



## **POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT**

# Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology of the research	7
3. Desk Research Findings	12
3.1. Adult Education Provision	12
3.2. Updating Digital and Andragogic Skills	18
3.3. Alternative and Creative Models	24
3.4. Attitudes of Low-Skilled Adults	30
4. Main Findings of the Focus Groups	35
5. Tools for Re-engaging Adults in Education	42
6. Tools for Engaging Adults in Lifelong Learning	43
7. Tools to Keep Adult Learners Focused	44
8. Digital Tools in Adult Education	45
9. Recommendations for Policymakers	46
10. Conclusion	52

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus+ “One Step Up” project aims to revolutionise adult education across Europe by identifying and implementing best practices, innovative tools, and effective strategies for engaging low-skilled adults in lifelong learning. This comprehensive report brings together insights from focus groups and desk research conducted in eight countries: Lithuania, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus, and Croatia. The primary objective is to create an inclusive and effective adult education system that addresses the unique challenges faced by low-skilled adults and promotes continuous learning.

This executive summary encapsulates the key findings and recommendations from the “One Step Up” project, providing a roadmap for policymakers to enhance adult education systems across Europe.

Adult education plays a pivotal role in fostering personal and professional development, offering individuals the opportunity to acquire new skills, enhance their knowledge, and improve their employability. This is particularly critical for low-skilled adults who often face significant barriers in accessing learning opportunities. These barriers can include financial constraints, lack of time due to work and family commitments, limited availability of suitable courses, and sometimes a lack of confidence or motivation to return to learning environments that may have previously been intimidating or inaccessible.

**Personal Development:** Adult education enhances personal growth and self-fulfilment. It empowers individuals to achieve their personal goals, improve their quality of life, and contribute more effectively to their families and communities. Lifelong learning fosters critical thinking, self-confidence, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

**Professional Development:** In the rapidly evolving job market, continuous learning is essential for maintaining employability. Adult education provides opportunities to acquire new skills, upgrade existing ones, and gain qualifications that can lead to better job prospects and career advancement. This is particularly important in industries that are undergoing technological changes, requiring workers to stay updated with the latest developments.

**Social Inclusion:** Adult education promotes social inclusion by providing learning opportunities to marginalised groups, including low-skilled adults. It helps bridge the gap between different socio-economic groups by offering everyone the chance to improve their educational status and participate fully in society.



This report is structured to provide a detailed analysis of adult education practices in the participating countries, focusing on the following key areas:

- **Main findings from the research:** The research conducted under the “One Step Up” project highlights the diverse approaches to adult education across eight European countries. Key findings indicate that while innovative and flexible learning models are being adopted, common barriers such as financial constraints, digital literacy gaps, and social stigma persist.
- **Tools for Re-engaging Adults in Education:** Re-engaging adults who have been out of the educational system requires tailored approaches. The report discusses various tools and strategies that have proven effective in bringing adults back into learning. This includes the use of practical applications, community-based learning initiatives, and flexible scheduling to accommodate the busy lives of adult learners.
- **Tools for Engaging Adults in Lifelong Learning:** Maintaining engagement in lifelong learning is crucial for continuous personal and professional development. The report examines tools and methods that help sustain adult learners’ interest and motivation over the long term. This includes collaborative workshops, social learning platforms, and personalised learning paths.
- **Tools to Keep Adult Learners Focused:** To ensure that adult learners remain focused and committed to their studies, it is important to use strategies that prevent fatigue and maintain interest. The report outlines effective techniques such as short learning periods, self-assessment, and regular breaks. It also emphasises the importance of interactive activities and clear learning objectives.

- **Digital Tools in Adult Education:** The integration of digital tools in adult education is a key theme throughout the report. It discusses the benefits of e-learning platforms, interactive media, and AI-supported programs. These tools provide flexibility and accessibility, making it easier for adult learners to engage with educational content.

The “One Step Up” project underscores the critical need for innovative and flexible approaches in adult education. By implementing the recommendations provided in this report, policymakers can create more inclusive and effective education systems that promote lifelong learning and empower low-skilled adults to achieve their full potential. This report aims to serve as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in adult education, providing a roadmap for enhancing learning opportunities and fostering a culture of continuous personal and professional development.



## 2. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The “One Step Up” project employed a comprehensive and multi-faceted research methodology to gather detailed data on adult education practices, tools, and strategies across eight European countries: Lithuania, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus, and Croatia. This methodology combined qualitative and quantitative research methods, including focus groups, desk research, and comparative analysis.

### Focus Groups

#### 1. Selection of Participants:

- Each country organised focus groups with participants selected based on their experience and involvement in adult education. This included a mix of adult education practitioners, policymakers, and low-skilled adult learners.

The focus groups across the eight countries involved a total of 59 participants:

- **Lithuania:** The focus group in Lithuania consisted of 11 participants, including adult education practitioners and policymakers.
- **France:** The French focus group included 6 participants, with a mix of adult educators, policymakers, and low-skilled adult learners.
- **Poland:** In Poland, the focus group had 6 participants, primarily adult educators and representatives from educational institutions.
- **Czech Republic:** The Czech Republic focus group included 10 participants, with a focus on adult educators.

- **Ireland:** The focus group in Ireland had 5 participants, including regional adult educators who work with low-skilled adults.
- **Portugal:** Portugal's focus group comprised 6 professionals working in adult education.
- **Cyprus:** The Cypriot focus group included 10 participants, focusing on educators and representatives from educational institutions.
- **Croatia:** The focus group in Croatia consisted of 5 participants, adult education practitioners.

Each focus group was structured to facilitate in-depth discussions on good practices, innovative tools, engagement strategies, challenges, and policy recommendations in adult education.

This diverse group of participants provided a wide range of perspectives, enriching the findings and ensuring that the insights gathered were representative of different contexts and experiences within adult education.

## 2. Structure of Focus Groups:

- The focus groups were structured to facilitate open and in-depth discussions on various aspects of adult education. Each session included sections on good practices, innovative tools, engagement strategies, challenges, and policy recommendations.
- Moderators guided the discussions, ensuring all participants had the opportunity to contribute and that the conversations stayed focused on key topics.

## 3. Data Collection:

- Discussions were recorded and transcribed to capture the nuances of the conversations.
- Participants' feedback was documented and analysed to identify common themes and unique insights.



- Special attention was given to the specific needs and experiences of low-skilled adults, ensuring their voices were prominently included in the findings.



## Desk Research

### 1. Literature Review:

- A comprehensive review of existing literature on adult education was conducted, including academic papers, policy documents, programme evaluations, and reports from international organisations.
- The literature review provided a theoretical framework for the analysis and helped contextualise the focus group findings.

### 2. Comparative Analysis:

- The desk research involved a comparative analysis of adult education programmes and policies across the eight countries.
- The analysis focused on identifying similarities and differences in approaches, challenges, and outcomes.
- Key areas of focus included national programmes for updating digital and andragogic skills, engaging low-skilled adults, and innovative teaching models.

### **3. Data Sources:**

- Data was sourced from credible and relevant sources, including government publications, educational institutions, and non-governmental organisations.
- The research team ensured that all data was up-to-date and accurately represented the current state of adult education in each country.

Data Analysis contained thematic analysis, synthesis of findings, and validation.

#### **1. Thematic Analysis:**

- Data from the focus groups and desk research was analysed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within the data.
- Themes were categorised into key areas such as good practices, tools for engagement, challenges, and policy recommendations.

#### **2. Synthesis of Findings:**

- Findings from the focus groups and desk research were synthesised to provide a comprehensive overview of adult education practices across the participating countries.
- This synthesis allowed for the identification of overarching trends and the development of cross-country recommendations.

#### **3. Validation:**

- Preliminary findings were shared with focus group participants and other stakeholders for validation. Feedback was used to refine the analysis and ensure the accuracy and relevance of the conclusions.

## Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The “One Step Up” project adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure research integrity. Informed consent was obtained from all focus group participants, who were fully briefed on the study’s purpose, methods, data usage, and their rights. This transparency fostered an environment of trust and openness.

Confidentiality was paramount. Participants’ identities and personal information were anonymised to allow free and honest discussion without fear of repercussions. All data, including recordings and transcriptions, were securely stored and accessible only to the research team, maintaining the integrity of the collected data.

Transparency with participants was maintained throughout the research process. Participants were kept informed about the study’s progress and how their contributions were used, reinforcing ethical foundations and fostering collaboration.

Despite the comprehensive approach, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The relatively small sample size of focus groups may not fully represent the broader population of adult learners and educators, necessitating caution in interpreting findings. The scope of the desk research might not have captured all relevant programs, particularly localised or newly developed ones, potentially leaving gaps in the data. Cultural differences between participating countries could also influence findings, complicating direct comparisons and generalisations.

In summary, while the “One Step Up” project employed a robust and ethical methodology, recognising these limitations is crucial for understanding the context and applicability of the research outcomes. The combination of focus group discussions and extensive desk research provided valuable insights and informed policy recommendations, ensuring the findings are reliable and relevant for enhancing adult education practices and policies.

## 3. DESK RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 3.1. ADULT EDUCATION PROVISION

The desk research component of the “One Step Up” project involved a comprehensive comparative analysis of adult education provision across the participating countries. This analysis focused on identifying national programs and initiatives specifically targeted at low-skilled adults, examining their structure, implementation, and effectiveness.



## Key Areas of Focus

- **Digital and Andragogic Skills:** All countries emphasised the importance of updating both digital and andragogic skills among adult educators. This focus is crucial in making adult education more flexible and accessible, especially for low-skilled adults who may face additional barriers in accessing traditional educational resources.
- **Governmental Funding:** Most countries identified governmental incentives or programs aimed at supporting adult education. These programs often include financial support for both educators and learners, providing resources necessary to improve educational outcomes and participation rates.
- **Challenges:** Common challenges across the countries include financial limitations, retention issues, and insufficient promotion of adult education programmes. These challenges can hinder the effectiveness and reach of adult education initiatives, particularly for low-skilled adults who may require additional support.

## Findings by Country

**Croatia:** Zaželi – Employment programme supporting women funded by the European Social Fund under the Operational Programme “Effective Human Resources 2014-2020,” this project aims to improve the employment prospects of marginalised women, particularly older women, those with lower educational qualifications, and those facing social challenges.

- *Strengths:* Targeted employment opportunities, integration of marginalised women into the workforce.
- *Weaknesses:* Challenges in sustaining post-project employment.

- *Opportunities:* Expansion potential, building networks.
- *Challenges:* Resistance from local communities.
- *Impact:* Enhanced professional competencies, improved education quality.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Empower marginalised groups through targeted employment and skills training.

**Cyprus:** Adult Education Centres provides general adult education within the framework of lifelong learning opportunities. The programme offers a wide array of subjects, including languages, arts, vocational skills, and personal development.

- *Strengths:* Inclusive, comprehensive, strong community engagement.
- *Weaknesses:* Accessibility challenges in remote areas.
- *Opportunities:* Technological integration, digital transformation.
- *Challenges:* Educational inequalities, promoting lifelong learning opportunities.
- *Impact:* Recognized as a significant program with massive participation exceeding 20,000 citizens annually.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Offer a diverse curriculum, enhance community engagement.

**Czech Republic:** iGUIDE – Guiding My Own Career is an adult education and career guidance programme integrating innovative teaching methods and technology-enhanced resources.

- *Strengths:* Wide range of resources, technology integration, educator training.
- *Weaknesses:* Resource accessibility, limited reach.
- *Opportunities:* Cross-sector collaboration, digital inclusion initiatives.
- *Challenges:* Inadequate adult career guidance.
- *Impact:* Improved access to labour market tools, enhanced career

planning support for adults.

- *Elements for One Step Up*: Utilise technology to provide career guidance, train educators to support career planning.

**France:** GRETA Initiative is a network of public educational establishments offering continuing education for adults, covering a wide range of subjects and increasingly offering online courses.

- *Strengths*: National reach, tailored training solutions, local adaptation.
- *Weaknesses*: Resource constraints, bureaucratic processes, paid training.
- *Opportunities*: Flexible learning models, partnerships with industries.
- *Challenges*: Need for continuing vocational training, addressing economic disparities.
- *Impact*: Increased access to vocational education, tailored training solutions for local needs.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Implement flexible learning models, develop industry partnerships, enhance training certification processes.

**Ireland:** Back To Education Initiative (BTEI) encourages adults with low education levels to return to learning, offering flexible, part-time courses designed to accommodate diverse schedules.

- *Strengths*: Flexibility, tailored programs, social inclusion.
- *Weaknesses*: Limited resources, retention issues.
- *Opportunities*: Technological integration, research and innovation, flexible learning models.
- *Challenges*: Low educational attainment among adults.
- *Impact*: Increased access to education for marginalised adults,

development of lifelong learning culture.

- *Elements for One Step Up*: Promote part-time and flexible learning options, enhance social inclusion strategies.

**Lithuania:** The “I can study – I can work” programme aims to help strengthen and develop professional and personal competencies to facilitate entry into the labour market.

- *Strengths*: Relevance, holistic approach, qualified team.
- *Weaknesses*: Limited scope, short project duration.
- *Opportunities*: Project expansion, collaboration, new service development.
- *Challenges*: Lack of professional skills, difficulties in finding a job.
- *Impact*: 130 participants involved, 62.3% returned to the labour market or education system.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Individualise learning processes, provide holistic support.

**Poland:** Centre for Social Integration (CIS) is a public institution operating under the Act on Social Employment, supporting individuals facing social exclusion, including low-skilled adults, by providing training, education, and integration services.

- *Strengths*: Financial support, tailored programs, social inclusion.
- *Weaknesses*: Limited funding, retention issues.
- *Opportunities*: Technological integration, government support.
- *Challenges*: Lack of basic skills, social exclusion, unemployment.
- *Impact*: Improved employability and social inclusion of low-skilled adults.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Offer tailored vocational training, individual support plans, holistic support services.



**Portugal:** Project PRR developed by Citeforma's Qualifica Centre and funded by the PRR (Recovery and Resilience Plan), focusing on improving literacy and promoting lifelong learning.

- *Strengths:* Financial support, flexibility, tailored support.
- *Weaknesses:* Lack of awareness, limited reach.
- *Opportunities:* Technological integration, collaborative partnerships.
- *Challenges:* Improving literacy and computer skills, promoting lifelong learning.
- *Impact:* Enhanced access to education, development of vital skills, fostering a culture of lifelong learning.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Provide opportunities for continued learning, support adult learners in accessing educational resources.

The desk research findings highlight both the strengths and challenges of adult education provision across the participating countries. While there is a strong emphasis on digital and andragogic skills, governmental funding, and community engagement, common challenges such as financial limitations, retention issues, and accessibility remain. Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving the effectiveness and reach of adult education programs, particularly for low-skilled adults. The insights gained from this comparative analysis provide a foundation for developing targeted policy recommendations and best practices to enhance adult education systems across Europe.



## 3.2. UPDATING DIGITAL AND ANDRAGOGIC SKILLS

The second comparative analysis within the “One Step Up” project focused on national programmes aimed at supporting adult educators in updating their digital and andragogic skills. The aim was to make adult education more flexible and accessible to low-skilled adults. The research identified key initiatives and strategies implemented across the participating countries and examined their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

### Key Areas of Focus

**Emphasis on Digital and Andragogic Skills:** All participating countries highlighted the critical importance of equipping adult educators with updated digital and andragogic skills. This dual focus ensures that educators can effectively deliver flexible and accessible adult education, incorporating modern digital tools and innovative teaching methodologies.

**Opportunities for Collaboration:** National programs often highlighted the potential for collaboration with various stakeholders, including educational institutions, industries, and government bodies. Such partnerships can enhance resource sharing, innovation, and the overall effectiveness of adult education programs.

**Common Challenges:** Despite the advancements, several common challenges were identified across countries. These include resource constraints, financial limitations, and the need for consistent implementation across different regions. Addressing these challenges is essential for the successful scaling and sustainability of these programmes.

## Findings by Country

**Croatia:** Curriculum globALE is a comprehensive training programme for adult educators focusing on competency-based learning, practical applications, and learner-centred approaches. It includes modules on adult education teaching methods, communication, and evaluation.

- *Strengths:* Comprehensive curriculum, practical skills, adherence to international standards.
- *Weaknesses:* Inconsistent implementation, reliance on external funding.
- *Opportunities:* Digital education methodologies, international collaboration.
- *Challenges:* Need for specialised training for adult educators.
- *Impact:* Enhanced professional competencies and improved education quality.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Adapt micro-learning resources with real-life examples, utilise modular structure for training courses, share case studies of successful adult education practices on the One Step Up MOOC.

**Cyprus:** AdultDigitalUp is aimed at improving digital literacy among adult educators and low-skilled adults, focusing on digital and andragogic skills.

- *Strengths:* Tailored learning pathways, certified training, blended learning.
- *Weaknesses:* Limited reach, reliance on external funding, participation challenges.
- *Opportunities:* Digital innovation, community engagement.
- *Challenges:* Need for digital skills in a changing job market.

- *Impact:* Improved digital skills among educators, increased awareness through webinars.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Conduct comprehensive needs analysis for learner requirements, organise free webinars and informational events, collaborate with government initiatives and stakeholders.

**Czech Republic:** STEMS is a capacity-building programme for adult education staff focusing on motivational strategies, engagement techniques, digital tools, blended learning, and cross-cultural competence.

- *Strengths:* Comprehensive training, online platform, policy guidance.
- *Weaknesses:* Limited reach, language barriers, resource constraints.
- *Opportunities:* Scaling up, partnerships, policy advocacy.
- *Challenges:* Low adult participation in learning.
- *Impact:* Enhanced competencies of educators, improved engagement with adult learners.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Integrate motivational strategies and engagement techniques in training programs, utilise an online platform for professional development and collaboration, provide policy guidance for systemic changes in adult education.

**France:** Pix + Edu is a French public service that offers self-positioning courses, online self-training and training courses to strengthen the professional digital culture of teachers and educational staff.

- *Strengths:* National reach, certification of digital skills, national diploma recognition
- *Weaknesses:* Learner autonomy, lack of learning support, lack of training in navigating the platform and/or courses.
- *Opportunities:* Flexible learning models, technological approach.
- *Challenges:* Budget constraints, rapid technological change.

- Impact: Increased access to digital skills education.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Implement flexible learning models and blended learning approaches, adaptive learning method, interactive and digital learning methodology.

**Ireland:** SOLAS is the Further Education and Training Authority providing and funding training opportunities for adults, focusing on digital and andragogic skills.

- *Strengths*: Financial support, collaboration, regulatory influence, national reach.
- *Weaknesses*: Resource constraints, bureaucratic processes.
- *Opportunities*: Technological integration, research and innovation, flexible learning models.
- *Challenges*: Fragmentation and inefficiency in the education system.
- *Impact*: Provides significant training slots, supports apprenticeship systems.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Develop tailored professional development programs for educators, foster inclusive education approaches, leverage technology for remote learning, establish collaborative partnerships with community organisations and employers.

**Lithuania:** Adult Education Centres provides general and vocational education for adults, offering courses in various subjects and focusing on lifelong learning.

- *Strengths*: Inclusive, comprehensive curriculum, community engagement.
- *Weaknesses*: Accessibility challenges, reliance on government funding.
- *Opportunities*: Technological integration, community partnerships.

- *Challenges:* Educational inequalities, lifelong learning opportunities.
- *Impact:* Increased participation in adult education, improved personal and professional development.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Develop inclusive education programs tailored to diverse learner needs, promote community engagement and partnerships, utilise technology to enhance learning experiences.

**Poland:** Digital Competences for All is a governmental initiative to improve digital literacy among adult educators and learners, focusing on enhancing digital and andragogical skills.

- *Strengths:* Financial support, collaboration opportunities, national reach.
- *Weaknesses:* Resource constraints, bureaucratic processes.
- *Opportunities:* Technological integration, industry partnerships.
- *Challenges:* Limited digital literacy among educators.
- *Impact:* Improved digital proficiency, innovative teaching methods.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Develop structured courses to equip educators with digital skills, emphasise innovative teaching methods and e-learning platforms, foster collaborative partnerships with industry and educational institutions.

**Portugal:** SOLAS-like Program focuses on providing training opportunities for adult educators and learners, with an emphasis on digital skills.

- *Strengths:* Financial support, collaboration opportunities, national reach.
- *Weaknesses:* Resource constraints, bureaucratic processes.
- *Opportunities:* Technological integration, industry partnerships.
- *Challenges:* Limited digital literacy among educators.
- *Impact:* Improved digital proficiency, innovative teaching methods.

- *Elements for One Step Up:* Develop tailored professional development programs for educators, foster inclusive education approaches, leverage technology for remote learning, establish collaborative partnerships with community organisations and employers.

The analysis reveals that updating digital and andragogic skills among adult educators is a shared priority across the participating countries. While each country has developed specific programmes to address these needs, common challenges such as resource constraints and financial limitations persist. Opportunities for collaboration and technological integration present promising avenues for enhancing these programmes. The findings underscore the importance of continuous professional development for educators to ensure that adult education remains flexible, accessible, and effective for low-skilled adults. By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging opportunities, policymakers can support the sustainable development of adult education systems that are responsive to the evolving needs of learners.



### 3.3. ALTERNATIVE AND CREATIVE MODELS

The third comparative analysis within the “One Step Up” project focused on examining alternative and creative models for engaging low-skilled adult learners. These models include learning festivals, community-based events, and innovative andragogical approaches designed to increase participation and engagement in lifelong learning. The research identified various initiatives and strategies across the participating countries and evaluated their effectiveness, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

#### Key Areas of Focus

- **Common Barriers:** The analysis highlighted common barriers to participation in alternative learning models, including funding issues, accessibility challenges, and insufficient promotion. These barriers can significantly impact the reach and effectiveness of educational programs aimed at low-skilled adults.
- **Need for Tailored Support:** All countries recognized the necessity of providing tailored support services to engage low-skilled adults. This includes financial assistance, awareness campaigns, and community engagement efforts to ensure that educational opportunities are accessible and relevant.
- **Digital Exclusion:** A significant portion of low-skilled adult learners faces digital exclusion, which necessitates comprehensive digital literacy training and the integration of digital tools into educational programs to bridge the gap.





## Findings by Country

**Croatia:** Lifelong Learning Week is an annual event aimed at promoting lifelong learning and increasing engagement among adults who have had limited exposure to educational opportunities.

- *Strengths:* Increased awareness and engagement, diverse range of activities and learning opportunities.
- *Weaknesses:* Limited reach and awareness, logistical challenges.
- *Opportunities:* Enhanced promotional efforts through online platforms and social media, showcasing personal and professional benefits.
- *Challenges:* Ensuring broad participation, sustaining engagement post-event.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Increase awareness campaigns, highlight success stories and testimonials from past participants, and use diverse media channels for promotion.

**Cyprus:** Digital Skills in the Modern Age Conference is part of the Ministry's activities for the European Year of Skills 2023, focusing on continuous and targeted training for teachers and strengthening existing infrastructures.

- *Strengths:* Focus on digital skills and lifelong learning, strong institutional support.
- *Weaknesses:* Low level of digital skills among citizens, reliance on existing infrastructures.
- *Opportunities:* Developing national strategies for professional development, linking work needs to education systems.
- *Challenges:* Addressing the digital skills gap, ensuring broad participation.

- *Elements for One Step Up*: Provide practical training, promote continuous learning, and analyse professional needs to tailor programs effectively.

**Czech Republic:** Digital Skills Week (Týden digitálních dovedností) is a week-long event dedicated to enhancing digital literacy among adults, featuring training sessions, seminars, and exhibitions on digital tools and online communication.

- *Strengths*: High participation rates, diverse learning opportunities, strong support from government and tech organisations.
- *Weaknesses*: Limited financial incentives, need for broader promotion.
- *Opportunities*: Financial incentives for employers to subsidise employee training, expanding digital inclusion initiatives.
- *Challenges*: Significant digital skills gap among the workforce.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Increase employer engagement, provide incentives for participation, and expand digital literacy initiatives.

**France:** Self-Regulated Learning Approaches focuses on adult learners managing their thoughts, emotions, and actions to achieve learning goals, emphasising emotional intelligence and self-efficacy.

- *Strengths*: Personalized and learner-centred, supports emotional and cognitive development.
- *Weaknesses*: Complex implementation, requires high levels of self-motivation.
- *Opportunities*: Integration with collaborative learning models, use of technology to support self-regulated learning.
- *Challenges*: varied levels of self-motivation among learners, complexity of implementation, balancing emotional and cognitive development, technology integration and access, cultural and institutional resistance.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Implement personalised learning plans,

incorporate emotional intelligence training, and use technology to support self-regulated learning.

**Ireland:** National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) Strategies focuses on personalised, flexible, and inclusive teaching methods designed to engage low-skilled adult learners.

- *Strengths:* Flexible and inclusive, tailored to individual learner needs.
- *Weaknesses:* Limited resources, challenges in sustaining long-term engagement.
- *Opportunities:* Establish community learning centres, expand digital learning resources.
- *Challenges:* Overcoming stigma associated with adult learning, ensuring long-term participation.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Develop community-based learning initiatives, promote inclusive teaching practices, and leverage technology for flexible learning options.

**Lithuania:** Raising Adults' and Enterprises' Participation in Learning is a national initiative aimed at increasing adult and enterprise participation in lifelong learning through innovative approaches and community involvement.

- *Strengths:* Community-driven, inclusive, and focuses on practical support.
- *Weaknesses:* Limited reach, challenges in maintaining engagement.
- *Opportunities:* Expand programmes close to where people live, offer practical support such as childcare and travel cost subsidies.
- *Challenges:* Addressing educational system challenges and exclusion.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Make learning models accessible, provide practical support for learners, and promote flexible learning opportunities.

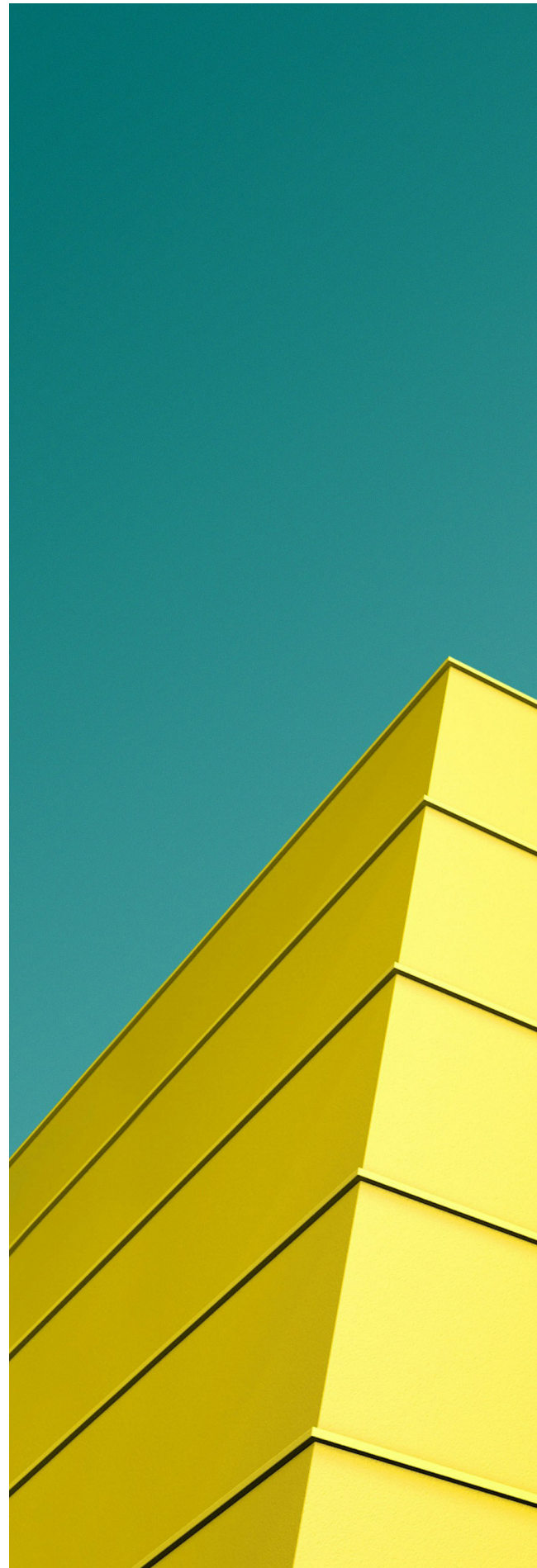
**Poland:** Education Street Learning Festival is an annual educational event in Warsaw that transforms public spaces into vibrant learning environments, promoting lifelong learning.

- *Strengths:* High visibility, community engagement, diverse learning opportunities.
- *Weaknesses:* Sustainability and coordination challenges, limited reach.
- *Opportunities:* Strengthen collaboration with local organisations, implement effective evaluation methods.
- *Challenges:* Ensuring continuous engagement beyond the festival.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Encourage collaboration, use public spaces creatively for educational events, and implement follow-up activities to sustain engagement.

**Portugal:** Participation in Creative Activities emphasises creative activities and exhibitions to boost learners' self-esteem and confidence, promoting engagement in lifelong learning.

- *Strengths:* Positive impact on self-esteem, diverse and engaging activities.
- *Weaknesses:* Limited funding and resource constraints, sustainability challenges.
- *Opportunities:* Secure specific funding streams, integrate creative models into national policies.
- *Challenges:* Ensuring consistent quality and engagement, addressing delayed payments and reduced course durations.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Allocate funding for creative learning models, integrate alternative learning methods into national strategies, and promote the benefits of creative learning.

The analysis highlights the innovative and diverse approaches being implemented across the participating countries to engage low-skilled adult learners through alternative and creative models. These initiatives address common barriers such as funding issues, accessibility, and digital exclusion while emphasising the need for tailored support services and community engagement. By learning from these models and integrating successful elements into broader strategies, the “One Step Up” project can enhance the effectiveness and reach of adult education programmes, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and personal development. Addressing the identified challenges and leveraging opportunities will be crucial for the sustainable growth and impact of these educational initiatives.



### 3.4. ATTITUDES OF LOW-SKILLED ADULTS

The fourth comparative analysis within the “One Step Up” project focused on examining the attitudes of low-skilled adults towards education and lifelong learning. Understanding these attitudes is crucial for developing effective strategies and programs that engage this demographic and address their unique needs and barriers. The research identified common themes, challenges, and opportunities across the participating countries, providing a comprehensive view of how low-skilled adults perceive and engage with education.

#### Key Areas of Focus

- **Common Barriers:** Low-skilled adults often face several barriers to engaging in education, including financial constraints, time management issues, digital skills gaps, and social stigma. These barriers can significantly impact their willingness and ability to participate in lifelong learning programmes.
- **Need for Tailored Support:** There is a recognised necessity for providing tailored support services to engage low-skilled adults. This includes financial assistance, flexible learning schedules, digital literacy training, and personalised learning pathways.
- **Digital Exclusion:** A significant portion of low-skilled adults faces digital exclusion, which further complicates their access to education. Addressing digital literacy and providing access to necessary technology are essential steps to bridge this gap.

## Findings by Country

**Croatia:** Low-skilled adults in Croatia often exhibit a reluctance to engage in formal education due to past negative experiences and a lack of confidence in their abilities.

- *Barriers:* Financial constraints, lack of time due to work and family commitments, and limited access to relevant courses.
- *Opportunities:* Offering more flexible learning options and community-based support to make education more accessible.
- *Challenges:* Overcoming stigma associated with adult learning and providing sufficient support to maintain engagement.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Develop community outreach programs to raise awareness and reduce stigma, offer financial support, and provide flexible learning schedules.

**Cyprus:** Many low-skilled adults in Cyprus recognise the value of education but feel overwhelmed by the digital skills required for modern learning environments.

- *Barriers:* Digital skills gaps, financial issues, and insufficient time.
- *Opportunities:* Implementing comprehensive digital literacy programs and offering financial aid to reduce the cost barrier.
- *Challenges:* Ensuring consistent engagement and overcoming resistance to learning new technologies.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Provide digital literacy training, offer financial incentives, and promote the benefits of digital skills for employability.

**Czech Republic:** Low-skilled adults in the Czech Republic often feel disconnected from formal education systems and prefer informal learning settings.

- *Barriers:* Financial constraints, lack of awareness of available programs, and digital exclusion.
- *Opportunities:* Promoting informal and community-based learning opportunities and increasing awareness of existing programs.
- *Challenges:* Bridging the gap between informal and formal education and addressing digital literacy.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Enhance promotion of community-based learning, provide digital literacy programs, and create pathways from informal to formal education.

**France:** Low-skilled adults often view education positively but are deterred by the complexity and cost of enrolling in courses.

- *Barriers:* Financial issues, complex administrative processes, and limited availability of suitable programs.
- *Opportunities:* Simplifying enrollment processes and providing financial support and guidance.
- *Challenges:* Reducing administrative barriers and ensuring programs are accessible and relevant.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Streamline administrative processes, offer financial aid, and tailor programs to meet the specific needs of low-skilled adults.

**Ireland:** Many low-skilled adults in Ireland see the benefits of education but are hesitant due to past failures and lack of confidence.

- *Barriers:* Social stigma, financial constraints, and time management issues.



- *Opportunities*: Providing supportive learning environments and financial assistance.
- *Challenges*: Overcoming social stigma and maintaining long-term engagement.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Develop supportive learning communities, provide financial support, and create flexible learning schedules.

**Lithuania**: Low-skilled adults are generally open to learning but face significant barriers related to accessibility and cost.

- *Barriers*: Financial constraints, lack of local educational opportunities, and limited awareness.
- *Opportunities*: Expanding access to education through online and community-based programs.
- *Challenges*: Addressing financial barriers and raising awareness of available programs.
- *Elements for One Step Up*: Increase online learning opportunities, provide financial aid, and enhance promotional efforts to raise awareness.

**Poland**: Low-skilled adults often feel excluded from traditional education systems and express a desire for more practical, job-related training.

- *Barriers*: Financial issues, limited availability of relevant courses, and social stigma.
- *Opportunities*: Offering practical, job-related training and financial support.
- *Challenges*: Reducing social stigma and ensuring courses are relevant and accessible.

- *Elements for One Step Up:* Develop job-related training programs, offer financial incentives, and promote the value of education for career advancement.

**Portugal:** Low-skilled adults recognise the importance of education but are often hindered by financial constraints and digital skills gaps.

- *Barriers:* Financial issues, digital exclusion, and limited access to relevant courses.
- *Opportunities:* Providing financial support and comprehensive digital literacy programs.
- *Challenges:* Addressing financial barriers and ensuring digital literacy.
- *Elements for One Step Up:* Offer financial aid, provide digital literacy training, and expand access to relevant courses.

The analysis reveals that while low-skilled adults across the participating countries generally recognize the importance of education, they face significant barriers that hinder their engagement. Financial constraints, digital skills gaps, time management issues, and social stigma are common challenges that need to be addressed. Tailored support services, including financial assistance, flexible learning schedules, and digital literacy training, are crucial for improving engagement and participation in lifelong learning programs. By understanding these attitudes and barriers, the “One Step Up” project can develop more effective strategies to support low-skilled adults in their educational journeys, fostering a culture of continuous learning and personal development. Addressing the identified challenges and leveraging opportunities will be essential for creating an inclusive and supportive adult education system.

## 4. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

The “One Step Up” focus groups aimed to explore various aspects of adult education, identify good practices, and address challenges faced by low-skilled adults.

### Key Areas of Focus

- **Good Practices in Adult Education:** Identifying effective training concepts, teaching methods, and digital tools. Highlighting innovative approaches and successful programs.
- **Tools for Re-engaging Adults in Education:** Exploring strategies and tools to bring adults back into education. Discussing practical applications, community-based learning, and flexible scheduling.
- **Tools for Engaging Adults in Lifelong Learning:** Examining methods to sustain interest and motivation. Highlighting collaborative workshops, social learning platforms, and personalised learning paths.
- **Tools to Keep Adult Learners Focused:** Discussing strategies to maintain focus and commitment. Identifying techniques such as short learning periods, self-assessment, and regular breaks.
- **Digital Tools in Adult Education:** Exploring the integration and impact of digital tools. Discussing e-learning platforms, interactive media, and AI-supported programs.



- **Engagement Strategies:** Sharing effective engagement strategies like gamification and project-based learning. Tailoring strategies to meet the needs of low-skilled adults.
- **Challenges and Barriers:** Identifying common challenges like financial constraints, time management, digital skills gaps, and social stigma. Proposing solutions to make adult education more inclusive.
- **Policy Recommendations:** Developing policy recommendations based on focus group findings. Discussing the role of policymakers in supporting adult education.

These areas ensured a comprehensive exploration of issues and opportunities in adult education, providing valuable input for developing targeted policy recommendations and best practices.

## Findings by Country

**Croatia** uses a variety of interactive and collaborative learning methods to engage adult learners, with a strong focus on practical and hands-on activities.

- *Training Concepts:* Project-based learning, collaborative learning, and microlearning are widely used.
- *Engagement Strategies:* Hands-on learning, simulation games, and interactive tools are effective.
- *Focus Areas:* Addressing digital literacy and providing practical learning objectives.

### Key Recommendations:

- *Expand Project-Based Learning:* Encourage learners to work on projects that relate to real-world scenarios.

- *Use Hands-On Activities:* Engage learners through practical, hands-on tasks.
- *Address Digital Literacy:* Provide training to improve digital literacy among learners.

**Cyprus** focuses on job-related learning and combining traditional and modern teaching methods to engage low-skilled adults.

- *Training Concepts:* Job-related learning concepts and microlearning are emphasised.
- *Engagement Strategies:* Embodiment in learning, engaging the body, and project-based methods are effective.
- *Focus Areas:* Use of multimodal texts and digital tools to enhance learning experiences.

### *Key Recommendations:*

- *Promote Job-Related Learning:* Connect learning with job-related skills and real-life scenarios.
- *Combine Traditional and Modern Methods:* Use a mix of conventional and digital teaching methods.
- *Engage Different Sensory Styles:* Incorporate visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading/writing activities.

**The Czech Republic** places a significant emphasis on digital tools and pre-lesson preparation to enhance the learning experience for adults.

- *Training Concepts:* Pre-lesson preparation using online resources and continuous availability of materials are key strategies.
- *Engagement Strategies:* Gamified flashcards, live polls, and collaborative tools are widely used.
- *Focus Areas:* Addressing digital literacy challenges and providing diverse learning materials are important.

### Key Recommendations:

- *Enhance Pre-Lesson Preparation:* Provide online resources that learners can access before classes.
- *Focus on Digital Literacy:* Ensure learners are comfortable with digital tools through targeted training.
- *Use Collaborative Tools:* Incorporate tools that facilitate teamwork and communication among learners.

**France's** approach to adult education emphasises connecting learning with professional goals and incorporating critical thinking skills into teaching methodologies.

- *Training Concepts:* Learning by doing and avoiding traditional academic approaches are highly valued. Critical thinking development is a key component of the curriculum.
- *Engagement Strategies:* Moving away from traditional classroom settings and incorporating gamification and collaborative workshops are effective strategies.
- *Focus Areas:* Emotional intelligence and art-based approaches are used to make learning more relatable and engaging.

### Key Recommendations:

- *Promote Practical Learning:* Use real-life scenarios and problem-solving tasks to make learning relevant.
- *Enhance Emotional Intelligence Training:* Integrate activities that develop emotional intelligence alongside cognitive skills.
- *Utilise Art-Based Methods:* Incorporate art and creativity into learning to engage different learner types.

**Ireland's** focus group identified several innovative practices that leverage digital tools and personalised learning experiences to engage adult learners.

- *Training Concepts:* Flipped classroom models and interactive online platforms are effective.
- *Engagement Strategies:* Gamification, storytelling, and social learning platforms are key methods.
- *Focus Areas:* Personalized learning experiences and adaptive learning systems cater to diverse learner needs.

### *Key Recommendations:*

- *Promote Flipped Classrooms:* Encourage learners to engage with materials before class to maximise in-class learning.
- *Incorporate Storytelling:* Use storytelling techniques to make learning more relatable and engaging.
- *Leverage Adaptive Learning Systems:* Use technology to tailor learning experiences to individual needs.

**Lithuania's** focus on adult education highlights the importance of integrating technology and practical learning approaches to engage learners effectively.

- *Training Concepts:* Micro-learning and the use of digital tools such as Kahoot, Mentimeter, and Zoom are popular. AI-supported programs are also utilised to address learners' needs more effectively.
- *Engagement Strategies:* Interactive games, online tests, and personalised learning paths help keep learners motivated and engaged.
- *Focus Areas:* Emphasis is placed on safety, motivation, and addressing real needs. There is a strong focus on understanding the audience before designing learning programs.

### *Key Recommendations:*

- *Develop Comprehensive Digital Literacy Programs:* Provide extensive training for both educators and learners in digital tools and platforms.
- *Foster Collaborative Learning Environments:* Encourage group activities and peer-assisted learning to enhance engagement.
- *Incorporate AI and Advanced Technologies:* Use AI-supported programs to personalise learning experiences and fill competency gaps.

In **Poland**, a blend of traditional and digital learning methods is used to cater to adult learners, with a strong emphasis on personalised learning paths and supportive environments.

- *Training Concepts:* Blended learning, multimedia presentations, and gamification are common.
- *Engagement Strategies:* Personalised learning paths and micro-learning modules are effective for low-skilled adults.
- *Focus Areas:* Time management training and creating interactive learning environments are crucial.

### *Key Recommendations:*

- *Expand Blended Learning Models:* Combine online and face-to-face learning to provide flexibility.
- *Support Time Management Skills:* Offer training that helps learners manage their time effectively.
- *Implement Gamification:* Use game-like elements to make learning more engaging and interactive.

In **Portugal**, the integration of interactive tools and practical applications in teaching is emphasised to enhance learner engagement.

- *Training Concepts:* Interactive whiteboards, multimedia support,



and blended learning models are commonly used.

- *Engagement Strategies:* Microlearning, interactive games, and practical activities are effective.
- *Focus Areas:* Relating content to real-life examples and using energizers to maintain engagement.

### *Key Recommendations:*

- *Enhance Use of Interactive Tools:* Utilise interactive whiteboards and multimedia tools to engage learners.
- *Focus on Practical Applications:* Relate teaching content to practical, real-life scenarios.
- *Use Microlearning:* Break down complex topics into smaller, manageable units.



## 5. TOOLS FOR RE-ENGAGING ADULTS IN EDUCATION

Re-engaging adults in education requires the use of innovative and interactive tools that cater to their unique needs and preferences. The following tools have been identified as effective in various countries:

**Gamification:** Using game-like elements such as quizzes, points, and badges to make learning more engaging.

**Interactive Platforms:** Tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Moodle facilitate online learning and collaboration.

**Practical Applications:** Relating teaching content to real-life scenarios helps learners see the relevance of their education.

### Key Strategies:

**Personalised Learning Paths:** Tailor learning experiences to individual needs and preferences.

**Community-Based Learning:** Engage learners through community initiatives and practical skills classes.

**Flexible Scheduling:** Offer flexible learning options to accommodate learners' schedules.

## 6. TOOLS FOR ENGAGING ADULTS IN LIFELONG LEARNING

Engaging adults in lifelong learning requires creating learning experiences that are enjoyable, relevant, and accessible. The following tools and strategies have proven effective:

**Gamification:** Incorporating game-like elements to make learning fun and engaging.

**Collaborative Workshops:** Facilitating group learning and support through workshops and team activities.

**Digital Tools:** Utilising platforms like Kahoot, Padlet, and Canva to create interactive learning experiences.

### Key Strategies:

**Project-Based Learning:** Encourage learners to work on projects that apply their knowledge to real-world scenarios.

**Storytelling:** Use storytelling techniques to make learning more relatable and engaging.

**Social Learning Platforms:** Facilitate peer support and networking through social learning platforms.

## 7. TOOLS TO KEEP ADULT LEARNERS FOCUSED

Maintaining focus in adult learners requires the use of strategies that break up long learning sessions and keep learners engaged. The following tools and strategies are effective:

**Short Learning Periods:** Avoiding long training times to prevent boredom.

**Self-Assessment:** Allowing learners to set and evaluate their own goals.

**Break Times:** Scheduling regular breaks to refresh and absorb information.

### Key Strategies:

**Interactive Activities:** Use creative tasks, quizzes, and multimedia resources to maintain interest.

**Energizers:** Incorporate dynamic activities to keep learners engaged and attentive.

**Clear Learning Objectives:** Set clear goals and provide regular feedback to keep learners on track.

## 8. DIGITAL TOOLS IN ADULT EDUCATION

Digital tools play a crucial role in modern adult education, providing flexibility and accessibility to learners. The following tools have been identified as effective in various countries:

**E-Learning Platforms:** Tools like Google Classroom, Quizlet, and Duolingo offer flexible learning options.

**Interactive Media:** Videos, podcasts, and interactive quizzes cater to different learning styles.

**AI Integration:** AI-supported programs provide personalised learning experiences.

### Key Strategies:

**Blended Learning Models:** Combine online and face-to-face learning for maximum flexibility.

**Adaptive Learning Systems:** Use technology to tailor learning experiences to individual needs.

**Interactive Digital Tools:** Incorporate tools that engage learners and make learning more interactive.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

To address the challenges faced by low-skilled adults and to enhance the effectiveness of adult education systems, it is imperative for policymakers to implement comprehensive and targeted strategies. The following recommendations are designed to increase accessibility, foster collaboration, promote flexible learning models, recognize and validate prior learning, and raise awareness about the importance of lifelong learning.



### Increase Accessibility

**Financial Support:** To reduce financial barriers and enhance participation in adult education, it is crucial to provide subsidies, grants, and scholarships specifically aimed at low-skilled and adult learners. Additionally, supporting adult education institutions financially will enable them to offer affordable or free courses, making education more accessible to those who need it the most.

**Digital Literacy Training:** Developing comprehensive digital literacy programs is essential to bridge the digital divide and ensure inclusivity. Integrating digital skills training into all adult education programs will equip learners with the necessary competencies to navigate and utilise modern educational technologies effectively, thereby enhancing their learning experience and employability.



**Flexible Learning Options:** Expanding blended and online learning platforms is crucial to providing flexible learning schedules that accommodate diverse learner needs. Additionally, promoting micro-learning modules will allow learners to engage with educational content in short, manageable segments, making education more accessible and less time-consuming for adult learners.

### *Key Strategies:*

- **Subsidies and Grants:** Allocate funds to reduce the financial burden on low-skilled adult learners.
- **Digital Literacy Programs:** Implement widespread digital literacy training to enhance learners' capabilities.
- **Blended Learning:** Develop and promote online and face-to-face combined learning options.

## **Foster Collaboration**

**Encourage Partnerships:** Fostering collaboration between educational institutions, industries, and government bodies is essential to create a holistic and supportive learning ecosystem. Promoting partnerships with community organisations can further support the delivery of adult education programs, ensuring they are relevant and accessible to local populations.

**Community Engagement:** Supporting community-based learning initiatives that involve practical skills classes and local events can make education more relevant and engaging for adult learners. Facilitating networking events and platforms for educators, policymakers, and learners to share best practices will help build a strong, collaborative community focused on lifelong learning.

**Networking and Knowledge Sharing:** Establishing regional and national forums for exchanging ideas, resources, and best practices will enhance the quality and consistency of adult education programs. Creating online platforms for continuous professional development and collaboration among adult educators will further support their growth and effectiveness, ultimately benefiting learners.

### *Key Strategies:*

- **Institutional Collaboration:** Build partnerships to enhance resource sharing and innovation.
- **Community-Based Learning:** Engage learners through community-focused educational activities.
- **Professional Development Forums:** Develop forums and online platforms for knowledge sharing among educators.

## **Implement Flexible Learning Models**

**Blended Learning:** Developing blended learning models that combine online and face-to-face instruction can provide the flexibility needed to accommodate diverse learning preferences and schedules. Ensuring these models are widely accessible and supported by adequate resources will help maximise their effectiveness and reach.

**Microlearning:** Creating short, focused learning modules tailored to fit into learners' busy schedules can make education more manageable and less daunting. Using microlearning to reinforce key concepts and skills allows for more efficient and targeted learning, helping learners to retain and apply knowledge effectively.



**Adaptive Learning Systems:** Implementing adaptive learning technologies that tailor educational content to individual learners' needs can provide a more personalised and effective educational experience. Providing ongoing training for educators on using adaptive learning systems effectively will ensure that these technologies are utilised to their full potential, benefiting both educators and learners.

### *Key Strategies:*

- **Flexible Scheduling:** Promote learning models that accommodate diverse learner schedules.
- **Microlearning Modules:** Develop brief, targeted learning units.
- **Personalised Learning:** Utilise adaptive technologies to customise learning experiences.

## Recognition and Validation

**Recognize Prior Learning:** Developing systems to recognise and validate prior learning and work experience is essential for acknowledging the skills and knowledge adults already possess. Creating pathways for adults to translate their prior learning into formal qualifications can significantly enhance their employability and motivation to engage in further education.

**Certifications:** Offering certifications for adult education programs that are recognized by industries and employers can provide a tangible return on investment for learners. Aligning these certifications with national qualification frameworks will facilitate skill recognition and ensure that learners' qualifications are valued and transferable across different sectors and regions.

**Career Guidance:** Expanding access to career counselling and guidance services is crucial for helping adults navigate the various learning opportunities available to them. Providing ongoing support and mentorship can further enhance educational and career development, ensuring that adults have the necessary resources and encouragement to succeed in their learning journeys.

### *Key Strategies:*

- **Prior Learning Validation:** Recognize and validate adults' previous experiences and learning.
- **Industry-Recognized Certifications:** Offer certifications that enhance employability.
- **Career Support Services:** Provide guidance and mentorship for adult learners.

## Raise Awareness

**Awareness Campaigns:** Conducting national and regional campaigns to inform potential learners about adult education programs is crucial. Utilising diverse media channels can help reach a broad audience, encouraging more adults to participate in lifelong learning opportunities.

**Information Dissemination:** Improving the dissemination of information about lifelong learning opportunities through user-friendly online platforms ensures that potential learners can easily access relevant details. Collaborating with local organisations to distribute this information can further raise awareness and increase community engagement.

**Media Campaigns:** Highlighting success stories of adult learners can serve to inspire and motivate others to pursue education. Showcasing the personal and professional benefits of continuing education can help reduce the stigma associated with adult learning, encouraging more individuals to take advantage of these opportunities.

*Key Strategies:*

- **Promotional Campaigns:** Launch initiatives to raise awareness about adult education.
- **Information Accessibility:** Ensure information on learning opportunities is easily accessible.
- **Success Stories:** Use media to highlight the benefits and successes of adult learners.

Implementing these recommendations will require concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, industries, and community organisations. By increasing accessibility, fostering collaboration, promoting flexible learning models, recognizing and validating prior learning, and raising awareness, policymakers can create a more inclusive and effective adult education system. This will not only empower low-skilled adults to achieve their full potential but also foster a culture of continuous learning and personal development. The “One Step Up” project provides a roadmap for enhancing adult education systems across Europe, ensuring that all adults have the opportunity to improve their skills, knowledge, and employability.



## 10. CONCLUSION

The “One Step Up” project has provided valuable insights into the state of adult education across eight European countries: Lithuania, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus, and Croatia. Through a combination of focus groups and extensive desk research, this project has highlighted both the strengths and challenges of current adult education practices, and it has proposed comprehensive recommendations for policymakers to enhance adult education systems.

**Diverse Approaches to Adult Education:** The countries involved in this project employ a wide range of strategies and models to engage low-skilled adults in lifelong learning. These strategies include job-related learning, community-based education, digital literacy programs, and innovative andragogical approaches such as microlearning and gamification.

**Common Barriers:** Despite the diversity of approaches, common barriers persist across all countries. These include financial constraints, time management issues, digital skills gaps, and social stigma. Addressing these barriers is crucial for improving participation rates and ensuring the effectiveness of adult education programs.

**Importance of Digital Skills:** The need for updating digital and andragogic skills among adult educators is universally recognized. Digital literacy is essential for both educators and learners to navigate modern educational tools and platforms effectively. Programs aimed at enhancing digital skills are critical for making adult education more accessible and relevant.

**Role of Governmental Funding:** Governmental support plays a vital role in the success of adult education programs. Financial aid for learners, funding for educational institutions, and incentives for industry partnerships are necessary to sustain and expand adult education initiatives.

**Innovative and Flexible Learning Models:** Innovative models such as blended learning, microlearning, and adaptive learning systems have shown significant promise in engaging low-skilled adults. These models provide the flexibility needed to accommodate diverse learning preferences and schedules, making education more accessible and effective.

**Recognition and Validation of Prior Learning:** Systems for recognizing and validating prior learning and work experience are essential for motivating adults to return to education. These systems help bridge the gap between informal learning and formal qualifications, enhancing employability and career prospects.

**Community Engagement and Collaboration:** Collaboration between educational institutions, industries, and community organisations is key to creating a supportive learning ecosystem. Community-based learning initiatives and networking platforms for educators and stakeholders enhance the reach and impact of adult education programs.

The “One Step Up” project has underscored the critical need for innovative and flexible approaches in adult education. By implementing the provided recommendations, policymakers can create more inclusive and effective adult education systems that promote lifelong learning and empower low-skilled adults to achieve their full potential. This comprehensive approach will not only improve individual outcomes but also contribute to the social and economic development of communities across Europe.



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them." Project Number: 2022-1-LT01-KA220-ADU-000085898