

National Coordinators for Adult Learning

ONLINE MAGAZINE



Innovative learning environments



Credits for all pictures can be found in the magazine



Co-funded by
the European Union

Co-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.

In this magazine

• Message from the European Commission	3
• Best practices in Hungary	4
• European Year of Skills - what's next?	9
• Giving a boost to adult education in Flanders	10
• Learning from each other in Ljubljana - June 2025	13
• An ode to stunning learning for all	16
• Mapping alternative educational spaces in Slovakia	18
• National coordinators meet in Bratislava	21
• Non-formal learning in third spaces in Germany	23
• Designing learning spaces in basic education	26
• Learning centers in Sweden	28
• Learning can be fun in The Netherlands	30
• The Union of Skills - Where do we stand	33
• Local Estonian government, partner in adult education	34
• The Union of Skills - initiatives	37
• Latvia: a strong adult educators' network	39
• Strengthening digital skills in Cyprus	41
• The Union of Skills - initiatives	45
• A wide range of creative initiatives in Czech Republic	46
• A place for safety and learning in Ireland	51
• Embracing the land as a teacher in Iceland	55
• Learning for everyone, everywhere, anytime in Türkiye	57

Dear reader,

The concept of innovative learning spaces is closely associated with the European Union's initiatives to enhance adult learning and cultivate the skills that individuals require to fulfil their professional, social, and personal lives. In the move towards a Union of Skills (2025) and a European Education Area, where learning will be accessible to everyone, innovative learning spaces are a concrete expression of this vision – places where EU policy on an inclusive digital, and sustainable society is put into practice.

Innovative learning spaces – both physical and digital – are also seen as one of the tools for achieving the goal of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (2021) of having at least 60% of adults participating in training every year by 2030. They broaden access to learning, promote community engagement, and connect formal, non-formal, and informal learning. In support of this concept, the Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning (2021–2030) emphasizes the need for 'modern and accessible learning environments' and support for local learning centres that bring together different social groups. The Union of Skills and the Basic Skills Action Plan (2025) further stressed the support for 'Member States on innovative community learning spaces to engage and motivate adults with low basic skills to upskill by operating in environments where they feel more comfortable.'

In 2024-2025, the National Coordinators of the Adult Learning Agenda from Belgium-Flanders, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, The Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Türkiye examined good practices in their countries and summarized their findings in this online magazine, highlighting the most representative examples of linking spaces, participants, topics and innovative approaches, and the results of their interaction.

The magazine also offers insight into their activities at the national level, which contribute to the shaping of national policies and the adult learning environment. The examples and initiatives collected demonstrate tremendous creativity and innovation in adult learning across the EU. The learning spaces and their activities presented emphasize curiosity and creativity over credentials, valuing experimentation, reflection, and continuous improvement. These learning environments focus not just on technical proficiency but also on emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and problem-solving - skills essential for thriving in complex, interconnected societies and empower individuals to take ownership of their learning and reshape their personal and professional trajectories.

Ultimately, they represent a shift to active, purpose-driven learning - where adults are not just consumers of knowledge but creators of change in their communities and workplaces.



The national coordinators from Belgium-Flanders, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, The Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden (in alphabetical order). Not in the picture: coordinators from Cyprus, Hungary and Türkiye.



Andreea Diana Spiridon
Team leader Adult skills
DG Employment, Social
Affairs and Inclusion
European Commission

[Hungary]

In the autumn of 2024, colleagues from two European Union projects came together to map out and explore innovative learning spaces, while also experimenting with new and creative approaches to teaching and learning. Their aim was to share experiences, exchange best practices, and discover how these modern environments can inspire more engaging and effective educational processes.

Budapest - September 2024

Best practices in innovative learning spaces

The Hungarian EPALE National Support Service organized an international study visit on 10 and 11 September 2024 for the staff of other national EPALE support services and national coordinators. The aim of the event was to showcase best practices in innovative learning spaces in Hungary and to discuss related experiences of the participating countries. Twelve participants from eight countries attended the event: Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (Wallonia), Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Ireland, Latvia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.



**EPALE Peer Learning Activity
11-12 September 2024
Budapest
INNOVATIVE LEARNING SPACES**



The role of learning cities



Dr. Balázs Németh, EU policy ambassador for EPAL Hungary, focused on the role of learning cities in developing a culture and infrastructure that supports lifelong learning and skills development.

Learning cities play a role designed to offer learning opportunities that are accessible to all citizens, fostering a culture that values personal and professional growth.

The discussion highlighted how formal institutions, such as higher education and vocational education and training institutions, can enhance their organizational capacity. This support can empower smaller or less formal organizations, such as community groups and volunteer organizations, allowing them to play a more effective role in learning ecosystems. Dr. Balázs Németh examined how learning cities promote cooperation and partnerships among different stakeholders. This includes municipalities, formal educational institutions, civic learning organizations, businesses, and non-educational organizations. Effective collaboration between these entities helps to create more inclusive and diversified learning opportunities. Policy makers are pivotal actors in encouraging a more unified approach to learning across regions and cities. They can develop policies that promote collaboration and shared learning objectives, ensuring that all citizens can acquire the necessary skills for life, irrespective of their background or circumstances. The city of Pécs is a member of the [UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities](#). Pécs serves as a model for how cities can integrate learning into all aspects of urban life, offering practical insights into the development and benefits of a learning city.

Public libraries as lifelong learning hubs



Ágnes Kovácsné Koreny, director-general of the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library talked about the function of Hungarian public libraries as lifelong learning hubs.

Public libraries have long been cornerstones of Hungarian communities, providing free access to knowledge, information, and cultural resources. However, today's successful public library is no longer just a 'repository of books' or a document archive, but rather a cultural and value-transmitting institution.

Modern public libraries are dynamic learning centers that offer a variety of information resources, services, and programs—always tailored to the local community they serve, based on its needs and demands.

When examining the significance of public libraries as accessible, inclusive spaces that support lifelong learning, several key aspects should be considered:

- Accessibility for all
- Inclusivity and social equity
- Support for lifelong learning
- Community engagement and connection
- Adaptability to changing needs
- Safe and neutral spaces

Also in adult education public libraries have an important role:

- They provide access to information and resources.
- They organize educational programs and workshops.
- They foster community engagement and support.

Community workshops

Zsanett Imre, Székesfehérvár Vocational Education and Training Centre introduced the community workshops they organise as a way of adult learning.

The Székesfehérvár VET Centre's Community Workshop is a versatile creative space located inside the main campus. It is a place of socialising and learning. It offers an array of activities and events primarily for adults, which not only aid lifelong learning, but also offer a way to wind down and spend quality time in an attractive environment. The Workshop is equipped with a wide range of modern machines and gadgets ready to accommodate a number of activities. Regular thematic and seasonal workshops are held in which up to 15 people can participate, work and learn under the guidance of qualified instructors. The Workshop is also used for hosting meetings and trainings, and it may be rented out by external parties.

Beside the events and activities in the Community Workshop, Székesfehérvár VET Centre also offers informative lectures targeting adults. The initial target audience is the staff at VET institute itself, however, opening to the wider public is one of the main future objectives.

Other initiatives include building closer partnership with the city council and local social institutions. The expected result is reaching more people and offering a greater variety of events and activities, targeting more specific age groups and interests.



FabLabs, the future of adult learning

CEO Dávid Pap of FabLab Budapest introduced the FabLab concept, originating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

FabLabs are based on small-scale workshops equipped with digital fabrication tools that enable individuals to create almost anything. These spaces are hubs for innovation, where technology, once limited to mass production, is now accessible to individuals, entrepreneurs, and communities alike. It is a unique learning space due to the project-based learning and interdisciplinary collaboration. Dávid Pap believes that the future of adult learning is in FabLabs. The participants were given the opportunity to practice using Microsoft MakeCode for micro:bit. This was a new tool for everyone, so it was a basic exercise. It was good to see how this IT tool can be successfully used, even for complete novices.



As a closing activity for the day, participants engaged in some physical activity through a [historical VR tour](#), where they could experience the connection between experiential learning and modern technology, all while promoting a healthy lifestyle.



Education in museums

The second day of the visit focused on 'Museums as Education Facilities' highlighting innovative approaches to adult education within museum settings.

Magdolna Nagy discussed the development of green skills for adults. The Museum Education and Methodology Centre, established in 2006 under the Hungarian Open Air Museum, supports the professional renewal of museums in Hungary. Its objectives include enhancing museum participation in lifelong learning and competency-based education, expanding the use of museum collections, and promoting museums as cultural hubs. The center conducts research, develops methodologies, and organizes training for cultural professionals and educators. The increasing societal expectation for museums to address sustainability has prompted the integration of green practices into their operations. The center is developing a 'Green Museum' methodology in partnership with the Pulszky Society, which includes creating a national criteria system based on extensive research and international best practices. This initiative aims to provide museums with the tools and training necessary to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, ensuring they serve as authentic sources of green knowledge in their educational programs. By showcasing best practices and setting a framework for sustainability assessments, the project ultimately seeks to establish a certification process for Green Museums in Hungary.

Róbert Török presented virtual exhibitions at the Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism. He spoke about the museum's history, collections, and the context of its establishment, emphasizing its unique national role in preserving the history of commerce, hospitality, and tourism in Hungary. Established in 1966, the museum has evolved through various locations, showcasing a diverse range

of artifacts related to trade and the hospitality industry. He also discussed the museum's digital initiatives, including virtual exhibitions and digitized collections. He highlighted several online resources, such as the museum's digital collection aggregator and the dynamic virtual exhibitions created through collaborative projects. They explored the interactive and educational aspects of these digital offerings, including the That's Beer! exhibition and the Gerbeaud House project, which provide valuable insights for vocational training and tourism.

Accessibility of infocommunications in museums

The speaker began by outlining Hungary's regulations concerning accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Despite these laws, practical implementation has lagged. The **organization Narradivas** has focused on enhancing accessibility since 2020, particularly through audiodescriptions for visually impaired individuals, created by **Katalin Gazdik**, and sign language interpretation provided by **Ildikó Demeter-Szabó**. Audiodescriptions aim to deliver objective, detailed narratives that enrich the experience of visual art and cultural events, fostering inclusivity and understanding. A recent project involved creating audiodescriptions for Csontváry paintings at the National Gallery, ensuring that visually impaired visitors could fully appreciate the artworks. The presentation also emphasized the importance of sign language accessibility, noting that their video interpretations cater to diverse audiences. Ultimately, the speaker underscored the mission of making cultural content accessible to all, advocating for broader integration in society.

Results of the European Year of Skills



2023 was announced the European Year of Skills as a response to the critical labour and skills shortages in Europe. The overall objective of the Year was to promote a mindset of upskilling and reskilling. The Year comprised a comprehensive year-long policy discussion with stakeholders on the role of skills and skills policies. The debate showed that European countries are facing very similar challenges due to rapid technological change, demographic ageing and a shrinking EU workforce, combined with the need for resilient industrial ecosystems and supply chains. There is broad consensus that these trends amplify the need for a better skilled workforce in Europe, capable of responding to the rapid shifts in skills needs.

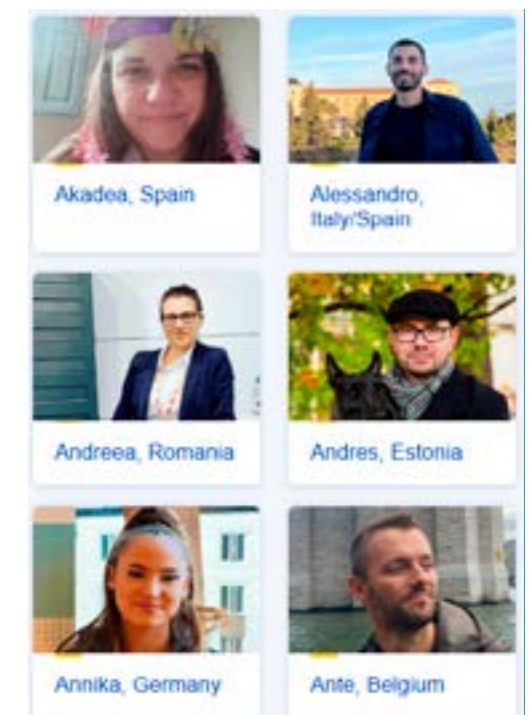
In October 2025 a report about the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Skills was published. The report reviews progress on EU policies for skills development and education. It highlights the growing need for digital skills, green transition competencies, and lifelong learning to keep pace with labour market demands. The document emphasizes that continuous learning and flexible training systems are essential for Europe's competitiveness and social cohesion.

Key ideas include

- Adapting education systems to future skills needs through innovation and collaboration
- Supporting workers and businesses with reskilling and upskilling programs
- Promoting inclusivity so that all citizens can benefit from new opportunities
- Strengthening partnerships between governments, industry, and education providers.
- Preparing for emerging challenges like AI integration and sustainability.

READ THE FULL REPORT

***Real People, Real Skills* features 200 inspiring stories from across Europe, showcasing individuals who upskilled and reskilled.**



WHAT'S NEXT?

-  **Empowering everyone to train**
Implement Individual Learning Accounts
-  **Strategic dialogue on skills**
*Give prominence to skills across policies
Promote public-private partnerships*
-  **Skills first**
*Encourage skills-based recruitment,
talent management and skills validation*
-  **Attracting International Talent**
-  **Promote skills as an investment**
*Explore ways to further incentivise
financing of upskilling and reskilling*
-  **Strengthening VET for competitiveness**
*Promote excellence
More women in VET professions
Integrate AI in training*

[Flanders]

Belgium



Giving a boost to adult education. That was the ambition of the 'Edusprong' projects in Flanders. In no less than 192 local projects, many centers for (basic) adult education worked together to build the future of adult education. Find out more about the results of the projects on the next page.



Going to the digital school for better job opportunities

A center for adult education in Brussels introduced the 'digital school'.

[READ MORE](#)



With some help 'it clicks' for sure

All adults with questions about learning can go to a 'Klikpunt' in their neighbourhood.

[READ MORE](#)



Organizing hybrid lessons, a steep learning curve

Not everyone has the time or opportunity to always be physically present in a class.

[READ MORE](#)



Linking digital to physical learning

Learners in elecromechanics first get to know a physical installation digitally online (at home).

[READ MORE](#)



Networking and collaboration to attract new learners

A center for adult education in Antwerp collaborates to lower, or eliminate, barriers for learning.

[READ MORE](#)



Learning/career guidance from entry to exit

A center for adult learning in Gent uses learning/career guidance to prevent school dropout.

[READ MORE](#)



Strong parents, strong children

A center for basic adult education collaborated with 11 schools to enhance the literacy of the parents to better support their children.

[READ MORE](#)



Investing in vulnerable youth to strengthen their future

In a bridging program youngsters could practice Dutch and improve missing competencies.

[READ MORE](#)



Flexible pathways in childcare training

Various centers for adult education collaborated to design flexible pathways in childcare training.

[READ MORE](#)

[Slovenia]

In Slovenia adult learning and education is moving beyond the classroom and becoming part of life – in nature, in communities, in businesses and in creative spaces. These innovative learning environments combine modern technologies and traditional knowledge, gamification and practical work, sustainable practices and cultural heritage preservation. What they have in common is their openness to all generations and the awareness that we learn most deeply when we share our experiences with others.

On the next pages you can find some inspiring examples of Slovenian innovative learning environments presented at the Third EAAL Forum from 18 to 20 June 2025 in Ljubljana. The event was organized by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE).



**CLICK TO FIND MORE STORIES AND INTERVIEWS
ILLUSTRATING THE VISION OF LIFELONG LEARNING
THAT EMPOWERS INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES**



Learning from each other in Ljubljana

From 18 to 20 June 2025 some national coordinators working together in the cluster 'innovative learning environments' met in Ljubljana/Slovenia for 3 days of learning from each other. [See the event's website](#). On the first day they learned from the SIAE colleagues about the Slovenian system of adult education, guidance and validation and about the Lifelong Learning Weeks that have been organised from 1996 to 2025. A large ESF-supported awareness-raising and media campaign for lifelong learning, [Lahko.si](#), will run from now until 2028.



On the second day the national coordinators joined the participants of the European Agenda of Adult Learning Forum at the [Center Rog](#). The Center is a true innovative learning space, a creative hub where everybody can create anything either by themselves or with the help of skilled mentors in nine production labs, where both traditional hand tools and the latest technologies are at their disposal. On the third day a visit to the [International Center for Self-Sufficiency](#) was on the agenda.



EAAL FORUM ON INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS [HIGHLIGHTS](#)

Study circles

Learning in small intergenerational groups to develop collaborative skills

Erika Švara from SIAE presented the concept of study circles. The study circles aim at facilitating joint learning in small groups that meet regularly. Mentors are the key pillars of the circles. The aims change over time. Initially, in 1993, their purpose was to expand the educational offer and democratisation of the society. A decade later, the emphasis turned more towards the accessibility of learning for the less educated and socially vulnerable, encouraging their participation in lifelong learning. Nowadays special attention goes to intergenerational cooperation and transformative learning to adapt to climate and social changes. SIAE coordinates the study circles and offers training programmes for mentors, monitoring, project-based development and international cooperation.



Picture: Marko Samac

[READ MORE](#)

Nature meets knowledge in a forest library

The Slovenia Forest Service, the Tourist Association of Slovenia, the SIAE, and the Forestry Library (Slovenian Forestry Institute) are the organizers of the Forest Libraries project (SL). With the forest libraries, they aim to promote reading culture in Slovenia and raise awareness about the importance of reading for the lives of individuals and society. They encourage reflection on the importance of reading for pleasure, and especially on the social aspect of sharing books and reading in public spaces. Reading books in the forest has a particularly beneficial effect on people's mental and emotional development. In peace and quiet, surrounded only by the greenery and the sounds of the forest, they can connect with themselves, others, and the story they are reading. According to Alenka Štrukelj from the SIAE, reading and the forest improve well-being, reduce stress, calm the mind, and encourage observation and curiosity.

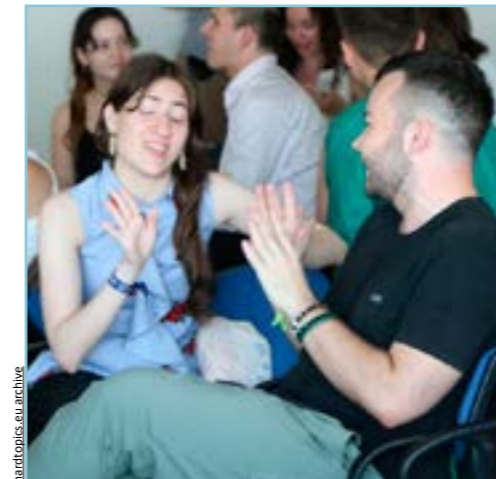


Picture: Rok Petancic

Forest library in the Herbal Centre of South-Eastern Slovenia in Škocjan.

Tools for youth workers and educators who want to overcome polarization

The **Hard Topics** project addresses the growing issue of social polarization. Young people report that engaging in constructive discussions about social topics is becoming increasingly difficult. The project's goal is to enhance the dialogue skills of young people and youth workers by creating spaces for discussion on shared values using a participatory and youth-friendly approach.



hardtopics.eu archive

The Hard Topics project connects young people with differing views to inspire meaningful dialogue.

An app has been developed to pair people based on a questionnaire and to spark deep and genuine conversations. People with the most diverse perspectives are invited to enter into conversations about values, dilemmas, and real-life questions trying to find common ground. Very often the youngsters engaging in this dialogue find ways to resolve conflicts peacefully in moments of quiet understanding. Matej Cepin from Social Academy explained that more than 850 young individuals are directly involved in the project, including at least 15% from geographically or culturally challenging backgrounds, along with about 110 youth workers.



Dole Estate

International Centre for Self-Sufficiency

Ana Vovk is full-time professor at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Maribor. She is also the head of the International Center for Ecoremediation and owner and leader of the International Center for Self-Sufficiency Dole where she transfers academic knowledge into practice through trainings, workshops and applied activities. Ana has developed new methods in professional fields, namely ecoremediation, permaculture, biodynamics, agroecology and transferred them to pedagogical work and sustainable life. She works with ministries and international research groups in the field of adaptation to climate change. [WATCH A VIDEO ABOUT THE FIELD TRIP](#)



Picture: SIAE Archive

Ode to stunning learning for all

Dr. Pieter Sprangers' 'Ode to Stunning Learning for All' was an inspiring lecture on making lifelong learning a captivating, continuous journey. Sprangers highlighted innovation in adult education through reimagined learning environments and supportive communities. Emphasizing curiosity, passion, and the human element in education, he delivers a visionary yet practical call for educators and institutions to transform learning into a delightful, never-ending endeavor.

Keynote speech at the 'Innovative Learning Environments' peer learning activity and European Adult Learning Agenda Forum in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 19 June 2025.

Watch the video - from 00:36:20 until 2:10:54

In his keynote Dr. Sprangers passionately explored how to make learning so engaging that people 'never want it to ever stop'. He began by sharing his personal mission to cultivate a delightful culture of lifelong learning. Sprangers laments that many young adults view education as something 'to finish' one day which, as he noted, 'breaks his heart' because modern life demands continuous learning well into older age. To set the tone, he involved the audience in reflecting on their last big personal development leap – underscoring the importance of openly discussing learning experiences. This led into one of his core ideas: astonishment or deep curiosity as the starting point of all learning. Adopting the curious perspective of Star Trek's Mr. Spock (Fascinating!), Sprangers humorously critiqued outdated adult education practices – for instance, organizing courses in traditional classrooms in city centres without considering the availability of public transport, which makes access difficult for many adults.

Lighthouses of knowledge

Sprangers advocates innovation in adult learning environments and a broader societal role in fostering learning. One vivid metaphor is to 'turn schools into lighthouses of knowledge' – community hubs that shine learning opportunities outward. He praises initiatives that transform cities and institutions into learning communities (citing UNESCO's

learning cities concept) to support learners 'from the cradle to the grave'. Learning, he argues, is as essential as oxygen and should be woven into everyday life. He stresses that lifelong learning should not be seen as a punishment or 'life sentence' but rather as an exciting, self-driven journey – comparing learning to a muscle that we train throughout life. Sprangers highlighted emerging ideas like extending higher education over a lifetime (instead of a compact 4-year period) and envisions a 'lifelong subscription' to education for everyone.

Genuine interest and support

A recurring theme was the human and relational aspect of learning. Sprangers asserts that technology alone (e.g. an app nudging you to study) is not a panacea. The human aspect is more important. Genuine interest and support from mentors, teachers, or peers profoundly motivates learners. Sprangers gave some powerful examples: the famous 'granny cloud' from Sugata Mitra's experiments, where elders' encouragement boosted children's learning. Another example is a study in prisons showing that inmates learn effectively only when a caring person (e.g. a guard acting as a mentor) takes interest. In formal education too, he notes, a strong teacher-student relationship can spark engagement even in uninteresting subjects. Sprangers urges educators and institutions to nurture these



To set the tone, Dr. Pieter Sprangers involved the audience in reflecting on their last big personal development leap – underscoring the importance of openly discussing learning experiences.

supportive relationships and to value all forms of learning – there is no such thing as 'just a hobby' learning for adults, since every learning experience is valuable.

Concrete ideas for change

The speech built from big-picture questions to concrete ideas for change. Sprangers touched on redesigning physical and virtual learning spaces: from outdoor 'nomadic learning' experiences – a new educational intervention he developed – to creative use of technology, always emphasizing 'cautious innovation' that keeps human needs in focus. He introduced the approach of scientific educational design research, which combines practical solutions with scientific inquiry to tackle complex educational challenges iteratively.

What's next?

To finish, Sprangers presented a forward-looking checklist (What's next?) for lifelong learning: make learning a common dialogue in

society, provide ubiquitous support, simplify the learning landscape, so people don't get lost in bureaucratic complexity, integrate lifelong learning deeper into higher education models, and elevate adult education centres from being 'Cinderella' to being equally esteemed as formal schools.

Dr. Sprangers' tone remained optimistic and rallying, as he concluded with an inclusive call to action: everyone – individual learners, educators, institutions, and policymakers alike – should engage in dialogue about learning and challenge each other to pursue learning with passion.

In essence, Sprangers' speech was both a celebration of the transformative power of learning and a pragmatic blueprint for making lifelong learning accessible, innovative, and truly stunning for all.

[Slovakia]

SIOV is actively involved in mapping alternative and inspirational educational places (ILE). In Slovakia the national coordinator did not only map these locations but also organized several visits to inspiring sites. The following pages briefly highlight some of the initiatives that were part of the campaign that was implemented in the second half of 2025.

Financial education for all generations



5 Peňazí (5 Coins) is an initiative of the National Bank of Slovakia and aims to educate people in financial literacy. It is intended for all citizens, regardless of their age or profession, the services provided are completely free of charge.

The educational content is available online as printable worksheets or in-person workshops, providing multiple learning options. For children and adolescents, it focuses on effective saving, budgeting, avoiding financial pitfalls and tracking expenses, so that they can develop good financial habits from a young age. For adults, the topics focus on mortgages, debts, investments and retirement planning, thus covering a wide range of financial issues. The content is presented in everyday language, without technical jargon, making it accessible to everyone.

In addition, it supports seniors learning in a group, gaining skills, and share knowledge within their community. Social workers and caregivers are also learning and helping people in debt and poverty with real solutions, not just informing.

5 Peňazí is transparent, honest and pragmatic because it collects quality information and connects it to everyday decisions. This allows people to make better financial decisions, thereby contributing to strengthening Slovakia, and thus positively impacting the country as a whole.

[**READ MORE**](#)

Innovative education space in libraries



SmartLab is a growing network of innovative laboratories located in public libraries across Slovakia, currently available in around 50 locations. These labs provide resources such as 3D printers, robotics kits, cutting plotters, heat presses, and pyrography pens, along with user-friendly design and coding software.

Library staff organise workshops and meetups that allow beginners to explore these tools. Participants can create models, build robots, personalise t-shirts, or learn to work safely with digital tools. While activities mainly target children and youth, adults are also welcome. Many libraries offer family gatherings and open studio hours, making SmartLab a beneficial place for collaborative learning.

The program aims to develop practical digital skills, encourage creativity, and make STEAM subjects accessible to everyone. As part of the National Strategy for Research, Development, and Innovation through 2030, SmartLab plans to expand with new activities and equipment.

More information and a list of participating libraries can be found online through CVTI SR and VAIA updates.

During the media campaign, SIOV documented two libraries that offer SmartLabs: Mikuláš Kováč Public Library in Banská Bystrica and Ľudovít Štúr Regional Library in Zvolen.

[**READ MORE**](#)

Some takes from the most popular learning city



Source: Preseňov - LifeStarter

Empowering through learning

LifeStarter is a community centre in Trnava for people of all ages, offering informal, hands-on learning in a supportive atmosphere that allows those who have been out of education for a long period to learn at their own pace.

Its HOTSPOT workshops help seniors and beginners develop the digital competences they need for everyday life, such as using e-services, online safety and basic tools, as these skills are essential for modern life.

Parents on maternity leave or returning to work can update their CV, prepare for interviews, learn time management techniques to boost self-confidence, while adults looking to change their careers receive clear, practical advice, skills checks and short upskilling modules with follow-up.

LifeStarter also advises employers on age-specific procedures and supports peer learning groups that build self-confidence, digital skills and a sense of community, contributing to the overall development of the community.

LifeStarter played a key role in launching Learning Trnava, the first learning city in Slovakia, and brings short-term meetings and thematic events to public spaces to make education visible, welcoming and accessible to all, thereby supporting a culture of lifelong learning.

[**READ MORE**](#)

Environmentally friendly activities



Source: Reuse Centrum Batekareň Trnava

Batekareň, a social establishment based in Trnava, offers a unique concept focused on developing eco-friendly habits. They offer a variety of courses, workshops, and seminars, including sustainable sewing, upcycling, tackling greenwashing, creating, and slowing down fast fashion. In addition to their diverse activities, they regularly organise clothing swaps, allowing participants to exchange their clothes and give worn-out items a second chance. In addition, they operate a reuse centre where one can bring and buy items, including clothing, toys, household items, books, and even plants. Batekareň employees are responsible for sorting items, displaying them, and managing administrative tasks related to their initiatives. Over the years, they have become well known locally, playing a significant role in terms of impact and community building.

[**READ MORE \(SK\)**](#)

All entities described above were part of the SIOV campaign, which took place in the second half of 2025. Other honourable mentions and places visited are:

EDUKOS - education and integration of inmates

[**READ MORE \(SK\)**](#)

Carpathian Foundation - field work with socially excluded communities [**READ MORE**](#)

Institute of Lifelong Learning (University of Žilina) - lifelong learning, education of foreigners [**READ MORE**](#)

DigiQ - education of parents and seniors in the context of cyber realities [**READ MORE \(SK\)**](#)

Orange Digital Centre - a place covering several entities that provide adult education [**READ MORE \(SK\)**](#)

All entities were also part of the media campaign, which took place under the auspices of SIOV in the second half of 2025. All videos will be available on the this [YouTube channel](#).

National coordinators meet in Bratislava

On 16 October 2025 the Slovakian State Institute of Vocational Education (SIOV) organized a conference 'Beyond Classrooms: Alternative Adult Learning Spaces' in collaboration with the Slovakian national coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning. The opportunity to meet in person and exchange practical experiences was available to national coordinators and representatives from other countries the day before the conference. Seventeen participants from Belgium/Flanders, Cyprus, Czechia, Montenegro, Liechtenstein, Hungary, Germany, North Macedonia and Slovenia accepted the opportunity to meet in Bratislava.

Slovakia, as the host, prepared a rich professional and accompanying program. It focused on the exchange of experiences, presentation of good practices and deepening cooperation in the field of adult education. Participants also visited the National Bank of Slovakia as an example of good practice in the field of developing financial literacy for adults.

The meeting was followed by the international conference 'Beyond Classrooms: Alternative Adult Learning Spaces'. The conference brought new perspectives on learning outside traditional schools and demonstrated that education is a lifelong process that can take place anywhere - at work, in the community, in libraries, or in online environments. Experts from universities, research, non-governmental organizations, and practice agreed that adult education is increasingly oriented towards personal and community dimensions. Research also shows that the motivation of adults to educate themselves primarily stems from internal needs for personal development, not just from work-related reasons. During the conference, a database of approximately 200 innovative educational places in Slovakia was presented, along with a series of videos showcasing specific examples of learning in various regions.

From the academic environment, a deeper insight was provided by Michaela Beran Sladkayova (Matej Bel University) in the contribution What Shapes Alternative Approaches to Adult Education and Ivana Studena (SAV) along with Luba Habodaszova (SIOV), who presented the results of the Survey on Adult Education in Slovakia. Inspirations from Slovakia and abroad The domestic scene were complemented by Slovak experts and initiatives focused on modern forms of learning. Natalia Babicova (DigiQ) spoke about the development of digital skills and safe behavior in the online environment, presenting initiatives to prevent cyberbullying.



Dušan Baranko (CVTI SR) introduced the SmartLab project. It involves modern educational spaces in libraries across Slovakia that support creativity, technical thinking, and the popularization of science. Foreign guest Larisa Şioneriu (AONTAS, Ireland) presented community education as a form of second chance for people who previously did not have the opportunity to study, such as individuals from marginalized groups or single parents.

Common message

Learning is shifting from traditional classrooms to communities, workplaces, public institutions, and especially to the digital environment. Adult education is becoming an open opportunity for everyone, regardless of age, profession, or social status.

The personal meeting of experts from several countries in Bratislava was proof that cooperation and mutual inspiration are the foundation of modern and inclusive adult education policy in Europe.

[Germany]

On the following pages you will find a selection of innovative learning environments of adult education from different regions in Germany. These examples are intended to provide an insight into the country's diverse educational landscape. They showcase different approaches and models that reflect the breadth and creativity of adult education. This is only a selection of examples and is by no means exhaustive. We also provide an insight into our European conference on innovative learning environments in basic adult education. The focus was on the question of which learning environments are motivating and sustainable – and how can learning spaces in (basic) adult education be designed to promote participation, motivation and quality?

INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - GERMANY

North Rhine-Westphalia

Non-formal learning in third spaces

Third places are informal learning spaces located in cultural and public areas, with the goal of “learning to live together.” They are open and inclusive, creating a network of various learning opportunities within a city

The concept of the ‘third place’ comes from American sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1989), who defined these as community gathering spots like cafés, pubs, or village halls – places that are neither home nor work spaces.

In Germany, responsibility for adult education is divided between the federal government and the federal states. The federal states have cultural sovereignty over education, although the federal government may also finance educational projects with the consent of the states in certain areas.

The Ministry of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia supports a variety of projects in third places, aiding in concept development, implementation, and the transition to an independent structure. In 2023, 24 third places successfully completed their three-year

implementation phase, and in 2024, 28 new third places began a new funding period.

The goal of these projects is to create new cultural centres and meeting places in rural areas, while promoting regional identity, social cohesion, and equal living conditions. These places should be easily accessible, welcoming, and designed with extended opening hours. They should be well integrated into the development of a city, village, or region. Examples include locations with high, sometimes historical, cultural significance, such as industrial heritage sites, former educational institutions, churches, or vacant shops. One example is the former synagogue in Epe, which now serves as a place for political education, promoting democracy, and addressing issues like racism and antisemitism.

[READ MORE \(DE\)](#)



Third places in Hessen

Das Gute Haus - The good home

The Good House is an example of an innovative learning center in a rural area. It is a cooperative that has received multiple awards. Its motto is: “What one person cannot achieve alone; many can achieve together.”.

The Hessian Adult Education Association (vhs) is carrying out a project on innovative learning locations and formats from the perspective of cultural education. The project ‘dasgute.haus’ is funded by the State of Hessen as part of the 2021-2025 Continuing Education Pact.

As a non-profit cooperative, ‘dasgute.haus’ serves as a family center, coworking space, and cultural hub, bringing together people of all generations. It offers a diverse program for all ages, ranging from open family cafés and craft activities to cultural events and educational sessions. The center also involves educational and management staff from adult education centers. Key partners include a local museum, a library association, and a state association for cultural education.



Photo: “dasgute.haus” <https://dasgute.haus/>

Among the current offerings are a coworking space with childcare services and a support group for those grieving the loss of a loved one. Additionally, there is an informative and engaging series of discussions exploring how the economy functions.

[READ MORE \(DE\)](#)



Das Gute Haus received the Hessian Social Award for Civic Engagement. [Watch the video.](#)

B.E.R.D

Move, experience, talk, think

Another innovative learning center is the BERD Center in Gießen. The acronym B.E.R.D. stands for ‘Bewegen, Erleben, Reden, Denken’ (move, experience, talk, think). Founded by public administration, local businesses, and a sports club, the center offers a variety of digital workshops, including adult education in Gießen.

The BERD Center features a virtual reality area for immersive adventure trips and virtual sports experiences. It is equipped with multifunctional seminar rooms and a conference room, as well as eFitness facilities. B.E.R.D.’s slogan is: “We are here for everyone. Good things should be shared.”

[READ MORE \(DE\)](#)

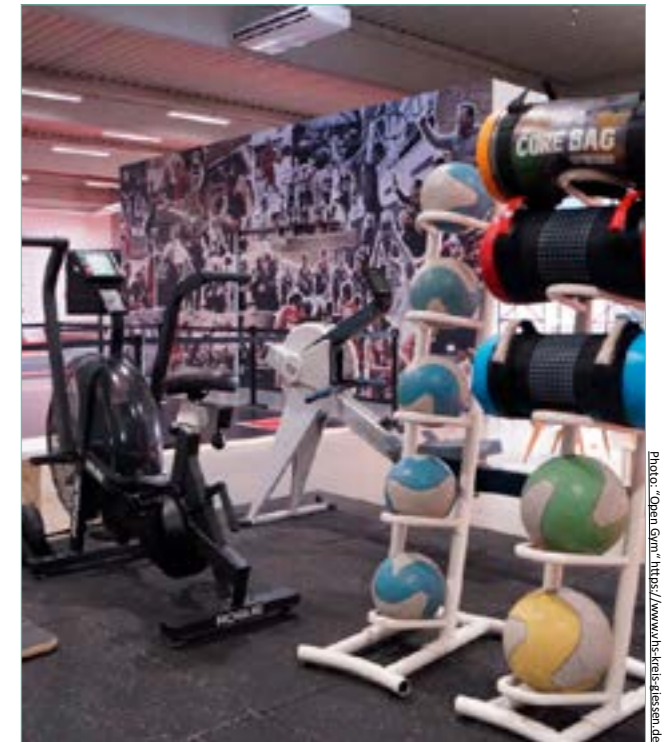


Photo: “Open Gym” <https://www.hs-kreisallianz.de>



Photo: Europa*Rad 2025. Copyright: CAP/2025

Contact and further information: Eva Feldmann-Wojtachnia, Center for Applied Policy research (CAP)

Munich

Political education in the Ferris wheel

The Ferris wheel in Munich is an example of low-threshold political education. It was organized for the first time at the Long Night of Democracy 2021 in Munich by the Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP) and the Foundation ‘Wertebündnis Bayern’ as ‘Democracy*Wheel’. Workshops were organized in the 27 gondolas by a wide range of civil society organizations. There were meetings with politicians and media professionals as well as open exchange formats. The general aim is to connect civil society and bringing together different social groups. The Ferris wheel served as the starting point for more political events such as the ‘Europa*Rad’, which will turn the fifth time in Mai 2026 offering the opportunity to discuss and explore Europe’s values.

[READ MORE \(DE\)](#)

Designing learning spaces in basic education

Which learning environments are motivating and sustainable – and how can learning spaces in basic education be designed to promote participation, motivation and quality? Experts from the field of basic education and European colleagues exchanged views on these issues.

The conference started with the keynote speech by Prof. Dr Simone C. Ehmig (Freie Universität Berlin), who presented the results of a research and development project on learning motivation and commitment in the everyday lives of adults with basic education needs. Following this, conference participants engaged in discussions on various aspects of learning space design through thematic workshops.

A key point was that learning spaces should actively encourage students to think and participate. The aim was not only to impart knowledge to learners, but also to involve them in the design process in order to create lasting motivation to learn. The exchange of ideas on various cooperation models and the integration of digital tools (such as AI and digital



media) showed how much potential there is in combining innovative learning methods and new technologies. The event made it clear that it is not only the content and methods that matter, but above all the attitude towards learners and their needs. Flexibility, participation and involvement in the learning process are at the forefront of efforts to further develop the concept of basic education in a sustainable and inclusive manner.



**READ MORE
ABOUT THE
CONFERENCE**



National coordinators and country representatives participating in the conference together with the organizers: from left to right: Anildo Vedovatti (Hungary), Burcu Evren (Türkiye), Laura Iveta Peniga (Latvia), Verena Lehnen, Simone Kaufhold (Germany), Karine Nicolay (Belgium/Flanders) Skuli Leiffson (Iceland), Lubica Gallova (Slovakia), Tanja Möller (Germany), AnneCatrine Uusitalo (Sweden), Monika Petlušová (Slovakia), Nadja Bornscheuer (Germany)

All pictures Axel Herzig - Fotografie

[Sweden]

On the following page, you can read more about learning centers in Sweden. At the core of learning centers is an education-focused perspective: equipping adults with the tools and support needed to access and complete their studies. Municipal adult education (Komvux) plays a central role in this, by addressing the labour market's competence needs and supporting adults' learning throughout various life stages.

Learning centers in Sweden

Municipalities are the main providers of adult education in Sweden. 'Learning center' in Sweden is commonly used as an umbrella term for environments that support adult learning. There is no formal definition of a learning center and municipalities have used partially different definitions.

A learning center refers to an activity organized by one or more municipalities where students are offered support in their learning from teachers and other staff and are given the opportunity to meet other students. Learning centers may be available for studies within municipal adult education, vocational higher education, universities and colleges, or other forms of education. 71% of all municipalities in Sweden have (at least one) learning center or a similar open activity.

Resources

Most learning centers offer individual study spaces, computers, internet, and group rooms. There is technical support, kitchen facilities, and videoconferencing or other remote meeting technology.

Services

Study and career counseling and pedagogical support from teachers are the most common services offered by municipalities at learning centers. Exam services, study technique support, and support for or during validation are also common. Just under half of the

municipalities with learning centers offer a contact person for universities/colleges or vocational higher education at the learning center. Students in municipal adult education are the most common target group for learning centers.

Target groups

In a majority of municipalities, university/college students or vocational higher education students are also target groups for learning centers.

Collaboration

Learning centers in other municipalities were the most common collaboration partners for learning centers. External education providers, universities/colleges, vocational higher education, and upper secondary schools are other common collaboration partners. About half have ongoing collaboration with the Swedish Public Employment Service. Relatively few report ongoing collaboration with Regional Development Actors (RUA).



Learning can be fun

Three million people in the Netherlands lack the basic skills to fully participate in society (16%). But it is a very diverse group. Large differences can be seen between native Dutch speakers and non-native speakers. In several innovative learning environments different target groups can improve their basic skills.

The goal of the Dutch adult learning policies is to help people improve their basic skills. The Netherlands does this through reaching out to specific target groups to increase their knowledge and expertise. Municipalities have the coordinating role in these policies and have the possibility to adjust policies to local

situations. The focus is local, but they get national support, for example funding. For all municipalities the goal is that learning basic skills should be easily accessible, with low thresholds and against a low cost, or even free of charge.

[Netherlands]

Women who bloom and grow

Grow and flourish gardens aim at more vulnerable groups in several cities in the country, among which Amsterdam. It's a space to be close to nature, learn about gardening, food, flora and fauna. It's a place to meet new people and empower women. The academy offers gardening but also aims

at people or groups wanting to start their own social/gardening initiative in other cities or neighbourhoods. Funding comes from individuals, the municipality, housing corporations, real estate developers etcetera.

[READ MORE ON EPALE](#)



Innovative learning environments in the Netherlands should be spaces used to help the hardest to reach groups. Learning can be non-formal or informal, but should always be easy, accessible, with low thresholds, but above all: learning there should be FUN!

Libraries and 'language houses' as important pillars for innovative learning environments

Libraries have a formal role in adult learning by providing space and support to learners. Libraries are however about much more than reading, language and books. They are centres for learning for all ages and are especially popular for digital skills. Language houses (Taalhuizen) are physical spaces where people can go to learn. There are about 200 language houses across the Netherlands. These are located mostly in libraries, but also in schools,

community buildings, health centers etcetera. They are easily accessible, free and easy to find but they also aim for good quality through a certification framework. Innovative learning environments in the Netherlands should be spaces used to help the hardest to reach groups. Learning can be non-formal or informal, but should always be easy, easy accessible with low thresholds, and above all: learning there should be FUN!



From Third Place to Third Space

Since 2020, eight libraries across the Netherlands have been working together with The Alignment House on a project to redefine library services within the digital transformation. 'From Third Place to Third Space' aims to increase the reach of public libraries and their interaction with residents.

[READ MORE ON EPALE](#)

CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS

The biggest challenge for these innovative learning initiatives and the adult learning policies in the Netherlands in general is to reach the right people. That's why awareness raising among target audience puts the focus on the fact that it is never too late to learn. Learning can be easy and accessible. You are not alone, there are many people that struggle with basic skills. Focus in all of these

initiatives is on learning needs of the target audience: reading, writing, numeracy, digital skills. But also: doing taxes, reading childrens' books to (grand)children, knowing how to sell something on the internet etcetera. The challenge is to find the balance between easy, accessible, fun and quality.

Perhaps this might be the next step to (more) formal education?

The Union of Skills

March 2025
#UnionOfSkills



Skills shortages and gaps are hindering EU competitiveness. Many people are falling behind as job requirements evolve, while businesses struggle to find people with the right skills and qualifications.



To address these challenges, the Union of Skills delivers a new approach, combining education, training and employment policies with a common vision of competitiveness.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

- There is a need to **increase access to skilled workers for SMEs**, as many report difficulties in recruitment.
- **Strengthening basic skills** in education is essential to ensure all students are equipped for the future, particularly in literacy, maths, science, digital skills and citizenship.
- **Shortages in STEM** are persisting, driven by low take-up among women.
- **Boosting digital skills** remains a priority for both adults and students, with efforts to expand training and participation in lifelong learning.
- Addressing demographic shifts is key, as the active **working-age population is decreasing**.
- **Encouraging more girls and women** to enter STEM and ICT fields remains important to close persistent gender gaps.

OUR GOALS:



Empower our people by enhancing skills to access quality jobs and navigate transitions



Enhance companies' competitiveness by helping them find the talent they need



Make skills portable across the EU, independently of where or how they were acquired

Local government, partner in adult education

The involvement of local governments in the promotion of adult education has been in focus throughout the Estonian experiences in promoting the adult learning agenda project. There have been round tables and seminars for local government employees and representatives of subordinate institutions. The Local Government Act in Estonia does not oblige them to engage in adult education. In order to promote better cooperation, a pilot program “Täiskäik” (Full Speed) was launched in 2022.

The aim of the pilot program is to help municipalities understand and support adult education more systematically at the local level. Creating practices and sharing experiences is necessary. Twelve municipalities participated in the pilot in the 2022 - 2023 period, 14 in 2024 - 2025. Experts from the Kasulava Training Center were involved to conduct the pilot program.

A call was made to join the pilot program, and the desired number of interested municipalities responded. Adult education profiles (statistical overview) were developed for these municipalities. Teams were formed in the municipalities, consisting of specialists and representatives of subordinate institutions. Face-to-face meetings were held at the locations. Then, a joint discussion seminar was held, in which teams from all municipalities participated. In a process of co-creation it was decided which problem they wanted to solve. A 5-month piloting period followed, during which experts organized interim meetings with the teams. Piloting practices were introduced at a summary seminar.

What has been achieved

Experts have prepared a web-based action model ‘Local government as a partner in supporting adult education’ which describes a systematic approach to promoting adult education, offers recommendations and instructions to municipalities for action at the local level.

The development plans of municipalities have been supplemented in the direction of adult education. Information on education has been collected and supplemented, and



Fourteen municipalities presenting their practices at the final seminar.

solutions have been found for learning issues of people with a low level of education. For example: supporting non-stationary secondary education, establishing a local public school, bringing men to study, training for the parents of babies, organizing information about training, etcetera. Municipalities are better able to see the benefits for their residents, see bottlenecks and formulate goals. Sharing practices is highly valued. This is unique, because practices in the field of adult education have not been shared in this way before.

During the process, it was recognized that collecting and sharing information and network-based cooperation do not require large financial resources. The expansion of the cooperation network supporting adult education is considered to be an important value.

This pilot program is sustainable, as 26 out of 79 municipalities have already participated and the activities will continue within the framework of the Agenda project in 2026 - 2027.

The guidance document is available online

[Estonia]

The involvement of local governments in the promotion of adult education has been in focus throughout the Estonian experiences in promoting the adult learning agenda project.

Popularization of adult learning through Estonian National Broadcasting

In cooperation with Estonian National Broadcasting, three adult education thematic television programs were organized titled 'Learning does not end'. Each program has 4 episodes and the length of one episode is 30 minutes. The programs are screened on Estonian television, with repeat broadcasts and of course the possibility of watching. Watching is used a lot. In 2023, there were nearly 200.000 viewers. Each time, together with the producer the participants are selected from nearly 100 candidates. The participants are learners and people and organizations that support learning

in adulthood. The number of viewers shows that the topic and people's stories matter to viewers. We believe that, in addition to social media, reaching a wider target group through television is an innovative approach.



Watch the [trailer of episode 3](#).

The importance of green skills in adult learning

In order to ensure that adult educators, network members and leaders are competent in the field of social change, regional seminars on green skills in eight counties were organized in 2024, with a total of 194 participants, including 81 from higher education and vocational schools. The participants in the seminars received a first-hand overview of the meaning of green skills and the green transition. They had the opportunity to argue and participate in discussions that help create the necessary background for raising awareness on the topic. The seminars focused on green skills and terminology, but the discussions were much broader, introducing the role of the state in promoting local life.

Experts from Tallinn University of Technology Helen Sooväli-Sepping (PhD) and Tallinn University Piret Vacht (PhD) facilitated the seminars. There was consensus among the participants that this kind of new topics in society is needed as adult education. It was decided that raising general awareness among the population is necessary when

addressing the topic of sustainability. Modern challenges and the transition to a more environmentally friendly and sustainable economic model require updated education and skills. In addition to teachers, other parties involved in adult education and skills development also need green knowledge: human resources staff, career counselors, library staff, local government employees, hobby group leaders, youth work specialists, etc. All adult education organizations can contribute to the formation of an environmentally sustainable mindset and values. We distributed the summary of the seminars, articles and writings through the ETKA Andras newsletter.



The Union of Skills

March 2025
#UnionOfSkills

INITIATIVES



Free movement of knowledge and skilled people

- Simplify recognition of skills and qualifications across the EU.
↳ Skills Portability Initiative
- Improve the free movement of learners and workers.
↳ European degree and European VET diploma
- Strengthen cooperation between universities.
↳ European Universities alliances
- Enhance pupil and teacher' mobility across schools.
↳ European School Alliances
- Make Erasmus+ more inclusive and accessible.



Making the EU a magnet for talent

- Facilitate targeted recruitment of non-EU skilled professionals to address critical shortages.
↳ EU Talent Pool
- Attract top students and researchers from non-EU countries.
↳ Visa Strategy
- Offer competitive work conditions to attract top talents to Europe.
↳ Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Choose Europe pilot

FUNDING

The EU is investing over **€150 billion*** to support people, businesses, education institutions and others to develop the education and skills needed for a thriving, competitive European economy.

*Estimation for 2021-2027 including RRF, ESF+, Erasmus+, ERDF, JTF, InvestEU.

A strong adult educators' network

In Latvia a strong network of adult education coordinators has been built in local municipalities since 2020.

Innovative cooperation

Training programmes, seminars, workshops, peer learning activities, and monthly online Adult Education Open-door Days in Local Municipalities are organized. The adult Education Coordination Network involves adult education coordinators in local municipalities and their local networks.

The contact list of coordinators is regularly updated, shared among stakeholders, and published on the new unified [platform for all adult education projects](#). On the [project webpage](#), local adult education activities and [best practices](#) are shared.

The [yearly report](#) on the experience, cooperation, and good practice in each local municipality is published.

Innovative activities

In 2025, to get new experience how to reach, address, motivate adults, to develop learning communities, to promote innovative learning environments, contracts with 21 local governments have been signed to organize 12 adult education days in each municipality using innovative learning methods and implementing 12 modules from 3 programmes non-formal education programmes designed in cooperation with the Latvia Bank and other partners in the Project: 'Be Money Smart!', 'Creative works', 'Green skills', using innovative environments and methods.

The experience gained in this activity has been summarized and shared on the Project webpage, the Moodle platform, and the WhatsApp group.

[*Latvia*]

A network of adult education coordinators has been built in the European Union Erasmus+ programme project 'National Coordinators for the Implementation of the European Adult Education Agenda in Latvia.'



Innovative learning environments

In September 2025 the seminar '[Innovative learning environments in Limbaži local municipality](#)' brought together 42 adult education coordinators to learn about the experience in Limbaži on how to make adult education more attractive.

[Cyprus]

The Cyprus European Agenda for Adult Learning 2024 - 2025 aims to strengthen the digital skills of both adult educators and adult learners, contributing to the country's digital transformation and lifelong learning goals.

INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - CYPRUS

Strengthening digital skills

The Cyprus European Agenda for Adult Learning aims to strengthen the digital skills of both adult educators and adult learners, contributing to the country's digital transformation and lifelong learning goals.

Building on the outcomes of the AdultDigitalUp project and aligned with the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (2021 - 2027), the project focuses on upskilling adult educators' skills through blended in-service training and the development of two courses on digital context (AI and digital competences).

Activities include digital upskilling courses, awareness-raising events, and stakeholder engagement, while also promoting collaboration with organizations participating in the EU Pact for Skills initiative to enhance synergies and visibility of innovative and inclusive learning environments. In the context of promoting innovative learning environments, organizations participating in the Pact for Skills initiative implement projects that foster cross-sector collaboration, integrate digital tools and methodologies into adult learning and promote innovative and inclusive learning environments for adults.

'Adult Digital Skills and Innovative Learning Environments' Information Day

On Friday, 23 May 2025, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY), through its Office of European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education, successfully organized the Information Day titled 'Adult Digital Skills and Innovative Learning Environments'. The event formed part of Cyprus's ongoing commitment to the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2024–2025 and the EU's flagship initiative, the Pact for Skills.

Bringing together key stakeholders from public institutions, academia, and civil society, the



Cypriot institutions showcase innovative approaches in adult learning linking to innovative learning environments.

seminar served as a dynamic platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and policy reflection. With a focus on enhancing adult digital competencies and fostering inclusive, forward-looking learning environments, the event underscored the importance of lifelong learning in addressing contemporary societal and labour market challenges.

[READ MORE](#)



Group discussion where participants identify challenges and opportunities for enhancing access to learning among vulnerable groups.

Recontextualizing the educational policy of evening schools

The educational policy of Evening Schools in Cyprus (Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth) has undergone significant changes in recent years, with the aim of responding more effectively to the actual needs of adult learners and aligning with European trends and practices. This reframing emerged as an imperative, since the traditional model of education did not provide sufficient flexibility and failed to consider the prior knowledge and experience of students.

A central feature of this new approach is the exemption of high school and technical school graduates from general subjects that do not lead to new learning. This rationale is closely linked to the principle of avoiding the repetition of learning content that offers no added value to the learner. Particular emphasis is now placed on technological and laboratory-based courses, which strengthen professional skills and provide direct links to the labour market. This measure has had a positive impact on enrollments, as adults increasingly recognize that attending Evening Schools is now associated with meaningful learning and practical application.

[READ MORE](#)



Integrating the andragogical approach and digital dimension at public school of higher vocational education and training

The digital dimension and the andragogical approach at Public School of Higher Vocational Education and Training (MIEEK) are intrinsically linked with the broader digital transition and the adoption of innovative practices of micro-learning within interactive learning environments.

Micro-learning, as an educational strategy, enables knowledge to be segmented into small, targeted units that are easily accessible and manageable by adult learners, who often face time constraints due to professional and family responsibilities. Within this framework, the andragogical dimension of digital literacy is implemented, placing emphasis

on teaching methods that acknowledge the unique characteristics of adults: their autonomy, the wealth of experience they bring with them, and their strong orientation toward the immediate application of knowledge in practice.

[READ MORE](#)

CIRC project: circular economy as a tool for adult education and social inclusion

The Erasmus+ project CIRC empowers adults at risk of social exclusion through learning based on circular economy principles. Using experiential tools like Walk of Life and Cycle of Change, educators build trust, empathy, and reflection while teaching sustainable innovation. Through the CIRC HUB – a multilingual online platform – learners and trainers connect, share ideas, and access tools such as the Circular Canvas Model and real-life case studies that inspire action towards a greener, more inclusive future.

[READ MORE](#)



Participants using the 'Cycle of Change' tool for self-reflection and empowerment.

Intergenerational learning as a tool for promoting green and digital skills

A practice based on the EU Project 'InterGenic, supporting EU's twin transitions through intergenerational learning, exchanges of knowledge and joint actions' under the ERASMUS+ Programme - Adult Education.

Intergenerational learning empowers and enhances a mutual and collaborative environment, where people of different ages have the opportunity to exchange knowledge, skills and experiences. As part of the InterGenic project young people (18-30 years old) are trained to become mentors in digital tools and practices for those over 55, while senior participants are trained as mentors and

ambassadors for sustainable and ecological practices, helping to guide younger generations. Through this exchange, sustainable ideas and practices can emerge, and individuals can contribute to building a more resilient future, strengthening social, economic and administrative systems.

[READ MORE](#)



Intergenerational learning and mentoring

AGORA: strengthening regenerative tourism through education and digital tools

The Erasmus+ project AGORA is implemented by Eurosucceed Consulting, a Cypriot organization established in 2009 with the main aim of informing and supporting individuals and enterprises in utilizing European and National Funds to achieve their strategic goals. The AGORA project empowers local ecosystems by promoting collaboration among communities, producers, and tourism stakeholders. Through education and innovative digital solutions, the project supports the co-creation of regenerative tourism experiences rooted in authenticity, originality, and sustainability.

[READ MORE](#)

MOOC Platform Just4ALL project: promoting a just transition through inclusive adult education

The Just4ALL project, an EU-funded initiative titled 'Building Social Innovation Learning Laboratories in Europe through a Just Transition for All and with All' is actively supporting Europe's inclusive recovery and its digital and green transitions. Running from October 2023 to September 2025, the project's core mission is to develop integrated, inclusive, and innovative adult learning and education (ALE) models that specifically promote a just transition, focusing on empowering vulnerable groups such as migrants, women, and low-skilled adults.

[READ MORE](#)

Micro-credentials: what, why, who and how?

A conference titled 'Micro-Credentials: What, Why, Who and How' was co-organized in 2024 by the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA).

The event offered comprehensive insights into micro-credentials (MCs) and their potential to address emerging educational, technological, and labor market needs.

[READ MORE](#)



Conference participants - A peer learning activity focused on mutual understanding around the theme of micro-credentials

The Union of Skills

March 2025
#UnionOfSkills



INITIATIVES



Building a solid foundation through education and training

- Boost basic skills from early years to adult learning.
↳ *Action Plan on Basic Skills*
- Ensure all children and young people leave school with adequate basic skills.
↳ *Basic Skills Support Scheme pilot*
- Foster excellence in STEM education and training.
↳ *STEM Education Strategic Plan*
- Make Vocational Education and Training (VET) more attractive, innovative, and inclusive.
↳ *EU VET Strategy*
- Tackle shortages, improve conditions, and boost careers for educators.
↳ *Teachers and Trainers Agenda*



Regular upskilling and reskilling as the new norm

- Upskill and reskill more workers in strategic sectors
↳ *Reinforced Pact for Skills*
- Provide skills for sectors undergoing transitions.
↳ *Review and strengthen EU Skills Academies*
- Help workers involved in restructuring processes.
↳ *Skills Guarantee pilot*
- Train people for sectors with skills gaps.
↳ *University-business partnerships*



© European Union, 2025 - Reuse of this document is allowed, provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license). For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders. All images © European Union, © Unsplash, unless otherwise stated.

[Czechia]

The Czech Republic showcases a wide range of creative adult learning initiatives. The examples on the next pages show how education can strengthen communities, connect generations, and make learning both practical and inspiring.

INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - CZECHIA

Wise Owl: mobile classroom

A specially equipped van from Wise Owl (Moudrá Sovička) brings digital learning directly to seniors in small towns and villages across the Czech Republic. Inside the cosy mobile classroom, participants join group seminars or individual sessions. They learn on their own devices to navigate the digital world safely and with confidence.

The project was born out of respect for older generations and the belief that everyone deserves to stay connected in today's digital society. The mobile classroom, equipped with five seats, Wi-Fi, and solar panels, offers a friendly and supportive atmosphere. By bringing education to where seniors live, Wise Owl promotes digital inclusion, independence, and a renewed sense of belonging.

"I have a smartwatch on my wrist, AirPods in my ears, an AirTag on my keys, I use an iPhone... I wouldn't be able to do any of that without you." - Long-term participant

READ MORE



Seniors learning with their instructor inside the mobile classroom.

**WATCH THE VIDEO
ABOUT WISE OWL**



Volunteer Network for Digital Education of Seniors

Building on the success of its mobile classroom, Wise Owl launched a nationwide platform called Wise Network (Moudrá Síť) - connecting volunteers known as 'digital assistants' with seniors who need help using their devices.

Through a simple web app or phone line, seniors can request support and arrange free personal meetings in libraries or community centres. The service is available across the Czech Republic and relies on volunteers aged 15 and older — students, professionals, and even seniors themselves.

"Not only do they learn something, but I am often enriched by the visit as well."
- Volunteer

This intergenerational approach strengthens digital inclusion and community bonds. Young volunteers gain empathy, patience, and communication skills, while older learners become more confident, independent, and connected to the digital world.

READ MORE



A map of places in Czechia where digital assistants and libraries involved can be found.

Mental health on Instagram: Chill is a skill

Chill is a Skill (Chill je skill) is an Instagram profile dedicated to supporting mental health, created by clinical psychologists and psychotherapists Mirek Světlák and Adam Suchý. Using short, easy-to-understand videos, photos, and infographics, the profile offers practical tips for self-care, following a microlearning approach that makes content accessible, concise, and relatable. Instagram allows the project to reach a wide audience, promoting proactive mental health care. Posts are evidence-based and guided by professional expertise, with topics drawn from clinical practice and followers' questions.

READ MORE



The founders of Chill is a Skill: *"We want people to start thinking about their mental health before discomfort develops into illness."*

Club SenSen: seniors as co-creators of learning

Club SenSen (Senzační senioři) at the Pardubice Regional Library provides a safe space where seniors actively shape and lead learning and community activities. Since its founding in 2012, the club has emphasized co-creation, allowing older participants to design their own learning, share knowledge, and engage in community life. Members read to children, assist with events for schools, run computer and language courses for peers, organize cultural events, trips, and leisure activities, and attend lectures from the Virtual University of the Third Age. The library supports

the club with space, materials, technical equipment, and methodological guidance.

The club grew to 70 members aged 65–92, about 40 of whom meet regularly. Participation strengthens social bonds, self-confidence, and motivation, supports a healthy lifestyle, maintains mental fitness, and fosters a sense of purpose and community involvement.

READ MORE



A library director: *"It was necessary to convince local authorities that older people can be partners with valuable experience."*



Grafia

Weekend of Open Studios connects the public with art & crafts

The Weekend of Open Studios in Pilsen and its surroundings invites the public to explore art through interactive workshops, exhibitions, and meetings with artists. Galleries, studios, craft workshops, schools, and universities open their doors free of charge, allowing visitors to try painting, sculpture, and other crafts under professional guidance. The initiative, launched in 2016, added hands-on creation to the traditional open studio concept, giving participants the chance to experience the joy of making art themselves. By 2025, the event included 72 locations, over 250 artists, and around

12,000 visitors. Local artists are promoted, and a special "art tram" helps participants move easily between studios. By removing entry fees, the event makes quality art accessible to families, seniors, and those with lower incomes. Visitors gain direct contact with artists, try tools and materials they would never use at home, and develop creativity, manual skills, teamwork, and wellbeing — often enjoying a digital detox in the process.

READ MORE



Founder of the event: *"Our goal is to bring artists and the public as close together as possible."*

A place for safety and learning

Adult and Community Education inherently provide innovative learning environments. These are innovative because they include wrap around supports, meaningful relationships and alternative physical spaces. In Ireland, Community Education often helps people who have been let down by the traditional education system in Ireland, and who need some care and guidance to get back into learning again or take up a class for the first time.

77% of community education learners are women and more than half of learners are over 55 years of age. Many people come from homes and communities where staying in school or going to college just doesn't happen. Or people have a lot to cope with, including disabilities, caring responsibilities, or the impact of the pandemic or the cost-of-living crisis. Many people are impacted by addiction. Many are living in precarious asylum seeker accommodations. Many people – an increasing number – find themselves homeless. Community education can be a place of safety for them and offer a way to learn that is tailored to encourage them to believe in themselves and discover their own potential -it offers innovative learning environments.

What is innovative about Community Education's learning environments is the wrap-around supports offered and the relationships the learners engage in. For instance, many Community Education providers also offer free counselling, childcare, transport support or travel reimbursement, free meals, teas and coffees, one-to-one learner support or mentoring to name a few. These additional supports help marginalised adults to re-engage in education.

The relationships that learners build between themselves, as well as with the practitioners are also key in fostering innovative learning environments.

[Ireland]



Adult and Community Education inherently provide innovative learning environments. These are innovative because they include wrap around supports, meaningful relationships and alternative physical spaces.



Two national projects carried out by AONTAS under NEAAL Ireland 2024-2025 stand out in illustrating what innovative learning environments can look like in Adult and Community Education: Innovation in Community Education: *Learners as Leaders*: Community Changemakers Programme and *Greener Tomorrow Through Community Education*.

Learners as Leaders: Community Changemakers Programme

This is an ongoing initiative for adult learners who are currently participating in, or have recently completed, community education and want to make a positive difference locally. Background: Many communities face challenges such as job insecurity, lack of shared spaces, limited public transport, social isolation, or rising violence and drug use - and this programme supports people who notice these issues and want to take action.

Twelve participants from across the country took part in a two-day residential workshop in August, where AONTAS, with the help of Grace Dyas, artist and activist with extensive experience in working with grassroots communities, facilitated activities to help identify an issue that learners faced in their community, and helped them to design and lead a small community project. This was followed by two online coaching sessions to support them on their journey to implement their initiative.

Ideas and projects include hosting a 'violence and toxic-masculinity awareness' workshop in male prisons, find alternative spaces to build communities and socialise – alternative to pubs, create leaflets to help single mothers with mental health navigate pregnancy and birth, organise a self-care day in a direct provision, run a singing workshop to help people find their voice and express themselves. These initiatives show that bottom-up solutions are always the best and that people care, and we need to foster a culture of care.

Most learners also became ambassadors for adult and community education during AONTAS' national campaign in September 2025 where they shared their transformational educational journeys. You can find these impactful stories [here](#).

READ MORE



Twelve participants from across the country took part in a two-day residential workshop in August, where AONTAS, with the help of Grace Dyas, artist and activist with extensive experience in working with grassroots communities.



Most learners also became ambassadors for adult and community education.

Greener Tomorrow through Community Education

This project supported six community education providers in different regions in the country to carry out an innovative initiative related to just green transitions with adult learners. AONTAS designed the programme in successful partnership with Saolta, subject matter experts in global citizenship education in Ireland.



Participants of Saolta 'Train the Trainer' Climate Action and Just Green Transitions course

Background: Climate change will impact vulnerable populations more acutely. We need an immediate focus on changes with social justice in mind. The goal is to create a resilient and equitable society where the environmental and social benefits of the green transition are shared by all. Therefore, while green transition means shifting to a sustainable, low-carbon economy in a way that is fair and inclusive, it also means addressing climate change while ensuring that all communities, including the most vulnerable, have equal opportunities. As EAEA's background paper, 'A greener future: voices of learners and educators in green transition Background paper on adult learning and green transition' (2023), shows adult learning is at the core of just green transitions.

This project, entitled 'Greener Tomorrow through Community Education' addresses this challenge by empowering adult learners from disadvantaged communities to take the lead in becoming sustainability champions in their communities, showing the transformative power of these small, localized actions.

The six participating organisations attended a four-week 'train the trainer' course on Climate Action and Green Just Transition with Saolta in September 2024. This course was a hybrid, and it included expert guest speakers, group and individual coaching sessions, group discussions, and opportunities to network and connect with the wider education sector.

During this course, participants deepened their understanding of climate action and just green transitions and were equipped with tools and skills to carry out different activities and projects in their local communities. They also received an extensive set of educational resources to support their initiatives. This included handbooks on sustainability education and adult learning. Upon completion of the training course with Saolta, each organisation received €1000.00 each for expenses related to materials, venue hire, transport and facilitation of their initiative. The projects that participant organisations ran with their adult learners included: bee keeping, home composting and community garden composting, practical skills in biodiversity, growing healthy food, and reducing energy use and energy costs, tree planting, organising cycling days with women, visible mending workshops or urban greening.

READ MORE



[Iceland]



Across Iceland's vast and rugged terrain, education has learned to adapt—to stretch beyond the traditional classroom and embrace the land itself as teacher.

INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - ICELAND

Embrace the land as teacher

In a country defined by glaciers, lava fields, and coastal winds, learning spaces are not confined by four walls, but by imagination and geography. Here, innovation in education is not simply about new technology or policy reform; it is about rethinking where and how learning takes place. From remote fishing villages to mountain valleys, Icelandic educators are cultivating a culture of curiosity that bridges community, nature, and creativity.

These rural and place-based learning environments respond to the country's dispersed population, ensuring that access to quality education is not limited by location. Instead, Iceland's landscape becomes an open classroom—alive with geothermal energy, art, and collaboration. The result is a uniquely Icelandic approach to education: one that fuses sustainability, local identity, and global connection, inspiring students and teachers alike to learn from their surroundings as much as from each other.

GeoCamp Iceland

Outdoor and place-based Learning

GeoCamp Iceland redefines science education through direct engagement with the natural world. Located in West Iceland, the programme transforms Iceland's dramatic terrain into an immersive classroom. Through outdoor exploration and hands-on investigation, students and educators delve into geoscience, sustainability, and STEAM subjects while using digital tools to record, analyze, and share findings. Each field excursion links real-world phenomena—like geothermal activity or coastal erosion—to curriculum goals, fostering inquiry, creativity, and environmental awareness. GeoCamp's teacher-training initiatives further amplify its impact, empowering educators to integrate interdisciplinary, place-based methods in their own communities. It is both a model of international cooperation and a testament to Iceland's belief that the earth itself is a living textbook.

[READ MORE](#)

LungA School

Learning Through Art and Environment

Nestled in the fjord-side town of Seyðisfjörður, LungA School offers a radically different vision of education. Inspired by the Nordic folk school tradition, LungA blurs the lines between classroom and community, between art and ecology. Students live, create, and learn together in a residency-style environment that values process over product and exploration over convention. Workshops and projects blend sustainability, performance, and visual arts with local culture, using the surrounding landscape as both inspiration and collaborator. Here, learning is immersive and human-centered—a dialogue between creativity and the natural world. For rural Iceland, LungA represents the power of small-scale innovation: a space where education is reimagined not as instruction, but as transformation.

[READ MORE](#)



Iceland's landscape becomes an open classroom—alive with geothermal energy, art, and collaboration.

[Türkiye]

Adult learning in Türkiye has become a central pillar of policies aimed at strengthening social inclusion, supporting employment, fostering local development, and preserving cultural sustainability. The Directorate General for Lifelong Learning (DGLL) of the Ministry of National Education delivers accessible and flexible learning opportunities through nearly 1.000 Public Education Centers and 31 Olgunlasma Institutions across the country, guided by the principle of 'education for everyone, everywhere, at any time'.

INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - TURKIYE

For everyone, everywhere, at any time

The collective learning initiatives in Türkiye demonstrate how adult learning contributes to social, economic and cultural development.

Women's empowerment and economic participation

Across several provinces, projects focusing on women's economic inclusion - particularly for those living in rural areas - have been highly influential. Disused village school buildings have been renovated and transformed into food production units, textile workshops, and handicraft studios, enabling women to engage in income-generating activities. Training programmes in food processing and local product development have supported women in establishing cooperatives and gaining a stronger foothold in regional markets. These models contribute not only to women's empowerment but also to rural development and community resilience.



Cultural heritage and creative industries

Across many regions, traditional craft, such as weaving, ceramics, and local artisanal productions, are revitalized through modern training programmes. By integrating traditional techniques with contemporary design, these initiatives preserve cultural heritage while generating economic value. In several provinces, women's cooperatives have successfully marketed these products nationally and internationally.



Digital skills and new forms of entrepreneurship

In provinces along the Black Sea and Aegean regions, digital marketing and e-commerce training programmes have strengthened local entrepreneurship. Individuals - especially women - have begun using digital platforms to brand, market, and sell their products, transforming home-based production into sustainable income opportunities. These initiatives illustrate the transformative impact of digital inclusion on local economies.

Youth skills development and pathways to education

In western and northwestern provinces, vocational and creative workshops play a critical role in helping young people discover their talents and plan for future careers. Training in fashion design, creative industries, and technical fields has enabled young learners to build strong portfolios and access competitive university programmes, illustrating how community-based learning can support educational attainment.

Türkiye's adult learning ecosystem continues to expand through innovative, community-driven and inclusive practices. These initiatives demonstrate the transformative potential of lifelong learning. Digital platforms connecting training with labour market needs further strengthen this ecosystem, bridging skills development and employment. Collectively, these examples reflect Türkiye's commitment to a forward-looking, equitable and sustainable vision of adult education.

National Coordinators are designated by EU Member States and other cooperating countries to facilitate their cooperation in implementing the new European Agenda for Adult Learning and the relevant initiatives of the European Skills Agenda. Their work contributes to promoting adult learning in their respective country, providing policy advice and gathering and disseminating best practices to national authorities. Each National Coordinator sets out a work programme which identifies the specific actions their organisation is going to take to implement the new European Agenda for Adult learning and the relevant initiatives of the European Skills Agenda in their country. The Erasmus+ programme of the European Union supports this implementation with a dedicated grant.



A group of national coordinators worked together on this online magazine. From left to right: Joram (NL), Nadja (DE), Lucia (SK), Jan (CZ), Laura (LV), Karine (BEFL), Simone (DE), Larisa (IE), Anne-Katrine (SE), Sirje (EE), Skúli (IS), Lubica (SK) and Zvonka (SI), the national coordinators and cooperators (in alphabetical order) from Belgium-Flanders, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, The Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Not in the picture: the national coordinators from Cyprus, Hungary and Türkiye. Their pictures can be found elsewhere in this magazine.

[Find out more about the national coordinator in your country on EPAL](#)

By clicking on a flag, you can access the contact details of the current National Coordinators, and information about their work.



Content contributors: all national coordinators in the cluster 'innovative learning environments'

Editor: Karine Nicolay (NCAL Flanders)

Layout and design: Karine Nicolay

Pictures/Illustrations: as mentioned in the magazine

Cluster coordination: Simone Kaufhold (NCAL Germany) and Karine Nicolay



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Co-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.