturers, (life) coaches. The interviewees are working in different industries including education, social workers, learning and development and, also, with different target audiences – women, adult learners, people with disabilities, lower skilled, immigrants, expats, people who do not speak the local language etc. Some of the interviewees also work internationally – across Europe and in the U

While all interviewees participated in trainings during the pandemic, many of them did not mention any trainings related to digital and media literacy or lifelong learning. Most of the trainings they participated in were directly related to their current role and future personal career prospects. Most of the educational opportunities they participated in were paid by their employer or themselves. However, some of the interviewees did acknowledge the existence of government courses, but also mentioned that it was difficult to get the grant and support.

The educators, part of the Dutch educational system, did not mention that within their surroundings the topic is highly popular nor that there are educational curriculums developed for (adult) learners with the topic in mind. They mentioned that the topic of critical thinking is a core one that needs to be addressed in relation to the media literacy. Oppositely, they recognized the concept of Lifelong learning and that it is a topic addressed in many of the schools and universities which accommodate adult education.

Some of the challenges that were mentioned by the interviewees, as mentioned previously as a topic that needs to be worked on was critical thinking. Furthermore, adult educators also are aligned with the feedback from the earlier mentioned national research. They share the view that many of the adult learners are not trained on the basis of how to interact and work together with the online environment, while this is key with the changes happening with rapid speed to the digitalization of the Dutch society. Also, many adult learners are afraid to make mistakes online.

In terms of career opportunities, the adult educators have the unique opportunity to try and create a mark in the history of traditional education and bridge the gap between the governmental agenda and the one of the university, academy or educational center. The educators can influence the educational agenda of their programs by for instance becoming the developers of a course or an educational game, that facilitates for digital and media literacy. They think of becoming an expert on the topic or for proposing the usage of some of MECO's project outputs for instance. They can also look at the resources available at the end of this chapter as supportive materials.

While there are a few volunteering opportunities to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning, there is a need for increasing the number of centers which are working on this topic. This means that the awareness on the topic, as driven by the Dutch Government currently may have not inspired or reached businesses and institutions or may not be seen as business and society critical, as their attentions were focused elsewhere – e.g., Covid-19.

Initiatives to support adult media literacy and lifelong learning

In the Netherlands, research⁵⁶ has concluded that various means are needed to achieve a high level of media literacy. Research and interventions for media literacy should take into account the economic, social, cultural and personal resources that people have at their disposal, since some resources are not accessible to everyone to the same extent. Media literacy should also be viewed in the context of attitudes, motivations and access.

There is also still little knowledge about which devices or platforms (with different levels of quality, ubiquity and autonomy) require which domains of media literacy. There is little concrete research into whether, for example, the use of only a smartphone is disadvantageous in relation to the development and application of different types and levels of media literacy.

For media literacy itself, it is not clear which groups (in terms of position and available resources) have exactly which aspects of media literacy, for example, who masters functional and who has critical skills or who does or does not possess information and communication-related skills.

One thing is certain for the Dutch population: one-size-fits-all approach does not work because different groups experience different obstacles.

There are national, regional and local networks that are focused on this topic and providing training and development on the topic of digital and media literacy and lifelong learning.

Online platform to test your digital literacy⁵⁷

It is an online resource containing twenty multiple choice questions to determine how digitally literate you currently are. It covers everything from using Windows and Office programs to Social Media and Google.

Schools focused on adult education: VAVO schools⁵⁸

“Informed citizenship for all. Digital literacy as a precondition for an inclusive society”

Two and a half to four million Dutch people are unable to keep up digitally enough to participate in the digital society (April 2021). That is an increasing problem. Whether it concerns assessing news and information or communication with the government: digital literacy is essential to participate in society. More research is needed to prevent large groups of Dutch people from being excluded. The program “Informed citizenship for all. Digital literacy as a precondition for an inclusive society” looks

⁵⁶ Universitet Twente. MEDIAWIJSHEID: CONCEPTUALISERING EN BELANG IN EEN GEMEDIEERDE SAMENLEVING Lacunes in bestand onderzoek en beleid. Available at: <https://www.utwente.nl/en/centrefordigitalinclusion/Files/mediawijsheid-conceptualisering-en-belang-vandeursen-helsper.pdf>

⁵⁷ The test is available here: <https://www.digitalegeletterdheid.nl/test-jouw-digitale-geletterdheid/>

⁵⁸ Website can be reached here: <https://www.vavoscholen.nl/w/>

specifically at low-literate adults, a large group of Dutch people who have difficulty with reading and writing. And the program investigates how children from different socio-economic backgrounds learn about media and the digital world.

Using the research to gain scientific insights into how citizens become digital literate, what promotes and prevents this, and how this influences their participation in the digital society. At the same time, hoping to contribute to promoting digital literacy. The research is closely in line with the mission of the Digital Literacy Coalition⁵⁹ to give a major boost to citizens' digital skills before 2025. We are working on this task together with 20 social partners: educational and knowledge institutions, governments, healthcare, social organizations and companies.

With the help of qualitative research such as observations, interviews and creative assignments, the researchers obtain a nuanced picture of the everyday experiences of low-literate people and children in the digital society. In the first PhD research, they work together with libraries, language houses and ROCs where language education is offered. There they examine the barriers that low-literate adults experience. The project is currently doing the second PhD project together with out-of-school care and primary schools.⁶⁰

Digital Literacy Coalition

In 2018, the Digital Literacy Coalition (DLC) was founded. The DLC consists of twenty partners from education and science, business, government, healthcare, and the educational and cultural sector who work together to stimulate the level of digital literacy in all layers of society. Digital literacy is the totality of knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes, motivations, trust and insight necessary to understand, deal with and deploy digital technology, to thrive in a digital society. In the living labs for digital inclusion, health, education and work, the DLC works together on concrete projects, supported by research. DLC shares the knowledge acquired with this among the partners involved, so that best practices can also be used elsewhere. The Groningen Agreement has laid down the ambition of the DLC to make Groningen the most digitally literate region in the Netherlands by 2025⁶¹.

Websites to support adult media education

Dutch Media Literacy Network (Co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility of the European Union) ⁶²

The Dutch Media Literacy Network ('Netwerk Mediawijsheid') is committed to working towards a future where everyone is – or is well on their way towards becoming – media literate. Media literacy allows one to move more easily and more securely through a society in which (online) media play an increasingly important role.

The network consists of over a thousand organizations committed to media literacy. These include libraries, cultural institutions, media coaches, developers of teaching material, educational

⁵⁹ Website available at: www.digital-literacy.nl

⁶⁰ Wiegman, P. (2021). *Netwerk Mediawijsheid*. Retrieved from: <https://netwerkmediawijsheid.nl/5-vragen-aan-wr-onderzoek-digitale-geletterdheid/>

⁶¹ Website is available at: <https://digital-literacy.nl/digital-literacy-coalition/>

⁶² Netwerk Mediawijsheid. Access to the website: <https://netwerkmediawijsheid.nl/over-ons/about-dutch-media-literacy-network/>

publishers, research institutes, IT companies, media producers and platforms, educational institutions and care and welfare organizations.

The network was established as a program in 2008 and is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Settling on a network for its organizational structure allows the tackling of important media literacy themes in an easier, faster and more creative way. The strength of the network lies in the sharing of knowledge and in cooperation.

Dutch Media Literacy Network is managed by our five core partners: Dutch Institute for Sound and Vision, Kennisnet (expertise centre for ICT in education), ECP (an information society platform), NPO (a public broadcasting company) and KB (National Library of the Netherlands). These five organizations together are responsible for drawing up and implementing the program's plans. Together, they take care of organizing the Program Team, which coordinates daily proceedings within the program.

The mission of the Dutch Media Literacy Network is to foster a society in which everyone is (on their way to being) media literate. Network partners are committed to fostering a society in which everyone is – or is well on their way towards becoming – media literate. They focus on three target groups:

- A. Adolescents – Every Dutch adolescent is (on their way to being) media literate. After finishing middle, high school and potentially higher education as well, they'll possess the necessary skills to live and work in a media literate way. They'll be motivated to keep developing these skills over the course of their lives.
- B. Adults – Every Dutch adult is (well on their way to becoming) media literate. They are aware of the importance of media literacy, for both their personal lives and development. They are motivated to continue developing these skills in their home life, their social life, at work et cetera.
- C. Vulnerable groups – Anyone in any sort of vulnerable position when it comes to media usage receives the proper guidance in the field of media literacy. They are media literate, or well on their way to becoming media literate (to the best of their ability), at least to the point where they can move easily and safely in society, possibly with support.

In their statement on diversity & inclusion they state their intentions and actions to make their work as a network more inclusive. This, they confirm, is necessary to ensure that their impact affects all Dutch citizens.

The Dutch Media Literacy Competency Model 2021 (Co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility of the European Union)

At the center of the Media Literacy Competency Model 2021 are the 17,5 million Dutch people who enjoy themselves, play sports, go to school, work, enjoy their retirements, practice their hobbies, make friends, and fall in love in today's media society.

In order to serve these 17,5 million people, the Dutch Media Literacy Network has created the Dutch Media Literacy Competency Model 2021, a definition of media literacy in a clear model. The Media

Literacy Competency Model 2021⁶³ offers eight media literacy competencies and ten areas in which the Dutch can achieve tangible results with their media use.

The model:

- gave substance to the definition of media literacy by the Dutch Council for Culture ('media literacy is the sum of knowledge, skills, and attitudes citizens need to consciously, critically and actively find one's way in a complex, ever-changing and fundamentally mediatized society' (CfC, 2005);
- was the point of departure for setting up new activities, projects, and services by the 1000+ network partners;
- was the starting point for research projects and the development of instruments to determine and monitor media literacy among various target groups;
- was leading with the allocation of incentive grants, determining of the themes for the yearly Media Literacy Week, and the design of the media literacy game MediaMasters.

DIGIT⁶⁴

DIGIT is the solution for everyone who wants to improve their computer and digital skills, young and old. DIGIT is widely used in all levels of education and is a leading online method for digital literacy in primary and secondary education. In addition, DIGIT is also the answer for every student in MBO and for all teachers who want to brush up on their skills.

DIGIT is published by Uitgeverij Instruct, an educational publisher that has been developing teaching materials for computer and digital skills for over 30 years in collaboration with teachers and partners from the field.

Interviews results

In the Netherlands the team of **Lidi Smart Solutions** interviewed a variety of adult educators – business owners, online educators, trainers, lecturers, (life) coaches, working in different industries including education, social workers, learning and development and, also, with different target audiences – women, adult learners, people with disabilities, lower skilled, immigrants, expats, people who do not speak the local language etc. Most of the interviewees have been working in the field of adult education in the Netherlands for 7+ years, which makes them experienced professionals on the topic. Some of the interviewees also work internationally – across Europe and in the US, however they are based in the Netherlands.

When asked about **the common misconception** about adult education, one female coach mentioned that women are keen to develop both personally and professionally. Maybe even to the extent that they constantly feel the need to do another Master, another diploma, another certification. A business owner, active in the online course industry, who creates self-paced programs shared that a

⁶³ Netwerk Mediajsheid. "Media Literacy Competence Model 2021". Available at: <https://netwerkmediawijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/The-Dutch-Media-Literacy-Competency-Model-2021.pdf>

⁶⁴ DIGIT. Website: <https://www.digitaleletterdheid.nl>

common misconception may be that people have a harder time grasping new concepts after a certain age, or starting a business or any other project. This could be related to the speed - level of reaction, thinking and understanding and familiarity an adult learner may have with the media. A number of interviewees believe that adult learners often compare themselves to other learners who have started at a younger age, which makes them afraid of failure and mistakes.

Some of the most **common challenges** that are mentioned by the interviewees involved the technical advancements (tech savviness) of the adult learners. While interviewees suggest that this may be caused by the mental barrier, they face caused by the knowledge gap, others suggest that time and money are common challenges. Motivation and added value of education are mentioned by interviewees working with lower skilled citizenship groups.

One of the **main obstacles**, mentioned by many and also in line with the challenges was critical thinking. While most of the interviewees shared that the lack of time is an obstacle, some argued that this “excuse” is related to a person’s priorities. Universities are also accommodating more and more adult learners as participants in the educational activities. Others, working with different target audiences shared that adult learners are afraid of making mistakes online and that they need to be trained on the basic knowledge so they can more confidently operate online. Lastly, some mentioned that there are not enough resources for the adult educators in the area of media literacy.

In terms of **difficulties** while using the media, interviewees mention that due to the high amount of information online, the adult learners become overwhelmed and insecure of their ambitions and choices anymore. Others mention that they struggle with interpretation of the information that is presented to them on the screen. Adults need to be open to learning new concepts and changing their current beliefs and to invest time to educate themselves on the topic. And, as Manuela said: “Media is everywhere and we need to be more aware of the source of information, who’s financing certain channels, who benefits from what kind of news and more.”

While the **Covid-19 pandemic**, according to many interviewees, accelerated the skills of the society, showed the world the endless opportunities online and how convenient online education actually is, with all the benefits it has (time, travel costs, etc.), some adult learners quickly forgot with the lift of the government regulations how and why to use their digital devices. Covid 19 brought all our trainings and coaching online and according to the interviewees, the training expectations are that this new method of education will continue in some sort of hybrid manner (online and face to face) going forward. In terms of media, according to interviewees more and more polarised news were shared during the pandemic. “People and events many times were either black or white. One had to dig for a bit of a more “grey” perspective or read both perspectives to get a more wholistic picture”.

Most of the interviewees shared that in the **last 3 years**, they have continued to obtain trainings and coaching advice, attend seminars and presentations, mostly in the form of video material, in their field of expertise. Some educators were also trained on the functionalities of the Microsoft Teams and Zoom platforms.

The suggested trainings by the interviewees are related to the basics of media literacy, for example through an A to Z guide on media tools, but also on collaborative and interactive learning and educational practices. Critical thinking is also a very important topic for training adult learners on.

All of the interviewees discuss good practices with other experts on local and national level through seminars, conferences, meetings, etc. Only a few are able to consult on an European level.

CHAPTER 3

EUROPEAN SYNTHESIS REPORT

Political Framework: Media Education

Media and information literacy (MIL) policy and strategy enhance the creation of knowledge driven, inclusive, pluralistic, democratic, and open societies. MIL policy and strategy are crucial for the survival of modern governance and global citizenship, in the digital world. Without a MIL policy and strategy, disparities are likely to increase between those who have and those who do not have access to information and media, and enjoy or not freedom of expression. (UNESCO, 2018)⁶⁵

According to the European Commission, media literacy refers to the different media and methods of distribution and it has never been more important than it is today. It enables citizens of all ages to navigate the modern information environment and make informed decisions. Hence, a high level of media literacy is a key factor in enabling citizens to make informed decisions in the digital age. Regardless of age, it is a crucial skill for all citizens as it empowers and sensitizes them by helping to counteract the effects of disinformation campaigns and fake news spread through digital media.

Regarding EU policy, it has recently revised the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) which strengthens the role of media literacy as it requires Member States to promote measures to develop media literacy (Article 33a). Because of the central role video-sharing platforms play in access to audiovisual content, the revised AVMSD obliges them to provide effective media literacy measures and tools as well as to make users aware of these measures and tools (Article 28b).

Furthermore, the European Commission has created an Expert Group on Media Literacy⁶⁶ by bringing together stakeholders of the field on an annual basis. The aims of this group are to identify, document and expand good practices in the field of media literacy, to facilitate networking between different stakeholders and to explore ways of coordinating EU media literacy policies, support programmes and initiatives.

As mentioned above, Media literacy is a prerequisite for a vibrant and modern democracy. In order to promote media literacy skills and projects around the EU, the European Commission inaugurated in 2019 the European Media Literacy Week⁶⁷. Every year, media literacy stakeholders at national level are encouraged to organize their own events during or around this week to celebrate and discuss media literacy. In addition, in the framework of the European Media Literacy Week, the European Commission has launched a call for applications for inspiring and impactful projects in the field of media literacy. The best candidates will be invited to Brussels to compete for three prizes at the high-level conference of the European Media Literacy Week.

How to develop MIL policies and strategies have been discussed over a number of years because effective national MIL policies are needed for any success – they are even a prerequisite for global or

⁶⁵ UNESCO (2018). World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: 2017/2018 Global Report. Paris: UNESCO.

⁶⁶ Online access to more information on the European Expert Group on Media Literacy: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2541>

⁶⁷ European Media Literacy Week (2020). Retrieved from: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/events/european-media-literacy-week>

regional success – in a long-term perspective. According to Carlsson⁶⁸, research has shown that countries that have a national MIL policy framework have proven more successful in their efforts to spread media and information literacy among their citizens than countries that lack one. Key factors are clearly expressed governance, broad support and the participation of many different stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

From a comparative study of MIL in Europe it has been identified the three stances or “the three D’s) of governance in relation to MIL:

- Developing Stance. Creating a policy framework with the state as driver and coordinator of the coordination of non-public actors.
- Delegating Stance. Creating a partly developed policy framework that fosters action by other actors.
- Disengaging Stance. Creating a limited framework so that non-public actors can lead their own initiatives.

In some countries questions relating to media and information literacy are sorted under the ministry of culture or education, while digital competence is a matter for the ministry of industry, telecommunications or trade (as it is the case of many of the countries subject of this research). The lack of dialogue or collaboration between the two ministries usually leads to a poor MIL policy as much more resources are invested in digital competence than in MIL⁶⁹.

International organizations such as UNESCO and projects at the European level, such as the one to which this document belongs within the Erasmus+ programme, as well as regional organizations have an important role to play in ensuring that MIL is developed properly and worldwide. Through these networks, the exchange of experience and knowledge between countries is promoted, cooperation is facilitated, incentives are offered and decisions are informed at national, regional and local level. The creation of such a macro-structure of international communication can stimulate the progress of existing policies and the implementation of new ones in less advanced countries in the field of MIL.

After a couple of decades of widespread access to the Internet and the advent of social media and smartphones, a new media structure is now emerging. The plethora of platforms and services available online has created a multitude of opportunities, not least the hope for increased citizen engagement and democratic participation. At the same time, however, it has given rise to new and serious dilemmas. The commercialisation of media is increasing every day and communication systems are transforming, changing patterns of social behavior.

The complexities of modern society therefore demand educated, skilled and critical citizens in many areas if freedom of expression, democracy and social progress are to be maintained and developed. Some of the knowledge and skills needed are related to media and communication culture. Thus,

⁶⁸ Carlsson, C. (2019). *Understanding Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Digital Age. A Question of Democracy*. University of Gothenburg. Retrieved from: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/gmw2019_understanding_mil_ulla_carlsson.pdf

⁶⁹ Frau-Meigs, D., I. Velez and J. Flores Michel (2017). “Mapping media and information policy: new perspectives for the governance of MIL”. In: Frau-Meigs, D., I. Velez and J. Flores Michel (eds.). (2017). *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe. Cross-Country Comparisons*. Oxon: Routledge/ECREA, pp. 19-88.

Media Information Literacy (MIL), and consequently Media Literacy Education (MLE), is of utmost importance. However, it is important to note that not only young people have the need to be trained and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to obtain MIL, but also adults and even older individuals have the right and should acquire them in order to be active and democratic citizens.

As seen in the previous chapter, at the national level, the governments and legislative bodies - can make laws and ordinances to promote the acquisition of MIL by all citizens. But, today, when governments are being squeezed by the market and increased financialisation, the scope for action is limited. Carlsson therefore states that "in addition to policy makers, partners can be the media, media companies, journalists, Internet content providers, schools, libraries, museums, higher education, the research community, adult education organizations, civil society, and children, youth, parents and other adults"⁷⁰.

In short, it is clear that there is a need to engage the whole of society to ensure the acquisition of MIL by all citizens. This is not only important in order to be able to use new technologies but also, and above all, to make good use of them and to be able to exercise our rights and duties in a democratic society.

Adult education EU

It is expressed in the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning of the European Council that

Adult learning enables adults, in particular the low-skilled and older workers – to improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society. Adult learning provides a means of upskilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as makes an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. (Resolution 2011/C 372/01)⁷¹

Adult training systems that enable adults, whether working or seeking work, to maintain and update their skills are essential to adapt the workforce to the inevitable changes in the labour market. However, an OECD study⁷² argues that most adult training systems are ill-equipped for this challenge. As has been seen throughout this paper, in the countries included in this study as well as in the other European countries, participation in adult education varies widely.

In its Employment Outlook 2019⁷², the OECD underlines that a common feature across countries is that "those most in need of training are the least educated. These groups include the low-skilled, older adults, displaced workers, those whose jobs are most threatened by automation, as well as atypical workers".

⁷⁰ Carlsson, C. (2019). *Understanding Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Digital Age. A Question of Democracy*. University of Gothenburg. Retrieved from: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/gmw2019_understanding_mil_ulla_carlsson.pdf

⁷¹ Resolution 2011/C 372/01 (The Council of the European Union). Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning. 20 of December of 2011. Official Journal of the European Union.

⁷² OECD iLibrary. "Making adult learning systems future-ready for all". *Employment Outlook 2019: The Future of Work*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/bb84f968-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/bb84f968-en>

The study cited above highlights a number of findings that are relevant to the direction of this paper. These can be summarized in the following points:

- Unless urgent action is taken, the low-skilled and older adults are likely to be left behind. The one who need most training are the ones receiving less formation. OECD brings numbers into the question: participation by low-skilled adults is a staggering 40 percentage points below that of high-skilled adults and older adults are 25 percentage points less likely to train than 25–34-year-olds⁷³.
- Workers in non-standard forms of employment (self-employed, part-time workers, ...) have more difficulties in accessing training compared to standard employees.
- Most adults are not motivated to participate in training, have not been offered meaningful training options or are discouraged by the obstacles they encounter.
- Many adults still face various obstacles, such as lack of time or financial constraints, in accessing training.

From the interviews carried out during this research work, it has become evident that one of the biggest, if not the biggest, challenge of adult education is the social conception of it. This, coupled with other factors such as lack of time or financial resources, translates into workers with reluctant attitudes towards training. As the OECD study, the interviews conducted in this paper have highlighted adults in general are not motivated to train, generally do not value the need or the opportunity and find it difficult to reconcile it with their personal lives in terms of time or money.

A better understanding of the specific barriers faced by adults, in particular those in need, is essential to design effective measures adult learning opportunities and foster lifelong learning.

Adult learning and Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a digitalization of education and rapidly pushed education and training systems to explore new ways of teaching and learning. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on adult learning (AL) has also been acute. Participation in adult learning has been impacted, with adult learning providers and educators facing multiple challenges in continuing their learning offers and adapting to the situation.

From the interviews conducted in for this study, all the included experts on adult education agree that the pandemic has enormously accelerated the already ongoing shift into a more technological world. As a consequence of the measures taken in each partner country, such as the lock-down, many adults have been forced to adapt rapidly and the gap among those low-skilled in technological area and those competent using digital tools have become clearer.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 has harmed people to gain mistrust and the need of Media Literacy Education has also become evident as user have been facing many digital risks such as, fake news, invasion of privacy, identity theft, etc.

⁷³ OECD iLibrary. "Making adult learning systems future-ready for all". *Employment Outlook 2019: The Future of Work*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/bb84f968-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/bb84f968-en>

Along the same lines as these results, the European report *Adult Learning and COVID-19: challenges and opportunities*⁷⁴ asserts that the pandemic has affected different areas of the society among which are labor markets and Education and Training Systems. The changes that the COVID-19 crisis has introduced to society have required all individuals to adapt in multiple ways to a new reality including a shift to digital working and/or learning. There has been a significant growth in unemployment (for both young people and adults) as well as a sudden shift to ‘teleworking’ through the use of technologies.

All in all, the situation has strengthened the need for various skills, especially soft skills such as self-management, adaptability, collaboration and emotional intelligence. The developments during the crisis show that education systems overall are changing rapidly in the transition to distant learning which has definitely highlighted the importance of digital literacy, understood as the use of digital tools as well as the interpretation of digital information. Of course, the digital literacy implies also Media and Information Literacy.

In this context, the aforementioned report declares that a great number of adult education programmes have stopped around Europe due to the crisis, meaning that learning has been disrupted for many adult learners. However, adult learning has moved from the margins to the center of discussion, being identified as a potentially important ‘tool’ in the response to the crisis.

The main challenges identified in the field of adult education may be summarized in the following points:

- The sector faces challenges in organizing education activities online and ensuring equal access. Including challenges in organizing education activities online; challenges in transforming face-to-face elements into online learning environments; and challenges related to assessment and examination in formal education.
- Adult learning providers and staff face challenges in capacities, infrastructure and funding. Whilst many adult learning providers have adjusted quickly and well, gaps in the digital competences of adult learning providers have affected the quality of training offered during the crisis.
- Adult learners lack equipment, time and capacities: the vulnerable are disproportionately affected.

In order to address the aforementioned challenges and ensure a quality education for adult learners, the European Commission states the following responses and lines of action are needed:

- Providing financial support to the sector and adult learners
- Solving the lack of equipment by mixing methods
- Providing information and making the adult learning offer more transparent
- Support adult educators and providers through making available assistance, learning materials and online training for educators

⁷⁴ European Commission (2020). *Adult Learning and COVID-19: challenges and opportunities. A Report from the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning*. European Union: Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

Adult media education

According to the EPAL publication on Media Literacy Education on Adults, there are few reasons why it is important to concentrate on this angle which summarize as it follows:

- News literacy is a topical theme.
- As the global media landscape is in a constant state of flux, there is an urgent need for up-to-date information about ethical journalism, credibility of different news sources and basic principles of freedom of expression.
- News literacy is imperative for a functioning democracy.
- An individual cannot participate in society unless he/she understands it, and being able to access and critically evaluate information plays a huge role in this.
- Adults are still a somewhat neglected target group in the field of media literacy education.

Supporting adult learning: Initiatives

In recent years Europe and its member countries have carried out many campaigns and developed projects at all levels of society to promote adult education. This is reflected in the individual studies carried out for the countries of Lithuania, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands. In Chapter 2 of this document, the various laws, measures and projects carried out in recent years to promote lifelong learning and adult education are presented. This trend, as the OECD study rightly states, is replicable in all member countries. However, it has become evident that still today the attitude of adults towards education and training is in most cases not positive. Above all, it is the low-skilled and those most in need who are excluded from this educational context.

The paper "Making adult learning systems future-ready for all"⁷⁵ identifies a number of possible solutions for attracting adults, especially the low-skilled, into training.

It has been found that modular training can encourage low-skilled adults to find time to learn new knowledge and skills at their own pace. Modular training is a course that is composed of individual modules that can stand alone or be assembled as part of a training package. Each module has its own objectives and subject matter, and may even be divided into shorter lessons. In addition, they can be delivered in a variety of formats, with digital being the most common today.

Likewise, digital and online training programmes can also help to free up time for training, broadening access to training and containing training costs. However, these training options have limitations, as many low-skilled people (especially adults with low digital skills) may find it more difficult to access them.

⁷⁵ OECD iLibrary. "Making adult learning systems future-ready for all". *Employment Outlook 2019: The Future of Work*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/bb84f968-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/bb84f968-en>

Education and training leave, i.e. a regulatory instrument setting out the conditions under which workers can take time off work for learning purposes, is another policy tool to ensure that adults - including the low-skilled - have the right to set aside sufficient time for training.

In this complex context, the creation of cooperation mechanisms between government and different stakeholders - e.g., social partners, training providers, civil society and NGOs - can help governments to adapt adult learning programmes to local needs, facilitate the exchange and replication of good practices and improve the quality of training. Indeed, because of their proximity to learners, these stakeholders are well placed to understand the skills and training needs of adults.

Initiatives to support Adult Media Education

EPALE⁷⁶

The rapid technological developments and the ever-changing social conditions shape diverse communication dynamics that give rise to several challenges such as mal-/mis/dis-information, hate speech and propaganda. In this context, adult learning seems to be an important enabler in terms of supporting individuals in becoming more critical and resilient against those challenges. To this regard, news media literacy that draws from critical media literacy education can empower adults and promote the development of active democratic citizens.

The EPALE Discussion “News media literacy for adults – why is it important right now?” focused on the need of cultivating news media literacy, considering the rapid technological developments and the ever-changing social conditions. In this context, diverse communication dynamics occur which give rise to several challenges such as mal-/mis/dis-information, hate speech and propaganda.

FutureLabAE⁷⁷

FutureLabAE project addresses two main issues: the situation of democracy in Europe, where an increasing number of citizens, who, discontent with the political establishment, start leaning towards xenophobic and populist parties or choose not to vote at all; and the alarmingly high number of people in Europe who lack basic skills, especially digital skills, leaving parts of the population unable to benefit from the digital transformation. Adult education has a role to play in supporting societies and individuals to cope with these two issues.

Lifelong Learning Platform⁷⁸

The Lifelong Learning Platform is an umbrella that gathers 42 European organisations active in the field of education, training and youth, coming from all over Europe and beyond. Currently these networks represent more than 50 000 educational institutions and associations covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

⁷⁶ EPALE. Online access: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/oer-news-literacy-why-news-literacy-education-adults-important-right-now>

⁷⁷ FutureLabAE. Online access: <https://eaea.org/project/future-lab/>

⁷⁸ Lifelong Learning Platform. Online access: <https://lllplatform.eu/who-we-are/about-us/>

Conclusions

The present document is part of the European project Media Education – A Challenge to Overcome, coordinated by Edupro from Lithuania. The present research on the essential needs of adult educator to support adult learners with fewer opportunities in the field of media education has been coordinated by the Italian partner Petit Pas Aps. All the partners from the consortium have contributed by conducting desk research as well as interviews on their countries in order to provide a national report on the object of the study.

The final result is a European synthesis report on needs analysis, which constitutes an innovative and transferable result. The primary and secondary research methods assisted the partner organizations to understand better what is the current situation regarding adult education. The research has provided an insight into the perspectives of adult educators on current needs and challenges as well as on how target groups of the project may be involved during the project's implementation phases.

From the desk research it has become clear the current efforts made at different levels i.e., European, national, regional and local, to foster adult education in all partner countries. However, from the statistics, as well as from the interviews, it has turned evident that there are still some needs that have to be addressed. First of all, it is of utmost importance to change the misconceptions about adult education and encourage all adults, and specially those with fewer opportunities, to embrace learning opportunities. Educators who work with adult learners have confirmed what studies have already proven: it is never too late to learn.

Moreover, when it comes to digital and media literacy, the research has shown the existing gap in society between young and adult generations. The need of improving adults' media literacy is undeniable because, while education curriculums are constantly updated and younger generations might receive specific training on digital literacy, adults are still left aside. As it has been mentioned along the report, media literacy is more than using digital tools as it constitutes an essential competence for democratic practice. Hence, it is of paramount importance to train adults on competences related to digital tools, including media literacy education.

Besides, from the research it has been concluded that adult learners face many obstacles to access learning opportunities. From the interviews and statistics, the most recurrent challenges have been identified which include lack of time and economic resources, difficulties to reconcile training with personal and work life and lack of interest. These problems are exacerbated when it comes to adults with fewer opportunities, a target which includes adult with disabilities, immigrants, long-term unemployed, lower working class, etc.

Bearing in mind all the aforementioned, addressing those needs is the first step to be taken towards an effectively inclusive adult education model. This partnership aims to create training material available for free to train adult learners with fewer opportunities on media literacy. The conclusions drawn from this research will form the basis on which the training course will be developed as the next MECO project result. The next section will briefly summarize how the results from this research will affect the design and development of the training material.

Recommendations of design for the training course

After analyzing the common challenges that adult educators face, as well as the needs that adult learners themselves have, the consortium has identified key issues to guide the following steps within the MECO project.

From the research conducted, it has become clear that the training offered to adult learners must be **flexible** as well as easily adaptable. Being lack of time, financial resources and access the main issues to involve adults on education training, it has been concluded that the best option for the training course is to be available **online** and free of charge.

Moreover, because of the benefits of **modular training model**, the training material will be presented in online modules. It will be composed of individual modules with specific topics which will be independent so that the target group user will be able to decide what topics/material to learn.

The objective of the training course materials is to provide the project's target groups with the knowledge and skills needed to fight some problems such as: fake news, internet addiction, identity theft, cyberbullying, risks of social media, online gambling, online child pornography... and more generally adequate media education for adults.

The innovative aspects are related to the fact that all the training material will be designed based on the open-source phenomenon and training materials will be in various formats, included interactive teaching sources (text, image, audio, video, ...) Also, it will provide adult educators with supportive material to facilitate the implementation and adaptation of such material.

Educators/ facilitators and volunteers selected to respond to our interviews were made conscientious about the importance of their work. We hope that after reading this guide, people will have a greater appreciation for adult education and a better understanding of the importance of tackling the digital and educational gap among generations.

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About the authors

Authors of the report

SIMONA LITVINIENE. Master degree in Social pedagogy. Project manager in Vsl EDUKACINIAI PROJEKTAI with 11 years of experience on writing, coordinating and administrating projects; coordinating dissemination activities, reports writing; trainings for specialist in social area and Social and work integration of people.

GINTARE CERNIKIENE. Bachelor's degree in English Philology. 10 years of experience of writing, coordinating and administrating projects; coordinating dissemination activities, reports writing; Preparation of methodological support for specialists' competence development and improvement and local coordinator, researcher in the projects related to digital and media competences, critical thinking, creativity development.

MAYA DANOVA. Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Master's degree on management and development of human resources. PhD degree in the field of Marketing of tourism. Certificate for training of trainers; Certificate for training consultants in organizational development, management and human resources management.

SVETLA TAGAREVA. Bachelor's and master's degree in tourism, and a PhD dissertation on the impact of globalization processes in the hotel industry. 20 years of experience in the field of tourism, marketing and event management. Working experience as a tour guide, as a travel consultant, project manager and marketing manager in a hardware company.

MARTA MUÑOZ. Degree in Law and Master in European Affairs. European project manager in STP and several years of experience in European Projects and on implementing Educational Methodologies. Experience doing trainings in entrepreneurship. Certificate of the training of Trainer and storytelling certificate at international level.

GONZALO. Long-standing experience in the coordination of training activities, selection of target groups, didactic planning, selection and monitoring of trainers, logistic and didactic organisation, account support, budget management. Coordinator of the European Projects Department. - IT skills and - Alternative solutions for adult learning and organizations. Expertise in implementation, training, support and guidance of an Enterprise Resource Planning system.

FABIOLA PORCELLI. Master in EURO Project Planning, Master in Administration's Science and Bachelor in Political Social Science. From 2015 work experience as Project Designer and Manager in European, regional, local and private funding programs.

AINHOA GANDARIASBEITIA. Bachelor's degree in Education Sciences and Bachelor's degree in English Philology. Certificate of non-formal education trainer for youth. Working experience in educational projects and creation of didactic material.

LIDIA DIMITROVA - aM.Sc. in Technologies; B.A. in Psychology; A post-graduate specialization in Group psychodynamic training and organization development; B-school – US business education; a great number of certified courses within Blockchain and AI technologies. She has worked as a Project manager and expert on a number of private and EU-funded projects since 2012.

TANYA SLAVCHEVA - B.A. in Tourism and a Master's degree in Management of International business projects. She has worked in the field of tourism in various European countries as well as participated in a number of EU-funded projects.

Partner organizations



VšĮ EDUKACINIAI PROJEKTAI (EP) is non-governmental not for profit organisation researching, developing, organizing, providing, coordinating and supervising trainings in the field of non-formal education for various target groups as well for professionals and volunteers.



Nikanor Ltd was established in 2002 as a private company working in the field of recruitment, adults training and human resources management and development. We're licensed by NAVET as an adults vocational training center and for a Center for Information and Guidance. Nikanor Ltd is a member of EfVET (one of the leading European-wide professional associations which has been created by, and for, Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers.)



Professional Training Solutions (STP Consulting) as Training center is located in Zaragoza (Spain) and it offers training courses and technical support to private companies, public administration in rural areas, schools, NGOs and Incubators of Entrepreneurs into innovation in the areas of education sector, and professional solutions of non-profit sector.



Petit Pas is a social promotion association that was founded in Trani, Puglia (IT) in 2015, by a group of professionals, trainers and youth leaders motivated by the desire of improving their community, promoting social initiatives inspired by democracy, equality, and pluralism. Our goal is to enhance the level of knowledge and skills of our community regardless of gender, social background, cultural or educational background.



Lidi Smart Solutions was founded to promote the latest trends in the digital era, offering web-education for adults and youth in a number of fields. Among our core activities were developing and implementing online education platforms and e-learning tools. From there, we grew to tackle the leading-edge technologies, striving to demystify them and increase their accessibility to various social and professional groups.



ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Media Literacy Education (MLE)

What is Media Literacy Education (MLE)?

The NAMLE (National Association for Media Literacy Education in the United States) claims that “The purpose of media literacy education is to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today’s world”.

NAMLE recognizes that much has changed in the decades since the term "media literacy" was first used and that the focus of the discussion has therefore shifted from not only what we teach but also how we teach it. Instead of referring to key concepts, Basic Principles of "media literacy education" has been distinguished⁷⁹.

Core Principles of Media Education

Media Literacy Education...	Implications for practice
Requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLE teaches students to ask the specific types of questions that will allow them to gain a deeper or more sophisticated understanding of media messages. • MLE trains students to use document-based evidence and well-reasoned arguments to support their conclusions. • For MLE teachers, fostering critical thinking is routine. MLE calls for institutional structures to support their efforts by actively encouraging critical thinking in all classrooms. • Simply using media in the classroom does not constitute MLE.
Expands the concept of literacy to include all forms of media (i.e., reading and writing).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLE enables students to express their own ideas through multiple forms of media (e.g., traditional print, electronic, digital, user-generated, and wireless) and helps students make connections between comprehension and inference-making in print, visual, and audio media. • MLE takes place in a variety of settings, including, but not limited to: schools, after school programs, online, universities & colleges, religious institutions, and the home. • While MLE may result in students wanting to change or reform media, MLE itself is not focused on changing media, but rather on changing educational practice and increasing students’ knowledge and skills.
Builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media literacy is not a “have it or not” competency, but rather an ever evolving continuum of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and actions. • The requirements of MLE cannot be addressed by a single event, class, day or even week-long intervention. Rather, MLE teachers seek to provide students with numerous and

⁷⁹ National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) (2007). Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States. Retrieved from: <https://namle.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Core-Principles.pdf>



	diverse opportunities to practice and develop skills of analysis and expression.
Develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLE promotes student interest in news and current events as a dimension of citizenship, rights and responsibilities • MLE invites and respects diverse points of view • MLE trains students to examine how media structures (e.g., ownership, distribution, etc.) influence the ways that people make meaning of media messages. • MLE recognizes that HOW we teach matters as much as WHAT we teach. Classrooms should be places where student input is respected, valued and acted upon.
Recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLE integrates media texts that present diverse voices, perspectives and communities • MLE addresses topics like violence, gender, sexuality, racism, stereotyping and other issues of representation.
Affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLE is not about teaching students what to think; it is about teaching them how they can arrive at informed choices that are most consistent with their own values. • MLE helps students become aware of and reflect on the meaning that they make of media messages, including how the meaning they make relates to their own values.

This information was taken from the document "Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States" by NAMLE (2007).

Furthermore, when interacting with media content and in order to conduct an effective media analysis the following concepts must be taken into consideration ⁸⁰:

- All media messages are “constructed.”
- Each medium has different characteristics, strengths, and a unique “language” of construction.
- Media messages are produced for particular purposes.
- All media messages contain embedded values and points of view.
- People use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.
- Media and media messages can influence beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, and the democratic process.

⁸⁰ National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) (2007). Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States. Retrieved from: <https://namle.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Core-Principles.pdf>

ANNEX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Introduce yourself and your organisation. How long have you been working with adult learners (with fewer opportunities)? What is your role and what kind of activities do you (e.g., education, training, counselling, social work, volunteering, public service, policy making, etc.)? Your organisation: name, field of action, country, region.
2. In your experience, what do you think is the most common misconception about adult education (prejudices, role in society, importance given to the matter, ...)? What is the general perception media education for adults?
3. In your experience, what do you think are the most common challenges regarding adult education and media literacy for adult learners? What are the main difficulties encountered when working with adult learners?
4. What is the general profile of adult learners you usually work with? What are the main obstacles stopping adults from improving their media literacy (time, interest, economic factors)?
5. What are the main difficulties adults have when using the media? What are the main skills adults need to develop for acquiring media literacy using all forms of communication (e.g., awareness, access, safety, production, critical thinking)?
6. How do think the Covid-19 pandemic has affected adult learning of media literacy? Has the pandemic aggravated the needs of adults to acquire media literacy skills?
7. What kind of relevant training have you received over the last 3 years to help you in your work? If so, what kind (e.g., face-to-face, conference, seminars, shadowing, written or video materials, etc.)?
8. What kind of training would be helpful to you in the field of media education for adult learners (e.g., what topics and delivery method)? What kind of material could be useful to help you in media education for adult learners?
9. Do you have opportunities to discuss and share ideas and good practices with other experts in the field at a local, national and European level? If so, please specify when, where, how, and with who.
10. Do you have anything else to add?

ANNEX 3: INTERVIEWS ANSWER BY COUNTRIES

Interviews Lithuania

Introduce yourself and your organisation. How long have you been working with adult learners (with fewer opportunities)? What is your role and what kind of activities do you (e.g., education, training, counselling, social work, volunteering, public service, policy making, etc.)? Your organisation: name, field of action, country, region.

R1 – VšĮ Žmogiškųjų išteklių stebėsenos ir plėtros biuras, NGO - adult training center, Lithuania. The organization has been working with learners with fewer opportunities since 2010. We provide work integration training, social skills building activities, social and psychological counselling, social support.

R2 – The organization I work is social work with adults. I am the trainer. NGO Social Hub, Siauliai region, Lithuania.

R3 – I am working at NGO Human resources development and monitoring bureau as youth worker. We are based in Siauliai, Lithuania mostly we work with trainings for social workers, integration into labor market and adult learning. I am as youth worker consulting youth or young people about career and volunteering. Also, I have some trainings for adult learners such as design thinking, critical thinking.

R4 – D., project activities specialist and consultant. I have been working in Human Resource Monitoring and Development Bureau with adult learners for around 6 months.

R5 – My name is T. Currently I am studying Social Work and Law at Mykolas Romeris university at Vilnius. During pandemic I started working in ZISP (Siauliai) as employment specialist. During my work time I try to help people to find a job, create a normal CV - to sum up - we help people reintegrate into labour market.

In your experience, what do you think is the most common misconception about adult education (prejudices, role in society, importance given to the matter, ...)? What is the general perception media education for adults?

R1 – Major gap between different media tools - some people have good enough knowledge on using social media, but no skills for job-related tasks, some of people are good with smartphones, but have low skills using the computer. The level of knowledge vary significantly person by person - some do not have any knowledge at all, some use basic functions, some have quite good knowledge and skills but are not used to use it.

R2 – I think that unable to follow the news of IT. Information changes weekly.

R3 – Well sometimes is challenging to explain for adult learners certain things especially when we talking about media literacy. Because they tend to think that oh it is hard for me or they have some fears because of their age and so on.

R4 – Most common challenges is finding intrinsic motivation for learning. Difficulties are that many people have low self-esteem hindering their development.

R5 – In this smart technology century, people are, lagging" to catch up the modern technologies. While we are working with adult learners we face different problems like time management, lack of knowledge how to use modern technologies and what main rules are.

In your experience, what do you think are the most common challenges regarding adult education and media literacy for adult learners? What are the main difficulties encountered when working with adult learners?

R1 – The people I work with are often not familiar with things like emails, they are not aware of what are they for, so they need the very basic training to kind of get their heads around the very basic things to start with. A lot of the time they get overwhelmed with the very basic information, and give up.

R2 – Adult learners I work with require a lot of time, and I find that before starting training in a group environment, they feel more at ease having had prior individual, one-to-one training.

R3 – Adult learners often face difficulties in using media. This is a skill they started using relatively recently, so the practical skills aren't as good as they'd like.

R4 – The main difficulties that adult learners may face are a lack of motivation among adults. Adult learners are all the different people and their have various opinions, various desires. The main difficulty is to understand what they really want and what they are expecting to get.

R5 – To find correct and easy way to teach them.

What is the general profile of adult learners you usually work with? What are the main obstacles stopping adults from improving their media literacy (time, interest, economic factors)?

R1 – Many of them are unemployed, at-risk of poverty, facing learning difficulties, intellectual disabilities, they lack basic knowledge and that decrease their interest and motivation.

R2 – Don't have competences to introduce themselves; don't know how to introduce their competences; track information of new information

R3 – I am usually working with youth as I mentioned before.

R4 – Middle age, complicated growing up circumstances, unemployed. Main obstacle stopping adults from improving their media literacy is lack of technology skills.

R5 – Adults, facing social exclusion: long-term unemployed, those suffering with addictions, ex-offenders, those with mental health issues (mostly its 40–65-year-olds). There are various barriers that stop them from attending. Lack of motivation is a big one, no self-confidence, n previous experience of achieving goals.

What are the main difficulties adults have when using the media? What are the main skills adults need to develop for acquiring media literacy using all forms of communication (e.g., awareness, access, safety, production, critical thinking)?

R1 – Low capabilities for daily online tasks; Critical thinking, how to identify fake news, online safety.

R2 – Critical thinking; awareness; flexibility

R3 – I think the main thing is that they should learn not to believe everything what is on the internet. Also, they should learn how to be safe on the internet and not to overshare.

R4 – Lack of technical skills, these skills should be developed.

R5 – The main difficulties are critical thinking, not knowing privacy rules and safety.

How do think the Covid-19 pandemic has affected adult learning of media literacy? Has the pandemic aggravated the needs of adults to acquire media literacy skills?

R1 – There is a growing need for adults to learn media skills because of pandemics, because many of the governmental services now are operating online, some services can be acquired only by digital tools, a lot of fake news has been flourishing online since the pandemic started in social media and it asks for better identification of fake news and better critical thinking.

R2 – The adults were affected of Covid-19 pandemic. All people start use the IT for everything and our adults don't know how.

R3 – I think pandemic showed how important is to have media literacy and know how to use computer. People were forced to shift to media platforms and start acquiring these skills.

R4 – Pandemic has affected adult learning. Majority of people started listening webinars, also some of them started learning at online courses. During the pandemic a percentage increase of people who started using a media

R5 – Absolutely. The pandemic meant that many activities we were used to before, got transferred online (like paying bills, making appointments, talking to various government departments, many training and psychosocial activities - everything we were used to doing face to face). This meant that adults I work with, who already were facing social exclusion, were excluded even more from participating in everyday life. Even doctors' consultations were online, but adults, who don't have any media knowledge, or even access to the internet, were unable to participate.

What kind of relevant training have you received over the last 3 years to help you in your work? If so, what kind (e.g., face-to-face, conference, seminars, shadowing, written or video materials, etc.)?

R1 – Online training of fake news, training for creativity building; Online training, video materials;

R2 – I got a lot of info about training how to use zoom etc, a lot of training how to work in pandemic situation and so on. video training materials.

R3 – I have participated in some face-to-face seminars and trainings as well online too.

R4 – Conferences and seminars were most useful.

R5 – Recently I was at seminar about suicide assistance and how to help Ukrainian people reintegrate into life in our country.

What kind of training would be helpful to you in the field of media education for adult learners (e.g., what topics and delivery method)? What kind of material could be useful to help you in media education for adult learners?

R1 – How to organize media literacy training for people who do not have digital knowledge at all; online toolkit, face-to-face training;

R2 – All kind of training about integration IT in my daily and work life; how not to afraid introduce yourself in video version.

R3 – Some kind of practical tasks and easy explanations on theory things.

R4 – Training for ways of teaching educators to learn technical skills.

R5 – A lot of disabled people do not have even thinking how to start using media, why is it popular and useful these days. If our clients would be motivated to start media education, tablets or light laptops would be great.

Do you have opportunities to discuss and share ideas and good practices with other experts in the field at a local, national and European level? If so, please specify when, where, how, and with who.

R1 – Yes, during other Erasmus+ projects; multiplier events, national and international networks we belong to: National Anti-Poverty Organizations' Network, SFE CE FEC.

R2 – I communicate with a lot of organizations and have the possibility to share. From this year I start organizing NGO social breakfast and during the meeting with other organizations we are sharing the expertise.

R3 – Yes, during conferences, at least once a year.

R4 – Personally, i don't know.

R5 – We have great opportunities implementing various non formal adult education projects, so we are able to share good practices and ideas without partners. I feel that LinkedIn is another great platform to discuss and learn from other professionals.

Do you have anything else to add?

R1 – N/A

R2 – N/A

R3 – N/A

R4 – N/A

R5 – N/A

Interviews Bulgaria

Introduce yourself and your organisation. How long have you been working with adult learners (with fewer opportunities)? What is your role and what kind of activities do you (e.g., education, training, counselling, social work, volunteering, public service, policy making, etc.)? Your organisation: name, field of action, country, region.

R1 – Y. N. - volunteer at Special Olympics Bulgaria. I've been volunteering for the past 14 years, but I have been working with people with disabilities since a very young age due to the fact that my brother has a disability. As a volunteer my activities include support and assistance to people with disabilities during the sporting and training events that Special Olympics Bulgaria organize as well as other activities involving mental development for people with disorders.

R2 – H. N. - volunteer at Special Olympics Bulgaria. I've been volunteering for the past 25 years, but I have been working with people with disabilities for the past 40 due to the fact that my son has a disability. As a volunteer my activities include support and assistance to people with disabilities during the sporting and training events that Special Olympics Bulgaria organize as well as other activities involving mental development for people with disorders. Furthermore, I have organized training sessions with painting for people with down syndrome.

R3 – B. F. - volunteer at Special Olympics Bulgaria. I've been volunteering for the past 25 years, but I have been working with people with disabilities for the past 40 due to the fact that my son has a disability. My work as a volunteer is quite diverse, but in general I assist people with disabilities according to their specific needs at the moment.

R4 – Prof. Dr. N. D. M. is the head of Department of Management at the University of National and World Economy. She is a doctor of social management, a partner in the Bulgarian television MM, part of the MM New Media Group and a partner in the residence for social care Smart Social Care <https://smartsocialcare.com/>

R5 –N. G. T. PhD- I am a lecturer at the University of National and World Economy and I sometimes come across students with disabilities. Our university annually admits students with disabilities for both bachelor's and master's programs.

In your experience, what do you think is the most common misconception about adult education (prejudices, role in society, importance given to the matter, ...)? What is the general perception media education for adults?

R1 – The most common misconceptions when dealing with people with disabilities is that they aren't in any way concerned with media and that they live outside of its scope unaware of its influence or importance to the society. Although for some more severe disorders that might be the case not all adults living with a disability are blind the importance of media. In fact they are more likely to rely on media to further develop their knowledge of the world. For instance in our practice we see that most of the people we train use tablets or smart phones to watch educational videos and this assists them in graduating from school and even high school. Most people with disorders – due to the fact that they have dyslexia or other accompanying learning difficulties perceive through video or games in a more efficient manner.

R2 – Media literacy is partly about incorporating learning which is contained within media based forms (reality TV, dramas, documentaries) and partly about learning to manage information which comes via the media (using critical thinking, making informed and balanced judgements, understanding the author - reader/viewer relationship, learning that advertising is a deliberate strategy rather than providing creative content for entertainment). Students in special education settings may struggle to understand and obtain meaning from some film, TV, radio or advertising content. These students may tend to: See advertising as informative or instructional media, Struggle to understand inferred meaning in scripts and dialogue, Respond rapidly and positively to any instruction given in an online environment (click here to enter the competition, for example).

R3 – The most common misconception about people with disabilities is that they are a separate part of the social world and that they are unable to perceive or analyse information be it educational or emotional in the same manner as ordinary people. Furthermore, it is also perceived that their inability to express their views in an articulate manner is synonymous to not being able to do it at all. The fact that some of them face difficulties with reading or writing puts them in a position where the society rejects them on all levels – thus segregating them from the education system in general.

R4 – From my point of view, the most common and misconception is that learning and education take place at a certain stage of the human life cycle. Most people accept that after their higher education they do not need to make serious additional efforts for self-improvement or acquiring new competencies, but rather rely on employers that if necessary, they can attend certain training, which, however, will be associated with their working position. The attitude towards media literacy is similar. Every day I interact with very different people - students, partners, seniors, lecturers, colleagues, etc .. and when we talk about awareness, critical thinking, perception of information, correct interpretation, fake news, media and their influence, I am left with the impression that most of them do not understand in depth the importance of this media literacy. They suggest that it is important to have one, but they are not working purposefully to improve their own.

R5 – Nowadays, at a high level of digitalization of society, no special attention is paid to media literacy, and we all somehow accept that it is a given that simply exists in parallel with the Internet. Many people take the term in the sense of the ability to handle search engines and nothing more. In addition the specialized channels are paid and can issue cybersecurity and information problems.

In your experience, what do you think are the most common challenges regarding adult education and media literacy for adult learners? What are the main difficulties encountered when working with adult learners?

R1 – Usually we face two main difficulties – one is the support of the guardians as they believe their wards to be vulnerable on the internet and in situations where their innate curiosity will make them vulnerable to malicious intentions by outsiders. The other difficulty is the different abilities of the adults with disabilities themselves. Some disorders do not allow them to develop beyond a certain level regardless of their or other will to assist them with it. A minor additional difficulty is the patience and slow pace in which the training takes place. Teaching adults with disabilities as well as younger members of the community is a lengthy process that takes 10 times more effort and time that training any other adult member of the society.

R2 – For some students with special needs, there is a reduced capacity for tasks and skills such as: Using critical thinking, Making reasoned and informed judgements, Analysing the subtleties of personal communication (glances, shrugs, tone of voice, etc.), Analysing and applying learning from one situation to another, Learning by inference, Understanding the motives that inspire others to communicate with them.

R3 – It is a difficult task for people with disabilities to use critical thinking in perceiving the information that floods them, in many cases the large volume of information on a particular topic confuses them and it is more difficult for them to analyze it.

R4 – Regarding my experience with adult learners, I think that they are more confident in their abilities, they think that they can easily work with different types of media and messages, to critically perceive the information they receive. As a result of their self-confidence, it takes them time to realize how useful and unknown the essence of media literacy is. After the first year of the Pandemic, it seemed that their confidence diminished and they began to pay serious attention to what we read or listened to.

R5 – Actually after the basic knowledge the adult learners are much more focused and conscientious in their learning. They strictly follow the instructions and have almost no problems. On the other hand, the refusal to acquire new knowledge can only be a problem.

What is the general profile of adult learners you usually work with? What are the main obstacles stopping adults from improving their media literacy (time, interest, economic factors)?

R1 – As is the case in many countries the support people with disability receive miniscule in comparison with what they actually require. If we set that aside the economic factors are among the most important factors as these people are often left in care homes and this itself setbacks their development with years. The staff of the care homes is neither trained nor has the financial opportunity to adapt to the needs of people with disability as far as education is concerned. Some of the adults have attended general education institutions but have barely made it past primary education, what is left for digital or media training.

R2 – Special education teachers have an important, but probably quite different role in teaching media literacy than do their counterparts in mainstream education. They need to ensure their students are able to effectively use the media in all its forms, that they are not left prey to others who would seek to take advantage of them in an online environment, equip their students with strategies for managing highly visual or confusing information, and help them understand new and emerging forms of technology that may be helpful and supportive of their learning into the future. The most important struggle is explaining content to highly active and impressionable minds. Filtering the content is also a struggle that people with disability face.

R3 – Among the most common difficulties relate to the ADD syndrome that most people with disabilities have. Their attention span is short and mediums of education have to be changed on regular intervals so that they kept interested. The other difficulty is the economic one – often families are unable to provide for the education of their children with special needs as they materials are expensive. And finally working with adults with special needs is time-consuming. Patience is key in their training and repetition as they learn through observation and imitation.

R4 – My work is mainly related to bachelor's or master's degree students, and in my opinion the main obstacle for them to improve media literacy is the lack of interest. This may be due to the fact that mostly specialties related to media emphasize and study the subject in depth, while students in other specialties have very few hours dedicated to this or only basic information on the topic during lectures.

R5 – I work with people with at least a bachelor's degree or several master's degrees. Their main difficulties are related to the time they spend caring for the family. But these people are very organized and highly literate.

What are the main difficulties adults have when using the media? What are the main skills adults need to develop for acquiring media literacy using all forms of communication (e.g., awareness, access, safety, production, critical thinking)?

R1 – To be able to safely use media, people with disability require constant supervision and guidance. They are very curious in nature and can easily fall under unwanted guidance. Critical thinking is not out of option but it is very easy to attain. Access can also be gained fairly easy. What is crucial is for their guardians to be trained in order to be able to assist them in accessing safely media and filtering their information so that other psychological or emotional triggers do not occur.

R2 – With some disabilities there are issues in perception on all levels – reading, listening or even sight. Some of the people we work with often have additional disorder to the original diagnose such as schizophrenia which makes it difficult for them to differentiate between reality and media content. For other there is a general difficulty in using some apps or even devices that require clear speech and pronunciation as they have speech impairments. Mostly there is the physical disability that prevents them from using devices for those who have disabilities that affect motor function.

R3 – My personal experience shows that media literacy is often hampered by students' lack of understanding of how important it is to think critically. This is true for all adult learners, whether they

have a disability or not. In particular, for people with visual impairments, access to some sites is unavailable, there are conditions in which many hours with a digital device increase anxiety.

R4 – Accessibility of media content is largely a problem for students with disabilities, not all sites are adapted for people with disabilities, for example. The other problem is the lack of information, which sites are reliable and which are full of fake news and sensations, etc.

R5 – In my practice, adult learners do not have problems with the use of media education. Young people between the ages of 18-24 have much more serious difficulties. Due to their experience, adult learners do not have problems with critical thinking.

How do think the Covid-19 pandemic has affected adult learning of media literacy? Has the pandemic aggravated the needs of adults to acquire media literacy skills?

R1 – It has not affected them in any other specific way that usual.

R2 – It has not affected them in any other specific way that usual

R3 – I do not find much impact on people with disabilities in particular, because the whole period of the Pandemic has changed all of us in one way or another. They face the same problems in the digital space every day.

R4 – Certainly Covid 19 instructed a large part of the students to develop critical thinking, to deepen the analysis of the received information, to look for alternative sources of such. The pandemic seemed to make people doubt what they were hearing and not accept it as completely true, as there were a number of cases of conflicting information in the country that confused the public.

R5 – Many teachers and young learners have had to acquire such skills. This does not apply to adult learners. They prefer live and face-to-face training. This is more psychological problem.

What kind of relevant training have you received over the last 3 years to help you in your work? If so, what kind (e.g., face-to-face, conference, seminars, shadowing, written or video materials, etc.)?

R1 – Most of the training I have received has been provided by face-to-face training by the coaches the organization works with and by self-training through professional literature on the topic.

R2 – Most of the training I have received has been provided by face-to-face training by the coaches the organization works with and by self-training through professional literature on the topic.

R3 – We have face to face trainings in the organization where I am a volunteer

R4 – I attended presentations and meetings of colleagues from the university in connection with disinformation, fake news, methods to raise awareness of the public, etc.

R5 – Some video materials on presentation and artist abilities.

What kind of training would be helpful to you in the field of media education for adult learners (e.g., what topics and delivery method)? What kind of material could be useful to help you in media education for adult learners?

R1 – Training on different methodologies of media training that use video and sound as a medium. Also samples of such trainings to be adapted for users in our native language so that they can be used on daily basis by people with disabilities. Technology such as tablets or phones(as they are mostly used by people with disabilities) with pre-installed versions of search engines that provide safety measures or adapted content. Face-to-face training sessions with trained tutors, to learn from concrete examples with people with disabilities.

R2 – Training on different methodologies of media training that use video and sound as a medium. Also samples of such trainings to be adapted for users in our native language so that they can be used on daily basis by people with disabilities. Technology such as tablets or phones(as they are mostly used by people with disabilities) with pre-installed versions of search engines that provide safety measures or adapted content. Face-to-face training sessions with trained tutors, to learn from concrete examples with people with disabilities.

R3 – The use of assistive technologies has the purpose of providing students with disabilities to have equal access to media content and learning experiences. Therefore, various media applications are helpful when overcoming the barriers of physical, mental, cognitive, social, and emotional disabilities by providing as equal access as possible for student with disabilities. Assistive technology can come in many forms: a piece of software, an application, a website, or a mechanical tool. It can help with reading, writing, speaking, listening, calculating, problem-solving, or communication, and it can augment vision or sound or highlight parts of other media.

R4 – I believe that a practical guide for trainers working with adult learners would be widely used

R5 – Basic end user skills on using media.

Do you have opportunities to discuss and share ideas and good practices with other experts in the field at a local, national and European level? If so, please specify when, where, how, and with who.

R1 – N/A

R2 – N/A

R3 – N/A

R4 – N/A

R5 – N/A

Do you have anything else to add?

R1 – N/A

R2 – N/A

R3 – N/A

R4 – N/A

R5 – N/A

Interviews Spain

Introduce yourself and your organisation. How long have you been working with adult learners (with fewer opportunities)? What is your role and what kind of activities do you (e.g., education, training, counselling, social work, volunteering, public service, policy making, etc.)? Your organisation: name, field of action, country, region.

R1 – I am C. R.; ICT coordinator and teacher at the Juan de Lanuza school in Zaragoza. I teach new technologies to my students. In addition, I occasionally conduct talks or training courses for teachers in my school and outside my school on computational thinking, programming, robotics or how to use certain technologies for a teaching improvement

R2 – I am C. M. ,Professor of Journalism; Principal Investigator of the Group in Communication and Digital Information (GICID); Director of the Predepartment Unit for Journalism and Audiovisual Communication and Advertising; and Director of the Extraordinary Courses of the University of Zaragoza. I have been working with adult students with fewer opportunities (due to disability or economic resources) for more than twenty-five years, as a university professor, within the field of education, tutoring and adaptation of resources and content. My organization is the University of Zaragoza, university education, in the community of Aragon, Spain.

R3 – My name is T. L. I am a teacher of Adult Education for seven years I have worked in the City of Sestrica in coordination with the Adult Center of Almunia in my professional career I have had in most cases groups of elderly people but I have also worked with groups in social inequality people who have come to our country to seek a better quality of life, a decent job or simply nationality . And the field in which I work is the educational field we belong to the Provincial Council of Zaragoza and the activities we develop because they are educational activities focused and related to entrepreneurship, emotional and personal development and above all help those people to reintegrate into public and educational life

R4 – My name is S. V.. From the Department of Design and Production Engineering in the University of Zaragoza . Sonia is also an investigator regarding education and the psychological processes within it. She works as a professor in the Master's degree for Vocational Education Training (VET) for teachers in the University of Zaragoza, as well as in a VET institute

R5 – My name is Carla. I am a PhD in teaching and I have been part of the project coordination team of Red Araña (based in Madrid) since May 2021. One of my main functions is to coordinate and supervise projects that are developed in the territorial offices that the entity has throughout Spain.

In your experience, what do you think is the most common misconception about adult education (prejudices, role in society, importance given to the matter, ...)? What is the general perception media education for adults?

R1 – My perception is that it is totally necessary, and more so at this time where digitalization has gained a majority importance and most of our adults have surely not received the necessary training to face these new realities. In addition, we must always take into account lifelong learning and the opportunity for professional retraining for many people in adulthood who are looking for a new job.

R2 – The perception is that media education is not necessary, it is not sufficiently enhanced by public policies. Much more preponderance should be given, given that we are in an era of information pollution and deinfomation.

R3 – From my experience I can say that within the field of adult education there are many prejudices since most people who go to adult schools do so with first scarcity of information since there is no information on the subject is a non-taboo but almost taboo subject because very little is said about it and people have very little information about it, so people who approach adult schools come with fears, with preconceived ideas that are not true and that does not favor our education at all. As for the foreign staff who approach the schools, many also have prejudices and it is difficult for them to enter, it is difficult for them to approach, they find it difficult to ask for information then their own religion or the rules of their culture also prevent them from accessing and the fact that they are connected to us in the school that hinders the process and makes it difficult and long.

R4 – From my experience I can say that no one can doubt today that our society is subdued, of accelerated and almost convulsive form, to permanent and profound changes. The technological and informational revolution reaches all spheres and almost every corner of our lives. Work, leisure, travel and even almost thought is today subjected to the power of "technology" that is born, grows and transforms into multiple devices that are increasingly accessible and affordable, more universal. Its penetrating power has no borders, no social classes, no age, no cultural level... smartphones, tablets, video games, television, internet on its many faces is present, almost omnipresent and omnipotent, beyond the coordinates of time and place. From the educational world we can not remain immune to this technological presence that has transformed, rather that it is transforming our ways of living and thinking... "Educating for the new media. Keys to the development of media competence in the digital environment" precisely aims to offer clues and proposals, from the field of Educommunication, so that citizens are competent before the new media, developing skills, attitudes and values that allow them to live with them in an active, intelligent and critical way.

R5 – I think the biggest problem is that adult education is too often dealt with as it is with children/adolescents, forgetting that adults have a very broad life experience (and that it should be taken into account to "hook" them during classes). In addition, we cannot forget that they have needs that must be covered so that they can afford to attend the trainings (for example, the care of the children or even other adults in their care).

In your experience, what do you think are the most common challenges regarding adult education and media literacy for adult learners? What are the main difficulties encountered when working with adult learners?

R1 – Surely having grown up in an era where not only was it not necessary but there were almost no technologies. A large gap has been generated that hinders in the first place the desire of adults to train in this type of media literacy and secondly also makes it technically more difficult.

R2 – The main challenges and challenges are to apply the framework of the competence dimensions set by the European Union in DigCom, where indicators and fields are applied, not only instrumental or technological, but also ethical and protection against harmful content. The main difficulty is their level of media literacy in terms of use and management of tools.

R3 – Okay to explain this question I am going to focus on my teaching experience of these years and I would like to comment that one of the most important challenges I see would be to attract the largest number of people for this we have to do a great job of publicizing our work and our work, that is, a recognition of the work of adult educators because as I have already commented previously there is a shortage and lack of information on the subject. As for the problems that I see of the literacy of adults in these times I would say that the main problem is the digital age or the new technologies in which we are immersed is worth that is because it is an obstacle for the generation of adult schools generating fears shame frustrations that prevents many people from going and showing rejection to schools for not being able to face that fear.

R4 – The educator and the educator of adults learns to be through a process of socialization that is based on two basic pillars: previous experience you have had as a student prior to your entry into the university and the pedagogical model presented by its teaching staff in university classrooms.

R5 – The main one is a lack of motivation or interest. Often, these people come to the trainings because a social worker derives them, "forcing" them in some way to attend the training if they want to maintain certain privileges (social inclusion income, unemployment benefit, etc.). While this obligation is understandable, the negative consequences that it sometimes entails are still evident.

What is the general profile of adult learners you usually work with? What are the main obstacles stopping adults from improving their media literacy (time, interest, economic factors)?

R1 – The profile of the teachers I work with are teachers working in primary or secondary education. AN age range between 25 and 55 years. The main difficulty in this guild is the lack of time to learn in a deep way. The trainings usually fit in the few free times they have and the predisposition at first is not usually the best since the stress and anxiety for the daily work pending is latent, something that does not facilitate being open to training and its need. It is difficult for them to see the benefit in the medium and long term, since in the short term the emergencies are other

R2 – The profile of adult students (over 25 or 40, within 10% of my classes) and 90% over 20 years, are usually people who study second careers, in the first case and that is their first degree, in the second. Older people tend to have an interest in media literacy, requiring more time than their peers. But what has been demonstrated, over the years, is that those who are "digital immigrants" do not

have to have fewer skills, Prensky's concept has been overcome, some older people are wiser in an integral sense in the management of equipment and in the rest of the skills that are required for an optimal management of the TRIC (Relationship Technologies, Information and Communication).

R3 – Within our school the profile of students we have is mostly women and between 55 and 80 years the fact that we do not have men in school or just men is an aspect that we have not yet studied and of which we do not have much information but it is a curious fact and there I leave it, the factors that influence that these people can achieve the proposed objectives are mostly economic factors since they do not have access to these devices or new technologies and that influences the teaching process.

R4 – My students are soon-to-be professional teachers, and her goal throughout the degree is to provide all possible knowledge in order for them to apply it successfully in their educational future. The goal is to allow future teachers (my students) to come closer to the context where they will develop their professional career, permitting them to know where to find all the educational resources around them. Some of the learning goals from the subject include planning, design, organization, development and evaluation of learning activities; innovative knowledge; selection of the adequate content to be taught depending on the objectives set; leadership; teamwork; decision-making, etc.

R5 – I don't usually work directly with students. I participate in the process through the design of projects, as well as in their coordination and supervision. Therefore, it can be said that the profile of adult students to whom the effects of my work somehow reach is very broad, since it covers: students of training cycles, adults in a situation of exclusion, rural women, women victims of gender violence, entrepreneurs, people with some type of addiction, etc.

What are the main difficulties adults have when using the media? What are the main skills adults need to develop for acquiring media literacy using all forms of communication (e.g., awareness, access, safety, production, critical thinking)?

R1 – The main difficulty I don't think is the ability to communicate, but the way in which to communicate. How to use these new technologies to be able to express oneself is usually the main problem to do so in an effective way. I myself who am an expert in the area have to make efforts to be aware of new forms of communication that are emerging such as Discord, Twitch or similar.

R2 – As has been demonstrated in various investigations in which we have participated on digital competences, the dimensions in which they have more difficulty are those related to aesthetics and languages. Therefore, the main skills they must develop are precisely those related to production, without forgetting safety.

R3 – The main problems that adults have to face the media would be the lack of self-confidence, the lack of awareness on the part of the importance that the media can have and the low self-esteem faced by people who usually go to adult schools because such profiles, that other years we have analyzed we have realized that they came with low self-esteem and with little interest in the proposed activities.

R4 – The main problems that adults have to face the media would be the lack of self-confidence, the lack of awareness on the part of the importance that the media can have and the low self-esteem faced by people who usually go to adult schools because such profiles, that other years we have analyzed we have realized that they came with low self-esteem and with little interest in the proposed activities.

R5 – I think that the essential (and perhaps also more complex) is to get them to understand the workings of the media from an interconnected perspective. It is very difficult to convey the idea that no media escapes today the influence of the large media groups behind practically all the media; and it is also difficult to make them understand that no matter how much we see someone saying or doing something, they are not necessarily doing or saying that at the time or with the intention that we believe. It is more difficult even with the Internet, since in social networks, for example, we no longer even have the filtro that is assumed to the media considered official (such as the press or radio). In any case, this difficulty is probably connected with the difficulty involved in teaching to think critically (both in this area and in any other).

How do think the Covid-19 pandemic has affected adult learning of media literacy? Has the pandemic aggravated the needs of adults to acquire media literacy skills?

R1 – The pandemic has further accelerated the need to use these new technologies on the one hand and on the other has widened the digital divide since the acceleration in the inclusion of these technologies has been faster than the time it takes to be prepared and trained to use them. On the other hand, it has become clear how necessary they can be and has also been a revulsive or incentive for those adults who did not want to take the step to train and finally have done so.

R2 – Indeed, the confinement entailed the requirement of needing to have skills to be able to relate to the rest of the people, as a window to the world. Many adults had to learn against the clock to manage tools and resources to be able to connect with their families and for borales and leisure uses.

R3 – Of course, if the whole issue of the pandemic has harmed all people to gain in more distrust, more insecurity, lower self-esteem and that now falls to us teachers a more laborious job of trying to overcome this situation, which is already being developed through an emotional education plan that is being worked on in the center to try to put a solution and help people to change aspects of your life and be able to face situations in a different way and have another point of view.

R4 – Of course, education could also face major challenges, exacerbating massive pre-COVID-19 education funding gaps. I propose to overcome the classic approach to the didactic use of media and integrate media education in a transversal and multidisciplinary way in the teaching-learning processes, as a transversal axis of the curriculum, from a "prosumer" adult school approach where adult people become creative protagonists of media as a strategy of appropriation and learning.

R5 – I believe that, on the one hand, the Pandemic has aggravated the difficulties of adults with little or no knowledge related to ICT, but instead it has served to make those people who have a minimum base in this area have more options to access this type of literacy, since it has increased the offer and the facilities offered to access it.

What kind of relevant training have you received over the last 3 years to help you in your work? If so, what kind (e.g., face-to-face, conference, seminars, shadowing, written or video materials, etc.)?

R1 – Two mainly: a preparatory and skillful master's degree to do a doctorate, which has allowed me to know and deepen the way in which academic research occurs and finally communicates. On the other hand, a postgraduate degree in Technopolitics and Legal Rights, something so fundamental in this era that we are living of digitalization of society.

R2 – More than receiving training, we have offered it from my research group, GICID, and SMEMIU, from the UNED. When the pandemic began, we set out to develop a resource bank for those colleagues from other degrees who had no experience in e-learning and could learn to use tools and methodologies applicable to their classes, in an easy way. We posted it on our website and offered it through networks: <https://gicid.unizar.es/destacadas/banco-de-recursos-de-docencia-digital/>

R3 – The truth is that we have not received anything in recent years. It is a subject that I would like a little to denounce from here the little interest that there is towards the work of adult schools since we are not provided with courses, workshops, or seminars. Then I would like the situation to change and that we will also be told the opportunity to train and learn more to be in continuous educational progress in order to give the best to our students.

R4 – In the UNIZAR (Research team) has proposed an approach of older people to emerging technologies to perceive as useful tools in your life, discriminating possibilities and limitations and discarding fears and harm.

R5 – I would change the wording of this question a bit: "Have you received any kind of relevant training, in the last 3 years, to help you in your work?" After that I would continue with the following sentence: "In case you do..." He would add: "If not, what kind of training would you like to receive?"

What kind of training would be helpful to you in the field of media education for adult learners (e.g., what topics and delivery method)? What kind of material could be useful to help you in media education for adult learners?

R1 – Especially techniques to be able to reach people who may never have had a previous contact with this type of training.

R2 – You can use the materials that we have prepared from the ECO Digital Learning project, based on Open Educational Resources (OER) with free access to a list of MOOCs (Open Online Massive Courses) in 6 different languages, with the aim of expanding access to education and improving the quality and profitability of teaching and learning. The purpose of some of them is the application to media education. Available at: <https://eco-learning.eu/?lang=es>

R3 – I find it interesting to work on issues in the face of social communication that people learn to relate, learn to express their feelings, can learn to be able to transmit what they want to convey in each situation in which they find themselves, then also acquire skills for work, social skills, relate to

others, how to face a job interview I think it would be interesting if there were themes information about it to be able to give our students these tools.

R4 – Many adult learners have been away from formal schooling for many years and may have had negative experiences with school. These adult learners may be reentering schooling with anxiety and low self-esteem. Conversely, adult learners also bring years of previous knowledge and experience to the classroom, as well as an established system of values and beliefs governing their thought. They expect to be treated as adults. Adults often have a problem-centered approach to learning and are interested in content that has a direct application to their lives. They want to see immediately how the course content is relevant to their current problems or situations.

R5 – Perhaps courses/workshops in which they are studied, or present practical examples of how certain projects have been carried out in other regions/countries, interviews and/or round tables in which those project managers, experts in adult education, etc. are included.

Do you have opportunities to discuss and share ideas and good practices with other experts in the field at a local, national and European level? If so, please specify when, where, how, and with who.

R1 – Yes, with my fellow teachers or with teachers outside my school. I have a relationship with local and national administrations, not so much European.

R2 – Yes, with many educommunicators, for example, with Sara Osuna -professor of Education at the UNED- I share many investigations and projects; with colleagues from the Alfamed Network (Ignacio Aguaded, Agustín García Matilla, Joan Ferrés, Javier Marzal, Alfonso Gutiérrez), we share international scientific forums; and with colleagues from other countries, such as Divina Frau Meigs, from the Université de la Sorbonne; Sara Pereira and Manuell Pinto, from the Universidade do Braga; Elisa Hergueta, from the University of Krems in Vienna; Miguel Ezequiel Badillo, from UNAD in Colombia; Jorge Cortés Montalvo, from the University of Chihuahua, in Mexico; among others, in international congresses, including the one I have been directing, for several editions: CICID: <https://cicid.es/>

R3 – I do not have and have not had the opportunity to share these ideas with anyone at local level, neither at national level, nor at European level and I would like to because I find it interesting to share these ideas in order to achieve the objectives that I have raised throughout the questions.

R4 – I am working in several forums with the possibility to share the knowledges and experiences regarding the topic.

R5 – Yes, with the various workers of Red Araña, as well as with the international experts with whom we collaborate in European projects and with the members of the multiple entities with which we collaborate in Spain.

Do you have anything else to add?

R1 – It is necessary to raise awareness among politicians of the importance of promoting in the academic system the insertion of subjects related to media education, also through public aid for the

development of OER, such as MOOCs, through OTRI contracts or research projects with teams from different universities, experts in the field, such as GICID.

R2 –

R3 – I wanted to thank you for the opportunity to conduct this interview and to contribute my grain of sand to the world of adult education, hopefully something can be done and things can be changed and I hope that any change of course that is made is thinking about the well-being of our students.

R4 – thank you for the opportunity to conduct this interview and to contribute to the world of adult education, hopefully something can be done and things can be changed and I hope that any change of course that is made is thinking about the well-being of our students.

R5 – I found this questionnaire extremely interesting. The questions that compose it are profound and incite reflection and exploration of multiple issues related to our work. I am sure that I will continue to reflect on some of the issues proposed.

Interviews Italy

Introduce yourself and your organisation. How long have you been working with adult learners (with fewer opportunities)? What is your role and what kind of activities do you (e.g., education, training, counselling, social work, volunteering, public service, policy making, etc.)? Your organisation: name, field of action, country, region.

R1 – The association I volunteer for is called Auser Trani, which aims to promote active ageing of the elderly. I am involved in training through didactic lessons.

R2 – My name is V. T. and I am the president of the social promotion association called Auser Insieme Trani. The association works to promote the active ageing of the elderly through various training and entertainment activities.

R3 – I have been a powerchair football coach for four years now. I work for Oltre Sport, the first team in Puglia to practice electric wheelchair football for differently abled children.

R4 – I am an educator and I work at the Associazione Promozione Sociale e Solidarietà. The aim of the association is to promote social solidarity among people in situations of fragility due to relational, motor and mental limitations and difficulties.

I have run literacy courses on topics of general interest: operating system, word processing, Internet (e-mail, HTML language, programming tools, services), for adults over 35.

R5 – I am a teacher of computer science at the IDA Course, evening hotel course in Puglia, and I have been working with adults for 5 years. My students are adults, including foreigners, who have completed the first cycle of education. I work mainly with adults who, for work, family or personal

reasons, have abandoned their studies and intend to resume them in order to acquire a diploma without sacrificing their profession.

In your experience, what do you think is the most common misconception about adult education (prejudices, role in society, importance given to the matter, ...)? What is the general perception media education for adults?

R1 – It is wrongly assumed that adults are too old to learn and grasp new concepts, as if education is only limited to the adolescent/youth phase. Specifically, in media education in particular, it is believed that adults are unable to learn because new technologies are considered too complex for their standards.

R2 – It is often thought that adults and in particular the elderly cannot do certain things especially related to digitalisation.

R3 – The general perception is that things cannot be changed and limits cannot be exceeded. All this I consider absolutely wrong.

R4 – For many years, adults have been neglected in favour of children. Teaching adults is very different from teaching children. The motivations, expectations, experiences and strategies of the adult learner are not those of the child. When talking about adulthood, most people use the term 'training', driven by the conviction that when dealing with adults the use of the verb 'to educate' is in itself contradictory. The first task of a trainer is therefore to help learners become aware of their need to know, because you are never too old to learn. It is necessary to stimulate the need to know and to educate.

R5 – The users of Adult Education courses are more and more often the bearers of complex and diversified demands due to unequal living and working conditions, irregular school careers, a wide range of ages and the increasingly important presence of foreigners. The adult re-entering training is committed, acts and reacts if he is strongly motivated in a relationship of mutual respect; he wants to obtain a qualification, which will allow him to move on to work or to a new occupation; he expresses a strong desire for social promotion, socialisation and communication; he brings with him a wealth of general and professional cultural knowledge to be consolidated and developed. The most common mistake is to think that adults are not interested in training; in reality, it is necessary to find the right key to motivate them and give them the desire and pleasure to learn.

In your experience, what do you think are the most common challenges regarding adult education and media literacy for adult learners? What are the main difficulties encountered when working with adult learners?

R1 – The biggest challenge is to involve adults. Main difficulties: Often there is a lack of basic knowledge to deal with certain topics, so it would be good to understand the level of knowledge first and then propose activities.

R2 – Finding a balance between young and old, e.g., the hours available do not always match, and especially at the beginning there is a struggle to create the right mindset.

R3 – The main difficulties when working with adult learners are: having a common language, taking trivial things for granted, understanding how far you can go at any given moment, etc.

R4 – At some point in our lives, perhaps more than once, we all face the challenge of finding a job. For many, especially low-skilled adults, this search is made even more onerous. Adults in this situation do not always understand the importance of training. The long-term unemployed, in particular, are often discouraged and inactive, and it is difficult to reach them to make them understand that they need to update their skills and their personal and professional profile in order to return to work and be economically independent.

R5 – Educating is an active process that takes place between two people where one needs the other. The relationship between adults and educational issues immediately implies an element of problematic nature, because it clashes with a still common belief: that education refers exclusively to childhood and youth, that is, to the ages of growth, while adulthood is the moment when growth is already complete. In order for adults to be able to educate themselves, i.e. to change their attitude towards what they are experiencing, so that they can live with greater serenity and awareness, it is necessary to show that they are capable of learning and, above all, in what way and under what conditions they are willing to learn. As far as media literacy is concerned, I often deal with adults who are able to use a smartphone, and who do not consider it necessary to be able to understand and critically evaluate the content they encounter on the internet.

What is the general profile of adult learners you usually work with? What are the main obstacles stopping adults from improving their media literacy (time, interest, economic factors)?

R1 – Main profile: pensioners. The main factors preventing improvement are lack of time and other interests

R2 – Over 60. The main obstacle is the idea of not succeeding. They participate because they want to succeed, but at the first difficulty they get discouraged.

R3 – I work mainly with adults with severe motor disabilities. The main obstacles are the lack of autonomy and independence of the users.

R4 – Generally I deal with unemployed adults who are unqualified or poorly qualified. Although they are unemployed, they say they do not have time for training. They do not understand the importance of media literacy and the job prospects it offers.

R5 – I work mainly with foreign adults who have completed their first cycle of education and who intend to complete their second cycle of education. Many of the adults I work with have specific goals they want to achieve. They prefer to participate in learning activities that can help them achieve their goals, especially in the work environment. They have specific expectations from learning activities and are likely to drop out of learning of their own accord if these expectations are not met.

What are the main difficulties adults have when using the media? What are the main skills adults need to develop for acquiring media literacy using all forms of communication (e.g., awareness, access, safety, production, critical thinking)?

R1 – Main difficulties: technical. Main skill: awareness

R2 – They do not have the right mentality and think they can proceed from memory.

R3 – The main skills adults need to develop are those that enable them to improve their everyday activities. The main difficulties in using the media are represented by a lack of practicality and mental flexibility.

R4 – Main difficulties: Thanks to advertising on the Internet, it is possible to access a huge amount of resources completely free of charge. However, adults are not aware that advertisements can also represent a potential danger, especially if the site where they are displayed is not well-known or not very reliable. Very often, when adults click on one of these advertisements, for one reason or another they install certain programmes, which very often turn out to be viruses. This is why, based on my experience, I believe that media education is fundamental for adults because it promotes responsible use of the media, knowledge, the ability to analyse and critically interpret the language, content and messages transmitted.

R5 – In my experience, adults are more likely to spread fake news on social media. They do not have the ability to discern the true from the false, to fully understand the texts they read and to check the sources and/or compare different versions of the same news. This requires the promotion of skills for reading and writing media. Adults need to be supported so that they can develop critical and responsible thinking about the media (media awareness). In addition, media education can support processes related to distance learning and thus could extend the possibility of training to more adults, compatibly with their work commitments.

How do think the Covid-19 pandemic has affected adult learning of media literacy? Has the pandemic aggravated the needs of adults to acquire media literacy skills?

R1 – The pandemic has brought more and more adults into the world of media literacy: they have been 'forced', for example, to use new technologies to get in touch with their relatives.

R2 – The pandemic has accelerated the digitisation process in general and adults also want to be part of this change. Certainly the pandemic has aggravated the need but it has been a push for change that starts with each of us.

R3 – The pandemic has made it necessary for many people to do what was not necessary before and they have had to learn, and quickly.

R4 – Technological and digital progress has brought about major changes in our lives. New media and communication platforms have changed social and communication relationships. Technological and digital progress has provided Europe's citizens with significant new opportunities to communicate and to find, create and distribute different types of content; the exposure of citizens to large doses

of misinformation, especially at a time of major global crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, highlights the importance of a systematic approach to developing media literacy, the importance of collaboration between online platforms, experts and competent authorities, the importance of educating oneself and being aware of the choices one makes on the web.

R5 – Low skills are not only an obstacle to employment, but also a limitation to full participation in society, and this limitation became even more evident during the covid-19 pandemic, which required a rapid upgrading of skills (e.g. digital) for a range of both professional and everyday tasks. The pandemic showed that most adults did not have the digital and media skills to cope with the difficulties of the moment.

What kind of relevant training have you received over the last 3 years to help you in your work? If so, what kind (e.g., face-to-face, conference, seminars, shadowing, written or video materials, etc.)?

R1 – Books, podcasts, personal study

R2 – I am constantly training in the digital field as I work in this sector.

R3 – Master's degree, computer certifications, further training in clill methodology.

R4 – Books, Podcasts, Seminars

R5 – In the last few years I have taken computer courses but nothing on media education.

What kind of training would be helpful to you in the field of media education for adult learners (e.g., what topics and delivery method)? What kind of material could be useful to help you in media education for adult learners?

R1 – Type of training: I think that thematic meetings (from psychology to didactics) would be useful. Type of material: handouts, but also conferences

R2 – I would say that you have to train all the time but normally it is me who trains other people in this area.

R3 – Continuous training courses would be useful.

R4 – I have some knowledge about media literacy, but I do not consider myself an expert. I would need to train on specific topics, in a simple way, to be able to pass on this knowledge to my students. I would like to know about tools available online which can support my work. Most of the time I find online content mainly for children.

R5 – I would like to find a simple and effective way to teach adults the skills needed to critically read and interpret news on the web, and the importance of protecting their social media profiles.

Do you have opportunities to discuss and share ideas and good practices with other experts in the field at a local, national and European level? If so, please specify when, where, how, and with who.



R1 – No

R2 – It can be organized.

R3 – During the pandemic I studied a system of video analysis of the matches to be able to continue to manage the training of the boys focused on the study of tactics. In order to develop this, I attended several webinars held by the most important coaches and trainers around. Sometimes even in a foreign language.

R4 – I happened to be local, but we experienced the same problems

R5 – I often compare myself with other teachers, but we are in the same situation and with the same difficulties. We have not identified any good practices to follow.

Do you have anything else to add?

R1 – No

R2 – No

R3 – I believe that there are no limits and that forming is a gradual and endless process.

R4 – No

R5 – I agree with those who emphasise the need to set up a training course that is relevant to the daily lives of students. A training course with concrete and meaningful content that can be used in everyday life.

Interviews Netherlands

Introduce yourself and your organisation. How long have you been working with adult learners (with fewer opportunities)? What is your role and what kind of activities do you (e.g., education, training, counselling, social work, volunteering, public service, policy making, etc.)? Your organisation: name, field of action, country, region.

R1 – I'm L., the founder of Let's Reach Success - a company registered in Amsterdam but which operates globally and serves mainly people from the US and other English-speaking countries. I've been in the online education space for around 7 years now and was first teaching through free content in the form of blog posts as well as eBooks. In the last years, I've entered the online course industry and now create self-paced programs that teach aspiring entrepreneurs the different aspects of online business.

R2 – My name is M. D. and I'm a feminine leadership coach at Azkua. I've been working with adult learners for the last 20 years as a coach and trainer in London, Melbourne and now The Hague. Azkua is a coaching and training company based in The Hague.

R3 – I am a lecturer, based in the Hague, the Netherlands. Throughout my career within and outside of the university I have been involved in various educational programs and activities focused on adult learners. At the university we try to stimulate an inclusive and diverse population of students, by making it possible for groups of adult learners, who have a little child, or a busy schedule to attend classes and be able to conclude their study of choice in time.

R4 – I am a trainer in the hospitality industry. I work with companies who are looking to educate their workforce within the industry on specific topics, such as for example the guest journey. I work in the region of the Netherlands.

R5 – I am a consultant, trainer and life coach, working for a foundation, which focuses on supporting immigrants, people who do not speak the local language – Dutch, and for people with disabilities (mainly young adults). I am based in the Netherlands, but mainly work with families in Amsterdam.

In your experience, what do you think is the most common misconception about adult education (prejudices, role in society, importance given to the matter, ...)? What is the general perception media education for adults?

R1 – A common misconception about adult education is that people have a harder time grasping new concepts after a certain age, or starting a business or any other project. This is often being used as an excuse to not even give new subjects or interests a try. They are told by others they won't succeed and get discouraged as a result, and often compare themselves to other learners who have started at a younger age.

R2 – I'm not sure to be honest. As an avid learner myself I might simply attract other keen learners as clients but in my experience the women we work with are constantly learning something. They are keen to develop both personally and professionally. Maybe even to the extent that they constantly feel the need to do another Master, another diploma, another certification.

R3 – Some common misconceptions I hear from adult learners is that they do not have enough time to go to the university, or that they fear that they won't make it on time with the required credits to graduate and be successful. Some are also afraid that they won't fit in the group with younger students.

R4 – I think that a lot of misconceptions around hospitality workers is that they are not well skilled. While they may not be PhD degree holders, their capabilities and qualities are in many cases different. They are able to multitask, they have a fast reaction time, they have an etiquette on how to make guests feel welcome and important, and they also have a great emotional barrier. While they, as adult educators may not be seen as the easiest group to work with, the skills that they are trained at are different and sometimes way more complex than for other groups of learners.

R5 – I believe a common misconception is that they are not capable to perform with the speed - level of reaction, thinking and understanding needed to live in a society of digital nomads. I believe that they are capable, as long as they get acquainted with technology.

In your experience, what do you think are the most common challenges regarding adult education and media literacy for adult learners? What are the main difficulties encountered when working with adult learners?

R1 – One common challenge is the learning curve. This is a mental barrier mostly but often people won't begin learning something just because the gap between where they are now and the final result (having learned and applied that particular thing) is too big. This challenge can be overcome by understanding that everything is a process and all that they need to do now is take the first step. Not being tech-savvy can be another barrier. If an online program requires using a new platform or app, adult learners might be intimidated and not feel comfortable.

R2 – For our target group when it comes to adult education it is usually time and money. With busy careers and lives they struggle to put in as many hours as they'd like. And sometimes money is an issue. Coaching and training is an investment. And many women tend to invest in others and less in themselves. Regarding media literacy I'm not sure. Many of our clients read and listen to media from several countries as many of them are internationals.

R3 – In terms of the organization: Time and curriculum capacity are mostly the obstacles we face. Not only is that we don't simple have enough time to teach them everything we want, but also that sometimes we need to prioritize certain subjects that shape our curriculum and sell better. In terms of working with adult learners: Fear of failure. When working with digital devices in a multi-cultural and multi-generational classroom, sometimes adult learners feel ashamed to ask technical questions, that their peers already know the answer to. They are sometimes also afraid to "click the wrong button", but of course it also depends on the age of the adult learner that is in the classroom.

R4 – I think one of the most common challenges in the hospitality industry is not only to convince employers of the importance of training adult learners on the necessary skills, but also to convince the employees of the added value of attending trainings. In the area of media literacy, it is important that they are able to access, critically analyse and evaluate the information and data that comes from the systems that the hotels and restaurants work with.

R5 – I believe a big challenge is to get adult learners out of their comfort zone and to see them make experiments with new technologies. They are sometimes afraid of technologies and are afraid to even try to work with them. They simply say "I don't know how to work with this" and put it away. Adult educators sometimes do not have the pedagogical tools on how to approach such situations. I also think that not only adult educators need to have the knowledge on how to approach adult learners in terms of digital media literacy. I think every citizen has the responsibility.

What is the general profile of adult learners you usually work with? What are the main obstacles stopping adults from improving their media literacy (time, interest, economic factors)?

R1 – The adult learners I usually work with are people who want to quit their job and start a business. They are dissatisfied with their current reality, aware of the business opportunities available online, brainstorming ideas and looking for ways to earn on the side, consuming free content on the topic, following people in the industry, and thinking of investing in a program so they can learn the ins and outs of launching their business.

Some of the things stopping them from taking the leap might be lack of time (which often shows their priorities aren't in tune with their business goals), thinking it takes too long to succeed, comparing themselves to others who are already full-time business owners and feeling like they can't get there, being overwhelmed by all the advice online and not being sure which expert to listen to, or not being ready to invest in a self-paced program.

R2 – Our adult learners are international, female professionals and entrepreneurs.

R3 – I believe generally it is time and economic factors. Many adults want to learn, but sometimes they are preoccupied with the other responsibilities they have in life and simply not only they don't have the time, but more that they don't have the energy and capacity to learn.

R4 – Mainly time and interest/motivation are the obstacles that we face. Many of the adult learners are simply happy with the skills they have as they get them by the day at work. And mostly when there is a training needed, companies in the industry do not pay for the extra training time for acquiring the skills. This further does not motivate the adult learners to participate. Economic factors do not play a big role, as mostly the companies pay for the trainings.

R5 – I work with people with specific needs. I have disabled clients, living in shared housing, which experience loneliness, so I work with them on understanding the underlying reasoning behind their emotions. In the area of education, I give presentations, one-on-one coaching sessions to adult learners in the business field, mostly expats. The biggest obstacle I would name would be time.

What are the main difficulties adults have when using the media? What are the main skills adults need to develop for acquiring media literacy using all forms of communication (e.g., awareness, access, safety, production, critical thinking)?

R1 – To make the most of online education, adults need to be open to learning new concepts and changing their current beliefs. To be consistent with the new subject and make time for it daily or every few days. To make it a priority and invest not just time but also energy and focus. To be willing to implement what they learn. To actively listen to lectures, take notes and then go through them again. To also decide how the knowledge can be applied to their life, how they can give their own spin to it and personalize it to their lifestyle, thinking and vision.

R2 – I think critical thinking we become most crucial going forward. Media is everywhere and we need to be more aware of the source of information, who's financing certain channels, who benefits from what kind of news and more.

R3 – I believe they need to understand that in the digital world, nothing is 100% safe, that maybe once they will make a mistake, click the wrong button or close an important page. But without trying and making mistakes they will never learn. So a key is to focus on creating awareness related to safety but also to stimulate the critical thinking needed to become a media nomad.

R4 – Mostly they struggle with interpretation of what they see. In the digital world, things move very quickly, screens change with one click. They need to develop critical thinking skills and to be more aware of the generic common looks of a platform.

R5 – It would be beneficial if there is an A to Z booklet on media literacy for adult learners, which describes all the main concepts that are around the topic. Sometimes adult learners are asked to activate a “two factor verification” to use their online banking for instance. They are not aware of why this step is necessary and they do not have the understanding on how to do this in order to gain access to their account once again. So in this line, it is not only important that they are trained on their critical thinking, but also on the basics of media literacy.

How do think the Covid-19 pandemic has affected adult learning of media literacy? Has the pandemic aggravated the needs of adults to acquire media literacy skills?

R1 – With the pandemic, everyone spent more time at home and in front of the screen than ever before in history. That opened people’s eyes to the opportunities available online, to how convenient online education actually is, to better ways to use their free time and acquire new skills.

With that increased demand, more and more business owners packaged their knowledge into courses and started serving those people. Online programs on all topics you can think of became available and most of them were really results-oriented. People could now achieve a milestone or learn any new skill in no time, take only the information they need, without needing to invest in another program again.

During the pandemic, the online course industry exploded.

R2 – Covid 19 brought all our trainings and coaching online. Whereas previously we would meet regularly face to face this was no longer possible. Zoom meetings and events became the norm. And we expect it to continue in some sort of hybrid fashion (online and face to face) going forward. Re media literacy it appears that more and more polarized news where shared during Covid. People and events many times were either black or white. One had to dig for a bit of a more “grey” perspective or read both perspectives to get a more wholistic picture. Because of that I feel critical thinking (as mentioned above) will be crucial for all of us going forward.

R3 – The pandemic definitely accelerated many adult learners’ digital skills and capabilities. While they struggled to put up a presentation previously, now they can put up a presentation, share screen, include video and audio materials, manage a chat simultaneously. This made them much more able to multitask online and boosted for many their confidence in terms of their digital capabilities.

R4 – The Covid-19 pandemic did not really help much accelerating the media literacy skills in the hospitality industry. Though perhaps in the private lives, employees became more tech-savvy or took a government subsidised course, within the industry the goal was on survival of the business and cost cutting/saving strategies, rather than investment.

R5 – It has forced adult educators to be in touch more often with technology and digital tools. In the Netherlands there was a period of time where citizens were not able to see their grandparents for instance, as they were classified as a high-risk group. The adult learners had to get acquainted to using FaceTime for example, so that they can connect with the families. It helped, however once the regulations were lifted, everything went back to how it was.

What kind of relevant training have you received over the last 3 years to help you in your work? If so, what kind (e.g., face-to-face, conference, seminars, shadowing, written or video materials, etc.)?

R1 – My training never stops but it’s often in the form of learning from experience, consuming all the content in my areas of expertise that I can get my hands on, and investing in programs by entrepreneurs I look up to and want to learn from. All this is in the form of written or video material.

R2 – I’ve done several trauma trainings online, an additional coaching certification in the UK (live), a relationship coaching training and more.

R3 – Mainly short trainings, e.g. “how to” videos related to using Microsoft Teams and Zoom for online teaching purposes.

R4 – I have attended several hospitality conferences - e.g. HoreCava and have shadowed general hotel managers to see what their jobs look like in the “new” normal.

R5 – I took advantage of the government subsidy and did a few online trainings. I also of course attend all relevant online seminars and conferences related to adult wellbeing, coaching and guidance.

What kind of training would be helpful to you in the field of media education for adult learners (e.g., what topics and delivery method)? What kind of material could be useful to help you in media education for adult learners?

R1 – I believe everything necessary is already out there. There are different tools and delivery methods and everyone can choose what suits them best based on their learning/teaching style.

R2 – Critical thinking

R3 – I believe trainings are needed that are related to group involvement and group collaboration. It is difficult to keep the attention of all participants online. Educators need to be aware of the different tools and best practices related to online education that can contribute to a positive group collaboration and involvement.

R4 – Definitely more system training for the employees and also a generic training on different phone software. An adult worker is not always able to explain to the guest how to log into the wifi, because they themselves might not know that. The basis for some needs to be solid.

R5 – Like I previously mentioned, an A to Z guide on the media tools.

Do you have opportunities to discuss and share ideas and good practices with other experts in the field at a local, national and European level? If so, please specify when, where, how, and with who.

R1 – Yes, at a national level. Through my blog, podcast, social media channels and any other platform I’m on, I have the chance to connect with other experts in the field and collaborate, exchange ideas, and support each other. Social media is especially helpful with that. The one that works best for me right now is Instagram.



R2 – I’m connected to several coaching groups both in the Netherlands, the UK and globally.

R3 – We have staff meetings at the university, so yes on a local level I consult with colleagues from other departments.

R4 – I speak on a local (Amsterdam) and national (across the Netherlands) level with other hospitality professionals. Mostly over lunch or during events. I also talk with many companies by collecting data for the common issues they have within their organisations. I also coach individuals (e.g. senior management) on various topics.

R5 – Yes, on all levels: with colleagues in the foundation and also during trainings, conferences and seminars online.

Do you have anything else to add?

R1 – No.

R2 – I think that’s it 😊 Good luck!

R3 – No.

R4 – No

R5 – No
