



EduMAP empirical research, WPs 3 & 4

Research design documents: **Strand #3. Communicative ecologies mapping**



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Glossary:

GP – Good practice

CE – Communicative ecologies

AE – Adult education

AC/APC – Active citizenship/Active participatory citizenship

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Introductory note on public version

This is the fourth of a series of five documents that describe the research design and guidelines used for the multi-partner and multi-sited empirical research carried out in the EU project EduMAP (Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship). Empirical research work has been carried out for the Work Packages (WPs) 3 and 4, focused respectively on *Targeted research on best practices among vulnerable groups* and *Communicative ecologies in the field of adult education*. The research design included data collection and analysis protocols aligned to both WP3 and WP4 objectives, tested through a pilot conducted between December 2016 and March 2017 in Bucharest, Romania.

These guidelines have been used to ensure consistency across the Consortium for the data collection and interpretation. Overall, based on these guidelines, EduMAP partners collected data in 19 EU countries and Turkey, covering a total of 40 adult education (AE) programmes. In addition, eight groups of young people at risk of social exclusion (91 respondents) from seven EU countries and Turkey have been involved in the study to investigate their communicative practices and identify leverages that can be used to improve access to adult education.

The aim of publishing the research design is to offer an exemplar of research guidance used to plan and implement effectively multi-sited and multi-partner research for an interdisciplinary project.

(for more details on datasets and sampling, please consult the EduMAP Deliverables *D3.1. Targeted research on best practices among vulnerable groups*; and *D4.1 Communicative ecologies in the field of adult education*).

Strand #3 - Targeted research on vulnerable groups – Communicative ecologies mapping

1. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines sampling and data collection methods for the third of three strands in the research design for EduMAP empirical research for WPs 3 and 4.

1. Context analysis [WP3,4]
2. Targeted research on good practices [WP3,4]
3. **Targeted research on vulnerable groups: Communicative ecologies mapping [WP4]**

The **aims** in this strand are to:

- Examine the communication context and practices of young people at risk of social exclusion, including an overview of the channels, networks, and content they use in their everyday lives (informal level) and for work and education related purposes (formal level)
- Understand relations between communicative practices and the life/education/professional goals and aspirations of young people at risk of social exclusion.

In sum and within the EduMAP project as a whole, these aims will enable us to:

- Shed light on interconnections and mismatches between the supply and use side of adult education
- Identify alternative models and pathways by which AE policies and programmes can respond to the educational needs of vulnerable young people, and be easier to access by them through channels and networks that they are familiar with.

This strand will focus on the vulnerable group identified through Strand #1, and can be conducted in parallel with Strand #2 research on Good practices. This strand of research starts from the vulnerable group rather than GP, and may include at least some young people who do not or have never accessed AE. The focus is on understanding their life situations, communicative practices and assemblages, experiences, barriers, attitudes and aspirations related to AE and APC.

Data collection will involve ethnographic research carried out primarily through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and communicative ecologies mapping.

An ethnographic approach is advised for gathering rich data around the communicative practices and education/AE goals of young people at risk of social exclusion, aspirations and practices are blended in their everyday lives. As a norm, ethnographic research will be carried out through interviews, focus groups and communicative ecologies mapping. Where possible, other ethnographic techniques and data sources can be used, depending on context.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups are carried out with young people at risk of social exclusion (16-30 y.o.) that may or may have not been involved in AE programmes. Their focus is on the communicative practices of young people at risk of social exclusion in formal and informal networks, and their education and professional aspirations.

Communicative ecologies mapping can be conducted, where possible, as a support tool to the individual

interviews and focus groups, to guide the discussion on communicative practices and to evidence key aspects, namely: 1) *devices/platforms* for information and communication; 2) *people and networks* and 3) *content*; and their relations to the goals and life contexts where any of these are used.

Where possible, and especially where research is conducted in a vulnerable community, we advise gathering further data from various interaction occasions, including but not limited to:

- Conversations with people whose lives and activities intersect with those of the vulnerable young people involved in research, including for instance caretakers for disabled young adults, or other community members in the case of vulnerable minority communities.
- Available documentation on the history, past activities and any initiatives related to education carried out in the case of a closely knit group or a community.
- Visits to centres and facilities used by the young people at risk of social exclusion – these can include for instance community centres, libraries, schools, youth clubs.

Sampling criteria and protocols for the semi-structured interviews and focus groups are further outlined below.

2. SAMPLING

A vulnerable population or group will be identified in each country, taking into account jointly the manner in which that vulnerable group is represented in the country; as well as practical issues of access to the group. For example, the focus can be on youth with special needs or a specific disability; refugees in a certain country that has had a high influx of refugees recently; migrants; NEET youth; a minority population that is known to face discrimination, marginalisation or unequal access to education such as the Roma, etc.¹

Gaining access is an important aspect to be considered in the initial stages. It is important that researchers are able to conduct repeated visits to the group, and wherever possible blend in and spend time visiting, interacting and conversing to better understand the life context of the vulnerable young people studied. Aiming for the support of a mediator – such as a school, an NGO, an AE institution can facilitate access and longer term engagement with a specific group/community.

After a vulnerable group has been identified, sampling is guided by the following considerations:

- Gender balance – aim for proportional coverage of young men and women²
- Other considerations are going to be weighed for each context, such as economic and employment status, age groups within the segment 18-30 y.o., etc. Considering that the main aim is to cover as much diversity as possible from the vulnerable young people involved, in terms of lifestyles, aspirations, and communicative practices.

We aim to interview minimum 10 respondents overall.

¹ It is important to note that identifying a vulnerable group or vulnerable population is more nuanced and context-bound and eludes generalised definitions. For instance, several layers of vulnerability may characterise a unique young person that now has a refugee status, for instance being unemployed, unskilled, with low or no education, and with basic or no language skills other than their mother tongue. At the same time, people having been granted refugee status may be highly educated, speaking the local language or more languages, and already in possession of a job contract. Thus, identifying a vulnerable group by indicating one particular layer of vulnerability (such as refugee, NEET, minority, special needs) is just a first step in the research, and as this progresses the group may be better characterised to shed light on its contextual features, and relate these to their vulnerable status.

² This criterion may not apply if the vulnerability status of the vulnerable group studied is linked to gender issues. For instance, in the case of women who suffered emotional abuse or domestic violence; or for LGBT groups. In this case diversity will be sought within the features characterising the group.

3. INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

General notes on the questions and their administration:

In this section the protocol for individual semi-structured interviews is introduced. Depending on context and the vulnerable young people involved in the study, this may be adapted for focus groups. In the following sets of interview questions (protocols), there are a number of key questions, out of which **essential questions are marked in blue**. Consideration of the **time** that an interviewee has set aside for the interview may mean you have to be selective in which questions you probe further through the prompts. If time is limited, please consider covering the **essential questions marked in blue**³.

Communicative ecologies mapping

The individual or group interviews can be aided by a CEM exercise. In practice, this means marking the answers related to communicative practices on a large sheet of paper, focusing on:

- devices/platforms for information and communication;
- content;
- people and networks;
- goals and life situations where any of these are used.

Marking answers in proximity according to each focus area can help researchers delve deeper in some aspects, and keep the conversation on course. It can also be helpful to specifically mark whether use of/access to devices, content and networks is done predominantly for **formal** (e.g. education and professional/work-related) or **informal** communications (e.g., with family, friends, day to day life). For example, an interview may inquire around the use of social media, and mark accordingly:

- what devices are used for accessing social media (e.g. laptop, mobile phone), and what social media platforms (e.g. Facebook)
- what content is accessed and what content is produced/communicated
- with which people and networks do interviewees communicate or get informed about through SM
- for each of the above, whether communications are in the formal area (education, work related) or informal area (friends, family) and what are the goals for each (e.g., having fun for informal communications; or finding education opportunities and contacts through Facebook pages for formal communications)

Individual interviews [can be conducted individually or as part of communicative ecologies mapping]

A. DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

Year of birth

Marital status

Nationality/ies

Current living arrangements: Where do you live? How many people live with you? Are you satisfied with the living conditions?

Mother tongue/s + other language skills

Education: What is the highest level of education you reached?

Professional status: Do you currently have a job? If yes, how satisfied you are with your job?

Work experience: Have you held any jobs in the past? Which ones? What was your experience with these jobs?

³ The questions were tested in the pilot and overall the interview takes from 25 to 35 minutes. It may take longer if interviewees give more elaborate answers, and should this be the case, questions in blue should be given priority.

B. LIFE CONTEXT, ASPIRATIONS, RELATION TO AE

1. What do you dream of/want to do in your future?
 - a. What kind of job would you like to have? Why?
 - b. How does this relate with your prior professional experiences, if any?
2. Have you thought about what kind of training and qualifications you need to get there?
 - a. Which of these qualifications you possess?
 - b. Do you intend to follow further AE courses to gain further competences and qualifications? If yes, which ones?
 - c. If not, what are the challenges?
3. Have you ever taken an AE programme? If yes, how was your experience with it?
 - a. If not, have you ever thought of taking one? Why/why not? What would interest you?

C. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION PRACTICES

Guidance: To be employed following the flow of conversation and the mapping exercise, keeping in mind the focus on:

- devices/platforms for information and communication;
- content;
- people and networks;
- goals and life situations where any of these are used.

*Where necessary, probe how use of/access of devices, platforms, content and networks differs for **formal** (e.g. education and professional/work-related) and **informal** communications (e.g., with family, friends, day to day life).*

Access to information and media technology

1. What media and communication technologies do you own or have access to?
2. Which TV, radio, newspapers do you watch/listen to/read?
3. Which social media do you use? What for?
 - a. With whom do you communicate on social media? (friends, family)
 - b. Do you follow and education and job related opportunities through social media?
4. Do you have a mobile phone? What do you use it for?
 - a. Is it a regular or a smart phone?
 - b. Do you use mainly voice or other functions, such as sms? Or instant messaging (e.g. Whatsapp)? With whom do you use mainly voice? What about messages?
 - c. With whom do you communicate most often via mobile phone?

Information access/consumption/production and communication practices

5. Where do you get news and information about what is happening in the world, in your country?
6. Where do you get news and information about what is happening in your community?
7. Where do you get news and information about what your family and friends are doing?

Informal social networks (family, friends) and communication

8. How do you keep in touch with your family members/relatives/friends (phone, sms, face to face, social media, IM)? With whom do you communicate most frequently?
9. Did you ever find it difficult to reach/contact someone you wanted to reach? Describe.

Formal networks and communication – education/employment focus [formal communications]

10. Where/how do you get information about educational or training opportunities?
11. Where/how do you get information about employment opportunities?
12. Where/how do you get information about schemes that might benefit you? (e.g. social benefits, assistance)
13. Have you been in contact with employment agency personnel, health services, social workers, immigration service, or other authorities? Tell about your experiences.

