



# EUROPEAN POLICYBRIEF

## ADULT EDUCATION AS A MEANS TO ACTIVE PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP (EDUMAP)

### - POLICY BRIEF 2 -

## GOOD PRACTICES OF ADULT EDUCATION FOR YOUNG ADULTS AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION: TOWARDS ACTIVE PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP

European adult education (AE) systems face significant challenges in meeting the educational needs of young adults facing vulnerability. Vulnerabilities experienced may include low levels of confidence and lack of basic skills, disabilities, or structural marginalisation related to ethnicity or gender.

The Horizon 2020 research project EduMAP sought to:

- provide evidence relevant to educators and education authorities about approaches and factors contributing to overcoming access barriers to educational activities among young adults beset by of vulnerability, exclusion and risk
- help policymakers and education authorities tailor adult education policies and practices to meet the needs of young adults whose situations are vulnerable
- understand the real and potential impact of adult education on learning for active participatory citizenship in Europe and contribute to the further development of this impact.

EduMAP research findings show that young adults in vulnerable situations generally have positive experiences of participating in AE, related to developing and pursuing motivations, goals and aspirations and actively engaging in society. AE initiatives can lead to experiences that build competences, which, in turn promote young adults' active participatory citizenship (APC).



## INTRODUCTION

The main EduMAP research question was: **What adult education policies and practices are needed in Europe to include young adults at risk of social exclusion in active participatory citizenship?** The project aimed to help European, national and local policymakers and educational authorities to develop a better understanding of the barriers to adult education and identify ways to support the active participatory citizenship of young adults at risk of exclusion.

The main objective of EduMAP was to identify and review educational programmes and services which have proven to be successful in promoting the active political, social and/or economic participation of young people in risky situations and aged 16-30. EduMAP identified and described elements of good practices and investigated the role of information and communication processes in shaping aspects of access, inclusion and engagement in adult education (AE).

The findings are based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and on communicative ecology mapping with 814 respondents. These include adult education providers and practitioners, policymakers, young adults (including, but not limited to current learners) in 20 countries: Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.

## EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

### 1. Adult education programmes

Young people across 40 Good Practice (GP) cases talked about lack of or limited access to formal qualifications and resources. They mentioned resources such as information, knowledge, political power and representation from which they felt excluded. Their social capital, networks and connections were limited. They also mentioned a lack of support, resources and strategies to cope with difficult life situations, poverty and deprivation, and also physical and mental health problems. Experiencing different forms of discrimination including racism contributed to their risk of social exclusion and was a major barrier to pursuing life and career aspirations.

Two significant research findings are:

- for young learners facing diverse risks, attending AE leads to positive experiences related to developing and pursuing motivations, goals and aspirations and engaging actively in society
- when AE providers engage with and guide young adults through adult education based on the learners' many and various individual needs, this results in experiences which promote more and more profound active participatory citizenship (APC) engagement.

“I have never thought they would train you and then literally take your hand and guide you so you knew where you could work, see how you work... I did not expect that, I still find it amazing” (young male learner, Spain)

Summarising the most successful elements in AE for engaging young people in risky situations, findings point to the following predictors of success:

- A holistic and integrated social support and pedagogical approach, centred on the learners and their specific and individual development and support needs
- A well trained, multidisciplinary education- and support team or mediated access to supportive services

- Creating a safe space for learning in diverse and multicultural groups and developing a relationship of mutual trust and respect between learners and education practitioners. The potentials and aspirations of learners are the centre of attention
- Offering opportunities to practise active citizenship on all its dimensions, related to young adults' experiences and life situations and using role models who are in similar situations and have found ways of developing resilience
- Contextualising APC competences in ways that are relevant to learners' personal backgrounds and/or career aims.

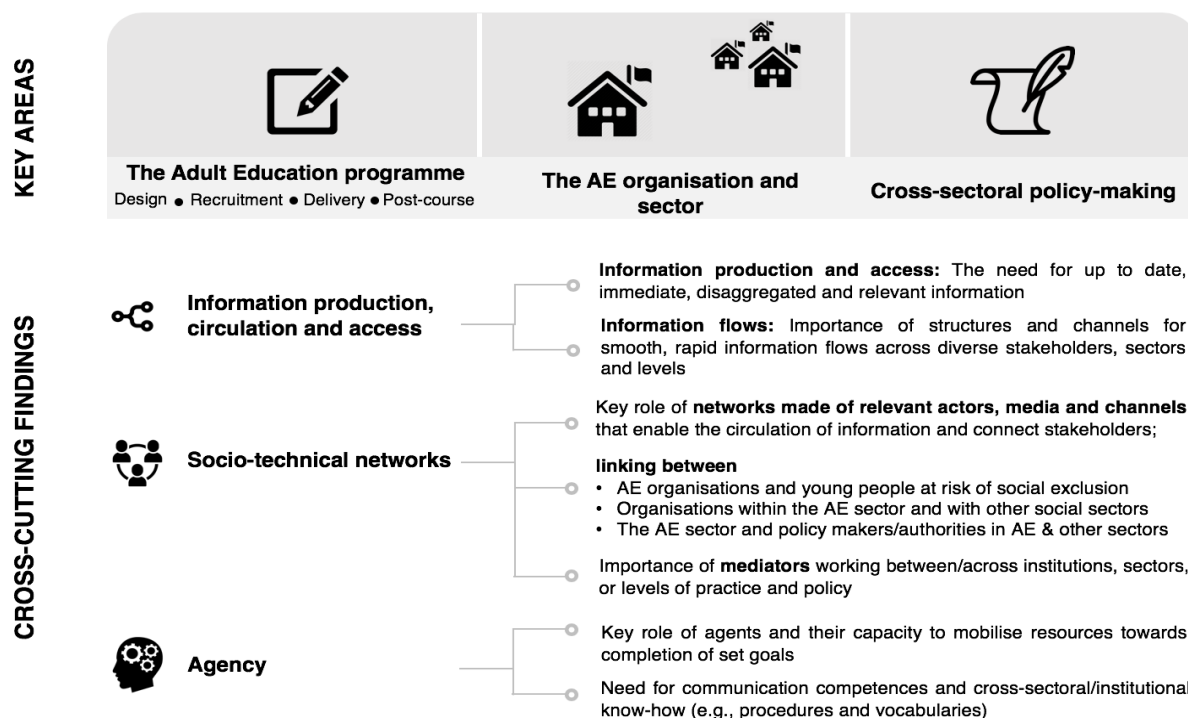
“... as long as I participate in this and other programmes, I know that I will receive some recognition and support from my people, and when you have that you don't need anything more; you are strong enough to continue with the next step, to act as many successful Roma do, to represent your culture and community to others, to teach others through your story”  
(Young female Roma learner, Greece)

While the AE routes to fostering and promoting APC-related competences are diverse and context dependent, one of the significant findings from the field research is that the conceptual underpinnings used by AE providers regarding active citizenship have an important influence on how the learning process is shaped.

## 2. Information and communication

EduMAP sheds light on interconnections and mismatches between the supply and use made of AE. Focusing on information and communication practices, research findings suggest ways to make AE more inclusive and effective in cultivating APC for young adults in precarious situations . Key processes, challenges and effective communication practices were studied at three levels:

- the AE programme, across the stages of programme design, recruitment, delivery and post-course communication
- the AE organisation embedded in the AE sector
- cross-sectoral policy-making impacting the AE field.



As the figure above shows, three cross-cutting findings apply across these levels, highlighting the importance of information, socio-technical networks and agency.

Up-to-date, immediate, disaggregated **information** is essential for AE programmes and policy to effectively respond to the evolving needs of young adults at risk of social exclusion.

**Socio-technical networks** are important for ensuring smooth information flows both within AE and between AE and other sectors.

AE for APC must ensure that it cultivates young people's **agency** in their capacity to mobilise resources towards the completion of goals. This puts young people at the centre of educational activities, as agents responsible for their learning and choices when appropriately supported.

“... building up their confidence and making them feel good about themselves, thinking outside the box about things that [...] they've never thought of doing before and then they suddenly think 'wow I really like this'” (Advice service manager, UK)

### 3. Research findings on favourable and supporting policies

EduMAP investigated the role of policies in creating favourable and unfavourable conditions for AE programmes. In this respect four findings are highly relevant:

- Although policymakers' conceptions of vulnerability are complex and multifaceted, a key issue emerging was the difficulty in proposing a definition covering all groups experiencing social exclusion, risk and vulnerability. The danger exists of providing a narrow definition that fails to protect and address the needs of all young people.
- Prominent dual drivers of economic contribution and immigration triggered by higher numbers of refugees in some European countries have prompted policy responses which tend to “blame” individuals with many countries calling for penalties (usually cuts in welfare payments) for failure to attend education. Countries affected by acts of terrorism are particularly prone to view integration as strongly related to security issues. Responses from learners point to the (negative) long-term impacts of such policies on young people's motivation and sense of identity.
- Issues of equality and equal access to resources are closely tied to inclusion. Policy implementation is particularly important, because if policy is not adapted to real needs, nor implemented and funded effectively, social inclusion policies and legislation remain mere rhetoric.
- When discrimination including racism is endemic in societies including the mechanisms of government, young people in risky situations face additional multifaceted barriers which may be obvious or hidden and ingrained.

“There are many factors that can affect the educational process negatively... We contact the persons not only at the level of education. We look at whether they need psychological support when dealing with their education. We not only consider the situation of one person but the whole family.” (Coordinator of a multi-service support centre, Turkey)

From an information and communication viewpoint, EduMAP assessed how policy design and implementation are facilitated by the availability, access and circulation of relevant information around structures that involve policymakers, education authorities, stakeholders and beneficiaries in the AE field of practice.

Challenges in these processes were identified at three levels:

1. Obstacles in information and data sharing, due specifically to ethical and political issues related to data privacy, representativeness, disaggregation and immediacy
2. Limited involvement of relevant actors in policy consultations, made difficult by complex and context-specific factors
3. Lack of specific competences and procedural knowledge for effective communication and engagement.

Looking at the routes to effective practice, the finding overall is that at the heart of effective policy is the ability to produce, circulate and enhance access to timely, relevant and accurate information. This relies on the interplay of three factors:

1. Distributed network structures for information production, access and circulation
2. Engagement of relevant actors and stakeholders
3. Cultivation of information and communication competences

“... when we developed the programme we brought a multi range of staff together to design it with us, including young people. ... And the key thing running through all of that [...] is flexibility. It’s about the flexibility to be able to do things differently, and to recognise that sometimes they don’t work”. (Local authority policymaker, UK)

These three factors are closely interrelated, with a focus on networks: nested, interconnected structures that enable information flows between different categories of stakeholders are the essence of effective information production, access and circulation for policymaking and implementation, and can be situated, for instance, across levels (local to national), sectors, and between the fields of policy and practice .

Moreover, EduMAP identified four cross-cutting factors that influence the effectiveness of networks and essential for effective policymaking:

1. The existence of values and traditions of collaboration and participation
2. Thinking locally and involving communities
3. Mixed policy and civil society structures
4. Informal communication, connections and relationships

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications and recommendations which address national, EU, regional and local policymakers, are structured into six areas:

1. Learning to live together
2. Strengthening drivers for the inclusion of APC in AE
3. Improving the accessibility and inclusivity of AE for young people in risky situations
4. Facilitating the participation of AE stakeholders and young people in policy consultation and decision-making
5. Building cross-sectoral coherence and co-operation
6. Harnessing human and machine intelligence for information processing and circulation

### 1. Learning to live together

Embedding AE for APC in a broader frame that considers social inclusion as a multidimensional process (spanning interpersonal, social, cultural and economic dimensions) that is conducive to stronger, more resilient societies. Supporting the active participation of young adults does not only benefit them, but the entire socio-cultural and economic structure, from a larger and better equipped workforce to strengthened democratic structures.

#### *Recommendations:*

- 1.1 Secure and ensure strong and coherent national and local policies, incorporating AE, that understand social inclusion as a multidimensional and complex process that needs to be supported by effective diversity and equality policies.
- 1.2 Promote diversity-oriented policies in labour and employment, which consider the workforce potential of young people at risk of exclusion as an asset, and treats them equally with others.

### 2. Strengthening drivers for inclusion of APC in AE Systems

Achieving stronger synergies between the AE and APC fields lays the foundation for policies to nurture more favourable environments for the inclusion of young people in AE and APC. In many EU

countries the organisations that support inclusion/APC from a broad perspective are under-represented, and, where present, synergies with AE may be weak. There is a need for stronger directives from the EU to Member States, encouraging investment in APC-enhancing actors with links to AE.

*Recommendations:*

2.1 Secure and ensure strong and coherent EU policies (European Social Charter, LLL strategies, key competences etc.) for sustainable funding and directives which support Member States in their development of AE provision for young people in vulnerable situations, embedding APC.

2.2 Encourage stronger synergies between AE and APC through directives, strategic documents and funding instruments.

### **3. Improving AE accessibility and inclusivity for young people in risky situations**

The most disadvantaged young people continue to be excluded from AE opportunities due to a combination of factors. These are related to difficulty in reaching out to young people at risk, elements in the design of AE programmes that act as barriers, and barriers to access due to lack of competences, qualifications and resources on the part of young people. Policies are needed to tackle these root causes jointly, at national and local levels.

*Recommendations:*

3.1 Create and consolidate enduring cross-institutional and cross-sectoral networks for reaching out to young people with information and support for providing choices and supporting decision-making

3.2 Create policies enabling AE programmes to become more accessible and inclusive through a combination of low threshold access, tackling the issues that make access difficult and showing flexibility according to individual needs.

3.3 Especially at local levels, create structures for involving young people in consultations and forums for the design of AE programmes to anticipate evolving needs and understand barriers to access.

3.4 Tackle barriers to access for young people paying attention to:

- promoting acquisition of competences and qualifications for young people with limited basic skills or incomplete compulsory education
- offering subsidies for supportive services to enable young people to attend AE (such as financial support, child care facilities);
- considering gender-specific barriers, especially for young working parents.

### **4. Facilitating the active participation of AE stakeholders and young people in policy consultation and decision-making**

Stakeholder involvement is one of the most effective means to ensure that up-to-date information guides policy design. Moreover, to build towards APC for young people they should be approached as active agents and initiators rather than as passive recipients. AE policies should ideally be designed *with* them and not only *for* them. We advocate the establishment of aims and consolidation of channels for making their involvement/voices central to the design of policies that affect them.

*Recommendations:*

4.1 Create and consolidate structures for the involvement of AE stakeholders and young people (directly and through representative groups) in policy consultations.

4.2 Ensure support for the development of relevant competences and procedural knowledge by AE stakeholders and young people, for policy consultations to occur effectively and for feedback to be appropriately formulated and circulated.

### **5. Ensuring cross-sectoral coherence and co-operation**

Strengthen information, communication and co-operation across different sectors including AE and APC, spanning multiple levels (local to national and EU) fostering constant dialogue between policy

and practice. These sectors vary by context, but some of the most important to consider are youth, labour, immigration and integration, health and welfare.

*Recommendations:*

5.1 Secure and ensure strong EU, national and local policies that enable cross-sectoral collaboration.

5.2 Promote hybrid spaces of consultation and action populated by both policy and civil society actors for the design of more inclusive and relevant policies.

## **6. Harness human and machine intelligence for information processing and decision-making**

The role of information for policy shaping and decision-making is pivotal. Obstacles are experienced in the availability of information and its circulation among relevant stakeholders. This is particularly evident in cases of vulnerability, exclusion, emergency and crisis, all of which demand highly specific sets of data. Given the diversity of the AE field, the added complexity occasioned by interlinkages with APC and the highly context-specific considerations inherent in the situations of vulnerable young people, we must consider the value of human capacity for information production, transmission and processing and that of machines as two complementary poles. It is through the creation of networks that harness the intelligence of people and machines that we can create the preconditions for AE to become and remain relevant for the needs of young people in precarious situations.

*Recommendations:*

6.1 Invest in structures for the production and circulation of information around policy design and implementation, ensuring:

- **Multidirectional flows:** Represented constituencies (e.g., young people at risk of social exclusion) and decision-makers (policy-makers) engage in horizontal and networked dialogue. Information and communication circulate in multiple directions, producing valuable exchanges for effective and meaningful policymaking.
- **Multilevel information flows:** promotion of information and communication flows across different policymaking levels (e.g. European, national, regional and local).
- **Multi- and cross-sectoral information flows:** across AE, APC and other sectors such as youth, migration etc.

6.2 Invest in socio-technical structures and networks for information production, processing and circulation that rely on joint human and machine intelligence.

6.3 Invest in building relevant competences and know-how among policy and AE stakeholders, including competences related to communication and procedural know-how for working at the intersections between sectors, institutions or policy and practice.

## RESEARCH PARAMETERS

The objectives of the EduMAP project were to:

- compile an inventory of adult education in the EU28 and Turkey, and investigate the effectiveness of adult education policies and practices in preventing social exclusion
- study successful educational initiatives among vulnerable groups within and outside Europe
- investigate and map communicative ecologies in the field of adult education and create innovative forums for dialogue between stakeholders
- create and test an Intelligent Decision Support System (IDSS);
- make recommendations to policymakers and other stakeholders for enhancing the learning of active participatory citizenship in Europe.

Both broad and targeted studies were undertaken. In the first phase, adult education policies and practices across Europe were investigated. The adequacy and shortcomings in the existing statistical data were mapped and analysed.

Once a general understanding of the state-of-the-art in the EU28 and Turkey had been achieved, successful education practices among young adults at risk of social exclusion within and outside the EU were investigated through 'good practice' case studies. The empirical work addressed the mismatch between AE policy agendas and the needs of young people at risk of exclusion, expanding the recommendations on specific actions for policy actors. Communicative practices and information flows within the good practices under study and among groups of young people in situations of vulnerability were mapped and analysed.

## PROJECT IDENTITY

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	Adult Education as a Means for Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP)
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Associate Professor Hanna Toiviainen, TAMPERE UNIVERSITY– TUNI – Tampere, Finland, <a href="mailto:hanna.toiviainen@tuni.fi">hanna.toiviainen@tuni.fi</a>
<b>CONSORTIUM</b>	TALLINN UNIVERSITY– TU – Tallinn, Estonia TAMPERE UNIVERSITY – TUNI –Tampere, Finland FOREDATA OY – Foredata Oy – Sastamala, Finland DVV International – DVVI – Bonn, Germany THE ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI – AUTH –Thessaloniki, Greece UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED – USZ – Szeged, Hungary SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA – ASBU – Ankara, Turkey LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY – LUL – London, United Kingdom UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON – UCL – London, United Kingdom
<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020), Societal Challenge 6 – Europe in a changing world: inclusive, innovative and reflective societies", call YOUNG-3-2015, topic "Lifelong learning for young adults: better policies for growth and inclusion in Europe".
<b>DURATION</b>	February 2016 – January 2019 (36 months)
<b>BUDGET</b>	EU contribution: 2,498,112.50 €
<b>WEBSITE</b>	<a href="http://www.uta.fi/edumap">www.uta.fi/edumap</a>
<b>FOR MORE INFORMATION</b>	Contact: Hanna Toiviainen ( <a href="mailto:hanna.toiviainen@tuni.fi">hanna.toiviainen@tuni.fi</a> )



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## FURTHER READING

A report: Creating forums for enhancing dialogue between relevant stakeholders:

<https://blogs.uta.fi/edumap/2019/03/10/a-report-creating-forums-for-enhancing-dialogue-between-relevant-stakeholders/>

Policy Brief 1: Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP): Broad Research on Adult Education in the EU.

<https://blogs.uta.fi/edumap/2018/10/22/edumap-recommends-to-pay-attention-to-vulnerable-young-learners-needs-and-to-set-explicit-goals-policy-brief/>

EduMAP publications: <https://blogs.uta.fi/edumap/category/publications/books-and-articles/>