Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship: A Concept Note

Edited by Pirkko Pitkänen (2017)

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual understanding of the notion of active citizenship (AC), specifically for the use of this concept in the H2020 project Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP). EduMAP seeks to understand and develop the real and potential impact of adult education on learning for active participatory citizenship in Europe. Particular attention is given to the educational policies and practices used within adult education to foster AC among vulnerable young adults aged 16 to 30. The **research question** that the project seeks to answer is: **What policies and practices are needed in the field of adult education to include young adults at risk of social exclusion in active participatory citizenship in Europe**? Therefore, in the development and conceptualisation of the notion of AC, the project specifically takes into account the requirements of this target group.

The paper will start with the consideration of role of Adult Education in enabling active citizenship of vulnerable young people, thus providing a context for this concept note. It will then discuss **complex interdependencies between lifelong learning, adult education and AC,** specifically focusing on **learning about, for, and through AC**. The intention especially of **chapter 3** in this note is to **identify some of the conceptual approaches that are prevalent in the field of theory, policy and practice** around the main research question of EduMAP, including diverse definitions and approaches which we seek to clarify as to their relevance in the further phase of field research. Some terminology has already been explored in the application and will deliver the basis of our further exploration. As WP 2 has already been completed, we can draw on some conclusions from desk research. In **chapter 4** some **preliminary conclusions** will be made as to how to take forward the conceptual approaches using them as a basis for a coherent approach in the upcoming fieldwork phase.

The document aims to contribute to a consensus across the consortium in relation to understanding the concept of AC, with a specific focus on the link between adult education and AC for vulnerable groups in the planning and execution of WPs 3, 4 and 5. This concept note will provide a helpful resource for the project researchers. An understanding of the idea of AC is essential both for conducting empirical fieldwork and data analysis, and presentation of results.

2. Background

In recent policy and scientific discussions adult education is seen as a key means for supporting active citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion in Europe (European Commission, 1998, European Commission, 2000; European Commission, 2016; European Council and European Commission, 2015). In practice, however, the different national adult education systems

in the EU 28 have serious problems meeting the educational needs of the young people seen as vulnerable i.e, such as those with low levels of basic or functional literacy or without a job.

During recent decades, the promotion of AC has emerged as a political goal in many countries around the world (Delanty, 2000; Nicoll et al, 2013; European Commission, 1998). Within official European policy, the idea of AC has been emphasised by the Lisbon European Council in 2000. The strategic goal set for the European Community was to become 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' (Lisbon European Council, 2000). Both research and policy papers have highlighted the **complexity surrounding the interpretation and understanding of the concept of AC**. Field and Schemmann (2017) observe in the recent decades the idea of AC has largely been interpreted from the following perspectives: (1) neo-Foucauldians who see AC as a mechanism for governance; and (2) a more traditional perspective, that relates to an 'older tradition of adult education for social justice' (Field and Schemmann, 2017:164). What unites both perspectives, as further noted by Field and Schemmann (2017), is the observation that the world of formal adult education now has declining relevance to civic participation.

Considering AC from the perspective of the '**adult education for social justice tradition**' provides a rich context for conceptual understanding of this notion and helps to develop the project's approach towards AC for vulnerable groups, specifically taking into account how AC could be enhanced through adult education. Such an approach further helps to advance the interpretation of the **project's original definition, which refers to AC as 'membership of a politico-legal community that serves as a forum for** *political, social and economic participation***'.**

The **recent debate on AC and adult education** has been strongly underpinned by the discussion on how the practice of AC could be exercised in a way that would **promote social justice, inclusion and participation** and what role is played by different forms of adult education and lifelong learning (Jarvis, 2008). This discussion underpins **complex interdependencies between citizenship, inclusion and participation in both local and global communities.** The recent policy discussion on AC has been driven by a concern that young people, in particular, are often not strongly embedded within their communities, and may lack the knowledge and skills to act effectively as citizens. In this discussion, **education is seen as a key means for supporting AC and social cohesion** (Brooks and Holford, 2009; Henn et al, 2005; Vromen, 2003; de Weerd, Gemmeke, Rigter and van Rij, 2005:1).

With such an interpretation, learning for AC is seen as part of a lifelong activity in which a person constructs links between learning and societal action. People can take an active part in diverse formal and informal learning processes at local, national and international levels. The contexts where citizenship can be learned thus occur not only in educational organisations but in various areas of social life: civil society, work, and what is usually designed as the private sphere (Kalekin-Fishman, Tsitselikis and Pitkänen, 2007: 30). Taking into account the recent debate on the challenge of AC, this concept note aims to present the project's approach towards the concept of AC, which will enable the project team to progress with the stages of the project, through creating a meaningful contextual interpretation of AC in relation to engagement, participation and inclusion of vulnerable young adults.

3. The Role of Adult Education in Enabling Active Citizenship of Vulnerable Young People

The next section will present our approach towards the concept of vulnerability. Before being able to look at the role and means of adult education in enabling active citizenship, we think it is necessary to reach understanding of the issue of vulnerability.

3.1 Vulnerability

3.1.1 Defining vulnerability: different approaches

There is a range of definitions and perspectives on vulnerability and, subsequently, on who might be a vulnerable person or a member of a vulnerable group. **Vulnerability** can be seen both as a **universal part** of the human condition, and as **particular** in the sense that it is *embodied* **and** *embedded*, affecting individual people uniquely based on their personal and social situation (Abrisketa et al., 2015).

The UN Development Programme's Human Development Report (UNDP, 2014) describes vulnerability as **multidimensional, dynamic and relational**, linking it to a **restriction of people's choices and capabilities** which are critical to human development (e.g. in the areas of health, education, personal security or command over material resources).

A helpful categorisation of different policy approaches to considering vulnerability, including ways in which the concept has been used in EU policies and practices, is provided by Abrisketa et al. (2015) as part of the FRAME project (Fostering Human Rights Among European Policies). The authors considered various EU policy and legal frameworks in the human rights field and found that the concept of vulnerability has not been defined by the EU across the board but rather that there are specific definitions embedded within particular policy areas. Further, there is a tendency with some EU policies to **use vulnerability alongside a range of connected concepts, such as exclusion, discrimination or marginalisation** – with conceptual boundaries not always being clear or explicit, and terms sometimes being used interchangeably. Overall, Abrisketa et al. (2015) found three main approaches within specific EU policy frameworks: (1) a *vulnerable groups approach* based on lists of specific groups (e.g. women, children, older people, migrants, etc.) without further definitions of the concept of vulnerability itself; vulnerability here has the tendency to function as a 'label'; (2) a *factors approach* which refers to the issues that might make people vulnerable (e.g. gender, age, disability, etc.) and thus provides explanations rather than just labels; and (3) a *mixed approach* which refers both to vulnerable groups and explains the factors which make people vulnerable.

According to Gynther (2017), **different policies and regulations** at EU level targeting educationally disadvantaged young people can be described as **fragmentary**. At legislative level, the anti-discrimination clauses included in the Lisbon Treaty (nationality, sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion/belief, disability, age and sexuality) suggest an awareness of specific grounds of potential vulnerability (to discrimination and therefore, exclusion).

3.1.2 Vulnerability and being at risk

As suggested earlier in the document, vulnerability is essentially defined in relation to a restriction of people's choices and capabilities. In this sense the concept is closely aligned with, even almost synonymous to, the concept of 'disadvantaged people' as such individuals are also held back (incapacitated, restricted) as a result of having certain disadvantages or possibly lacking advantages/opportunities.

As suggested in various parts of this document, **vulnerability** in the sense of a restriction of one's choices and capabilities is **complex, dynamic and context-dependent**. Being disabled ('differently-abled') might create a disadvantage in certain cases, leading to exclusion, while it might not have a significant effect on other individuals' lives. In a similar way, being a refugee might be a debilitating disadvantage for certain individuals, while it may even work to the advantage of others. For example, Papadopoulos (2006) suggests that in addition to negative consequences of adversity (e.g. trauma and distress), there are possible neutral effects (which he describes as resilience), as well as potentially positive outcomes (which he summarises as 'adversity-activated development').

Arguably, what defines vulnerability and distinguishes it from some other concepts like disadvantage is **its implication of being at risk**. In other words, when we talk about vulnerable groups, we refer to those individuals and communities who are at a considerably more significant risk of restriction, exclusion, and disadvantage. Another important aspect of effectively defining vulnerability concerns discussing its implications. In other words, when we say an individual is vulnerable in the above discussed wider sense of being at risk of disadvantage and exclusion and beyond the sense of restriction of choices and capabilities, **what kind of disadvantage and risk are we talking about? To what are they vulnerable? What are the implications of their vulnerability?**

3.1.3 Vulnerability and resilience: towards active participation

By describing vulnerability in terms of a limitation of choices and capabilities, the UNDP report provides an important **link to the concept of active participatory citizenship: human resilience, the counterpart to vulnerability, is what helps people cope better with risks and setbacks**, in form of expanded choices, agency and capabilities. The role of institutions at local, regional, state and global levels in the context of promoting resilience involves '…*removing the barriers that hold people back in their freedom to act […] [and] enabling the disadvantaged and excluded to realize their rights, to express their concerns openly, to be heard and to become active agents in shaping their destiny. It is about having the freedom to live a life that one values and to manage one's affairs adequately.*' (UNDP, 2014: 5).

Abrisketa et al. (2015) make a point of **distinguishing between** *protection* **and** *empowerment* **approaches**, which may be used by institutions to mitigate against vulnerability. While protection can bring about additional rights, including in form of prioritised access to resources, there are associated risks, such as the reinforcement and perpetuation of diminished capacity and agency (including through the above mentioned labelling and stigmatisation), as well as insufficient tackling of the root (structural) causes of the person's or group's vulnerability. On the other hand, an empowerment approach aims to increase choices and capabilities by building resilience and by addressing structural barriers (e.g. discrimination).

3.1.4 How we use 'vulnerability' in EduMAP

In a first attempt to map the field of adult education as a sector that can contribute to the empowerment of young adults in different situations of vulnerability with the aim of promoting their active participatory citizenship, it was necessary to formulate some factors of vulnerability. This was done in Work Package 2 to be able to identify the status quo across all EU 28 countries on the legal situation, as well as existing policies and practices towards young people in situations of vulnerability. We did this with an awareness that institutions as well as academic researchers who are in positions of power in societies may, by using categories such as 'vulnerable groups', inadvertently contribute to the very processes that have stigmatizing and labelling effects. At the same time, the objective of research such as that of EduMAP must be to **work towards more empowering approaches, including by taking account of the subjective perspectives and self-**

descriptions of young people themselves.

In the EduMAP project, the perspective we take on addressing vulnerability is **to see adult education as a possible means to contributing in different ways to help build resilience of young people**. The EduMAP consortium is fully aware of the sensitivities around issues related to the construction and reconstruction of vulnerability. We will strive to develop a process to check the integrity of our research approach across all Work Packages, including by establishing a reflective process within our consortium to enable the sharing of all concerns related to these issues during the field phase and in the data analysis stage.

3.2 Active Citizenship

In the following chapter we identify some relevant characteristics of **active citizenship across literature, politics and legislation** to be able to build the conceptual background to its use in the EduMAP project. To open the discussion of the characteristics of AC, the paper draws on the **original definition by the project** as a starting point for discussion. As the project proposal states, **by 'active citizenship' we refer to membership of a politico-legal community that serves as a forum for political, social and economic participation.** We also include as our targets young people without juridical citizenship (denizens) and those whose membership of a politico-legal community is conditional or at best tentative, due to their uncertain legal / immigration status. The characteristics of AC, as the following discussion will indicate, are related to one of more of these dimensions (i.e. political, social or economic). This three-dimensional interpretation, as defined by the 2.1 report, is a key for the development of the project approach, which considers AC as a complex multifaceted concept, involving participation and engagement in political, social and economic life of the community.

3.2.1 Characteristics of AC

On the **political level** the latest larger study is the report of the European Commission from the year 2012, Europe for Citizens Programme, led by the Institute of Education, University of London providing a detailed investigation of participatory forms of citizenship across the 27 member states of the European Union (EU) covering policy, practice and engagement. The results of the study show that the consequence of the economic crises on the field of Participatory Citizenship has been cuts to funding. The effects have been felt at all levels, challenging the sustainability of policies and practices that have previously supported the participation and engagement of citizens in decision making. The effects of the economic crises on citizens can already be seen in terms of a loss of faith in political institutions with a dramatic reduction in trust in national and European institutions in particular in Spain, Ireland and Greece and this although strategies that include innovative participatory and social cohesive elements that move beyond job related skills could prove a useful balance, particularly for young people in periods of high youth unemployment. The study suggest the following **definition of active citizenship**: *Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy (Report 4 European Commission, Europe for Citizens Programme, p. 12)*

3.2.2 Discourse on AC in research and policy literature

Results of basic research on AC conducted especially between 2009 and 2013 by financing through EC and Council of Europe programmes suggest that the question of active citizenship is very important for the **legitimacy of democratic governance**. This is so because legitimacy depends on the extent to which democratic structures and practices are 'owned' by individual people (Biesta, 2009).

However in practice, young generations are more passive with political and social engagement than older ones, at least when it comes to traditional ways of participation. Instead of top-down social participation, those born in the Information Age may prefer groups and virtual communities which are primarily organized as peer networks where individuals and their communities can become world-shaping forces and drivers of change (Allison, 2007). For a further understanding of how such participation could be facilitated and promoted, the **notion of the community is of central importance**. Research indicates that a common idea is that being actively engaged *in* a community is considered to be more desirable than being *outside* of a community. Field and Schemmann (2017:172) observe that in the EU policy context, an **active or global citizen is understood to be a member of the wider community** who in some unspecified way is engaged with or has expectations of the policy process. Being a part of and participating in a community relates to the notion of the sphere of citizenship. The increasing internationalisation and **globalisation** as well as expansion of **new technologies** have **widened the sphere of citizenship** (Field and Schemmann, 2017; Jarvis, 2004). In the contemporary world, therefore, a person can be actively engaged with diverse national and international communities by means of new information and communication technologies. Brooks and Holford (2009: 17) also point to the discourse that sees a widening of the sphere of citizenship through globalisation and supported by new information and communication technologies to include international communities characterized by the **values of tolerance and non-violence and by the acknowledgement of human rights and mutual respect**. As different authors (Biesta 2009:148: Hoskins et al., 2006: 11) have already pointed out active citizenship takes place as engagement *in* a community guided by values. Ethical boundaries set limits for active participation, specifying the particular values that should be underpinned through the participation in the community life. **As a rule, people's activities should support the community and should not contravene principles of human rights and the rule of law.**

However, Mascherini et al. (2009: 10;) and Hoskins et al. (2008: 389) point out that active citizenship is not about *any* participation in community but the idea of active citizenship denotes a set of activities which are considered necessary for a stable democracy and therefore is incorporated with **democratic values.**

It has also been argued that playing out of active citizenship is often strongly differentiated by gender, **and tends to perpetuate conventional gender role**s. For example, for many young women, active citizenship frequently means taking responsibility for themselves economically, while at the same time taking care of others. Young men, on the other hand, receive stronger encouragement to participate in a wider range of citizenship-related activities. (Arnot and Dillabough, 2000; Brooks and Holford, 2009: 16.).

Different authors point out the change in discourse within **a neo-liberal approach** that has become the **leading perspective**. In the neo-liberal view of the good society, the individual actions of active citizens are considered to be the main 'solution' for collective problems. In fact, in the Anglo-American context, the idea of active citizenship emerged strongly in the wake of Thatcherism and Reaganism as the 'answer' to the vacuum that was created after the demolition of welfare state provision. In this context an active citizen was first and foremost the person who, through **active involvement** in the local community, **would provide those 'services' that were no longer available through welfare state provision**. (Biesta, 2009: 150.)

As a consequence of the neo-liberal shift, a citizen as **a holder of rights** has become more and more a **bearer of duties** (Eriksson, 2009: 194-198). This suggests that the idea of active citizenship approaches the idea of citizenship very much from the needs of the socio-political order. It specifies the kinds of activities and 'investments' that individuals need to make so that the specific socio-political order can be reproduced. Active citizenship, thus, as noted European Commission

document (2000) focuses on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life, the chances and risks they face in trying to do so, and the extent to which they therefore feel that they belong to and have a fair say in the society in which they live. (European Commission, 2000: 5).

3.3 Adult Education, Lifelong Learning and AC

3.3.1 Learning about, for and through citizenship

Promoting AC through education has become one of the European Commission's **strategies for increasing social cohesion and equal opportunities**, and for **reducing the democratic deficit across Europe** (European Commission, 1998). It is expected that the education system will enable and motivate people to voice their opinions in a democratic way and thus increase their trust in the political system. In the document *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, the European Commission highlighted three **major pillars**, one of which was 'learning for active citizenship' (Commission of the European Communities, 2001).

The importance of **strengthening AC through education** has been underscored by the recommendations on lifelong learning, issued by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union since 2006. In this policy discussion, the **key competences** which should be given priority in all EU Member States include the ability to communicate in one's mother tongue and foreign languages, **adopting civic competence based on knowledge of social and political concepts and a commitment to active and democratic participation.**

The **neo-liberal shift can be seen also in the field of adult education**. While, historically, adult education has been an important means for providing people with a broader, more humane education, recently in many European countries, adult education has become reduced to only one of its functions, namely that of **employability or 'learning for earning'**. As the report of **Work Package 2.1 results** indicates, the economic dimension has become an important aspect of AC. Besides formal education, policy literature typically stresses informal learning as key for developing and maintaining essential work-related skills.

The objectives of lifelong learning have been integrated with other strategies, which have the effect **of making individuals less dependent upon the state**, or transforming learning into a desirable consumer commodity. In this discourse, the strategies of adult education and lifelong learning have been used for **mobilising people to help themselves**, rather than providing services to them. Young people, in particular, have been targeted through initiatives to **encourage AC through community involvement and volunteering** (Brooks and Holford, 2009:11; Field, 2006).

Generally speaking, learning *for* AC comprises two approaches to citizenship learning, namely learning *about* citizenship and learning *through* citizenship (cf. Johnston, 2003:158; Kalekin-Fishman, Tsitselikis and Pitkänen, 2007: 28–32). Learning *about* citizenship is a traditional task of formal education and the subject of civics. It often covers historical and cultural understanding as well as information on citizens' rights and responsibilities. This learning is primarily about citizenship as *status*, and focuses mainly on the politico-juridical spheres of citizenship. Learning *through* citizenship is learning citizenship mainly by practising it in everyday life. The nature of learning is normally informal and bottom-up.

Learning *for* citizenship is **particularly appropriate for adult education** as it offers the prospect **of linking formal and informal learning**, individual and collective actions and making dynamic connections **between citizenship as *status* and citizenship as *practice*.** It has the potential to incorporate and develop skills for citizenship while locating them within wider societal contexts.

Three different but overlapping dimensions can be explored from learning **for** AC: **learning for multicultural citizenship**; **learning for inclusive citizenship; and learning for participatory citizenship** (cf. Kalekin-Fishman, Tsitselikis & Pitkänen, 2007: 30–32).

3.3.2 Learning for multicultural citizenship

In the current increasingly interconnected and mobile world, there is a need for education to be reformulated in ways that are enriched by cultural diversity. In contrast to the traditional conceptualization of education as a panacea for ensuring national unity within the nation-state, the emphasis has increasingly been placed on the **management of diversity**. Issues relevant to dealing with the inclusion of culturally diverse populations are a salient challenge for education systems burdened with the responsibility of preparing people for active citizenship.

The reproduction of active citizenship has received attention as a way to **overcome vulnerabilities in a multicultural society**. There are many means for political and societal engagement and participation open to legally resident newcomers but, in practice, a lack of juridical citizenship (like in the case of denizens) often entails exclusion from the labour market and society. Addressing this issue entails acknowledgement of the wide range of contexts where citizenship can be learned. Especially among vulnerable minority groups, learning for active citizenship should include a course of actions enabling them to find ways to be part of society and influence its processes in multiple ways.

3.3.3 Learning for inclusive citizenship

People's social inclusion or exclusion shape or limit their societal participation. Research has shown that social exclusion and alienation are real problems in European societies. Especially many youth groups live in a hybrid space between the mainstream culture and peripheral ways of living. If no efforts are made to create real preconditions for their societal membership and participation, the members of these groups are at risk of being marginalized and defined as outsiders (McCollum 2011).

It is conventionally understood that after completing the formal education, a graduate should have acquired relevant competence and self-awareness as a national as a core identity construct of the state. This type of approach implies a distinction between the dominant (hegemonic) cultural tradition and peripheral irrelevancies and may not relate to the problems that the minority learners have to face. In order to prevent social exclusion among vulnerable groups, educational institutions need to shape curriculum contents, **educational initiatives and pedagogies in ways that are acceptable to a wider range of cultural codes and communicative practices to which the learners have been socialised.**

3.3.4 Learning for participatory citizenship

According to Hoskins et al. (2012: 9), the concept of active citizenship was initially introduced to highlight the shift in the understanding of citizenship: to be perceived not only as a legal concept, but to include individual involvement in participatory democracy, with a greater focus on citizens' involvement in decision making and policy development. At the EU level, the increasing focus on participatory forms of citizenship has been developed to remind European citizens of their rights and responsibilities and to encourage them to engage in the European community. The main concern of European policies resides primarily in the participatory elements aimed at securing the stability of the European societies (Milana, 2008: 211). Much effort has also been invested in developing indicators and instruments for measuring participatory forms of citizenship and learning for active participation (see e.g. Hoskins, 2007; Scholze, 2009; de Weerd et al., 2005).

Learning for active participatory citizenship is a challenge for policy-makers and institutions responsible for education alike. The contexts where participatory citizenship can be learned do not range just from educational institutions to political, social and economic activities, but include also new and less conventional forms of participation, such as one-off issue politics and responsible consumption (Hoskins et al., 2006: 11; Biesta, 2009: 148). Thus, in addition to schools, civil society and workplaces, the **participatory forms of citizenship can be learned through diverse actions in virtual communities, digital milieus and single-issue interest groups.**

3.4 Mapping the communicative ecologies of vulnerable young adults

The EduMAP approach draws from the observation that we are all living, interacting and communicating in interconnected 'communicative ecologies' made of social networks, channels and underlying tools and technologies. These communicative ecologies create invisible boundaries around (1) the messages we receive and deliver; (2) the people we communicate with; and (3) the kind of educational and professional opportunities available to us. In the context of this project, communicative ecology maps helps us to understand the living circumstances of the members of vulnerable minority groups, what communication technologies they have access to, where they obtain information, with whom they communicate, and how all of this varies across different minority groups. This process involves paying attention to the wider context of information and communication flows and channels, formal and informal, technical and social, to understand communication opportunities and barriers and their implications for adult education. The project will use these research findings to create innovative platforms for enhancing dialogue between the providers and potential users of educational initiatives. (Pitkänen & Sabiescu, 2017.)

EduMAP analyses communicative ecologies in the field of adult education and vulnerable groups, identifying matches, mismatches, and opportunities for improving interaction between educational providers and vulnerable young adults. The study results are expected to help educators and educational authorities to better understand communication opportunities and barriers among vulnerable young people and their implications for adult education. The research findings will be used to create platforms and forums for enhancing dialogue between the providers and potential users of educational initiatives. At this stage, there are a few conclusions we can share:

- To make adult education opportunities more easily accessible for vulnerable young adults, there is a need to tap into their communicative practices and identify those platforms and networks which can be used and expanded (including digital platforms like Facebook as well as local social networks and information hubs).
- Information literacy is an important topic to be considered when assessing the adequacy of digital platforms for reaching out to vulnerable youth. There is a need to create more enduring and systematic platforms and hubs for dialogue that include information literacy education and support.
- In the long run, we need to look beyond sporadic, ad-hoc solutions, towards ways of bringing together adult education providers and other social care and community development actors to better serve the needs of vulnerable groups and communities in systematic, integrated ways.

3.5 A competency based model of learning for AC

Given an importance for learning for *active* citizenship, we argue that achieving active citizenship entails adequate **knowledge, skills and motivation**, and this is largely a question of education and learning. Enhancing competence necessary for active citizenship thus includes both **cognitive, operative and attitudinal dimensions**. An awareness of the citizenship rights and citizenship duties is vital; in addition enhancing intercultural **understanding** of the **principles of democracy,**

equality and human rights is also a crucial element of learning for active citizenship. A further significant question is whether educational initiatives allow the forms of learning that foster critical citizenship or whether their aim is mainly to channel a person's political agency into reproduction of the existing socio-political order (cf. Brooks & Holford, 2009: 21).

Further, the competence necessary for active citizenship covers an operative dimension: a person's human, social and cultural capital. An ideal citizen does possess relevant **professional and/or entrepreneurial skills, digital competence, innovativeness and creativeness**. S/he is able to communicate interculturally, and interact and create webs of networking, underpinned by shared values, trust and reciprocity.

A capacity for political, social and economic participation can be seen as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for active citizenship; there may be **mental barriers** that prevent people who have the capacity for active citizens from participating. Thus, in addition to improving skills and knowledge needed for active participation, the **transformation of the learner's identification and engagemen**t is also important. Learning for active citizenship has a strong **affective dimension**, seeking to reshape not only people's awareness and behaviour but also their identities and emotions. Attitudinal dimension includes issues like **engagement with the principles of human rights, equality, democracy and motivation to support the (local/national/European/international) community** and not contravene the rule of law.

Our research suggests that in order to be able to produce valid, factually-based adult education policies and practices relevant for the needs of vulnerable groups, it is necessary to go beyond the existing information, to explore the sources, informative value and shortcomings in the preceding data and to undertake further empirical research in relation to AC. Our fieldwork to be undertaken through WP3 and WP4 will enable the research team to further explore AC, in relation to the inclusion and motivation of the target group. EduMAP will proceed from idea to application in its endeavour to create an **Intelligent Decision Support System** (IDSS) to make better use of the available data. The IDSS will be developed to **enable adult education to respond efficiently to the needs of vulnerable young adults** through facilitating access to relevant information for both practitioners and policy-makers to support them in addressing a range of problems and challenges faced by adult education.

3.6 Council of Europe: a conceptual model of democratic competences

A conceptual model developed during a Council of Europe project is still in progress (2014-17). It aims to conceptualise and document the competences required to participate in a culture of democracy (Council of Europe, 2016). The focus of this model is not on AC in these terms, but on competences for democratic culture, or culture of democracy. The preference for the term 'culture of democracy' implies that apart from democratic institutions and laws, it is necessary to cultivate as well democratic values, attitudes and practices, which include respect for the rule of law, the public sphere, human rights, diversity and engaging in intercultural dialogue (Council of Europe, 2016: 15). The model was developed as a tool to inform educational planning and decision making, and it appears to be extremely helpful and relevant in the context of the project, specifically in terms of advancing our understating of competences required to participate in a culture of democracy, thus contributing to promoting of active citizenship.

4. Some Conclusions for Further Development of a Conceptual Approach on AC in EduMAP

In EduMAP we are employing the concept of AC to provide a better understanding of social inclusion and participation of vulnerable young people. AC is seen by the research consortium as related to the social, political or economic dimensions of participation and engagement as follows:

- Social dimension: focuses on the development of social competences, social capital
- Political dimension: encourages civic and political participation, running for boards, neighbourhood activities
- Economic dimension: relates to employment (e.g. developing employability skills), access to social benefits.

Our research suggests that citizenship is not to be seen entirely as a juridical issue but also in terms of people's participation in political, social and economic arenas. For instance foreigners residing permanently in a country are seen as potentially active citizens in terms of political, social and economic participation. In such interpretation, AC is not restricted to juridical state membership but contains multiple political, social and economic positions occupied by individuals.

The project work is exercised through dedicated work packages, which use the **concept of AC as both a lens and conceptual underpinning** for our theoretical, empirical and practical work and approaches. Work Package 2 helped to consider the role of adult education and lifelong learning for social inclusion of vulnerable groups, specifically emphasising social, political and economic dimensions of AC. Taking into account WP 2 findings, WP 3 is aiming to identify and review educational initiatives and communication practices that have proved to be successful in including vulnerable groups in active political, social and/or economic participation. WP 4 that is being carried out simultaneously with WP 3, is developing mapping for charting the communicative practices among educational actors and vulnerable minority groups, specifically focusing on their engagement and participation - aspects, which strongly relate the three-dimensional interpretation of AC. WP 5, the Development of an Intelligent Decision Support System, will aim to link research findings back to the educational practices by developing an Intelligent Decision Support System (IDSS) for the use of policy-makers, educational authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

Within the project we take the view that **education contributes to strengthening social cohesion and active citizenship**, specifically in its **three-dimensional interpretation**. **Getting perspective and views of young adults in situations of risk is one of the core priorities of the project.** We argue that in today's societies, individuals have multiple spheres for their participation and citizenship learning. Besides conventional representative democracy, such as participation in voting and membership in parties or NGOs, there are new and less conventional forms of political participation (one-off issue politics, participation in virtual communities, etc.)

As WP 2 research indicates, the spheres of socio-economic participation have also extended: not only are participation in employment and schooling elementary parts of active citizenship, but also new forms of entrepreneurship (e.g. start-ups), volunteering and consumption are increasingly important. In WP 3 good practices are being selected, bearing in mind the multiple spheres of citizenship. The semi structured interviews will enable us to gather information on choices and definitions of young vulnerable people themselves. In WP 4 we aim to understand how the providers and users of educational initiatives are situated in the flows of information and communication: we will study and map communicative ecologies in the field of adult education and develop innovative forums for dialogue between educational agencies and young people. Through mapping communicative ecologies in the field of adult education, new forums for dialogue between educational agencies and the targets of educational policies and practices will

be created.

In today's world, participation in associational life is multiple: people can be active actors both at local, national, European and international levels. In an ideal case, a person's participatory activities and interactions with other people are characterised by mutual respect and non-violence. Especially among young generations, a topical question is the extent to which individuals are participants not only in states and other territorial entities but in discursive networks of contested information and knowledge. This approach draws upon young people's own political concerns and recognises their potential for establishing new forms of solidarity at the local, national and transnational levels. This also relates to our WP4 work, specifically on mapping the community interactions, which help support our argument that AC is a complex multifaceted concept, involving participation and engagement in political, social and economic life of the community.

Education has its targets in each of the above-mentioned dimensions of citizenship. Primary education is the main agent of societal empowering but active citizenship cannot be encapsulated in a set of competences to be acquired 'once and for all'. Learning for active citizenship therefore is a *lifelong* and *changing* process, which cannot be successfully completed in childhood or early adulthood. Facilitating social engagement and inclusion of vulnerable young adults can take place through different types of adult education and lifelong learning (e.g. vocational education, basic skills classes, second-chance education) in both formal and informal settings, where AC is seen as being related to the following dimensions: social, political or economic dimensions of participation and engagement. The concepts of participation and engagement provide a context which encourages not only active but also participatory elements of citizenship, thus emphasising the need for learning for active participatory citizenship in a range of learning environments and settings.

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