



**Proposals for Development
for the Increase of Efficiency of Basic Skills
Development
in Estonia**

The Purpose and Background of Preparing the Development Proposals

The 'MAP – Mapping Digital Methods Applied in Adult Education in Partnership' Erasmus+ project, implemented by a consortium of three Hungarian and German, Estonian, Romanian and Spanish partners between January 2022 and December 2023, aims to improve the digital skills of adults.

The work that has been carried out throughout the project has started with international meetings in the different countries of the consortium to learn how the development and training of digital competencies was implemented with adults. At the end of each meeting, the partners had to vote on which 4 practices they considered the most relevant and important. The result achieved with this selection has been the elaboration of a document where the 4 good practices of all countries are collected.

Another result achieved has been the creation of a training framework in digital competencies for different adult education professionals (training organizers, educators, and curriculum developers), taking as a reference the European Framework of Digital Competences DIGCOMP 2.2. This training framework includes the required learning results necessary for the development of digital competencies and the application of differentiated teaching methods.

In particular, one topic that has gained prominence in the past years is digitalisation in all areas. Therefore, adult education cannot be left out of the equation. What methods, tools and approaches do other European institutions use for counselling and training adults? How can digital skills be transparently assessed and comprehensively recognised? Which applications are best suited for everyday use in adult education? MAP focuses primarily on the exchange between organisations on these topics in order to learn from each other and apply innovative educational methods.

MAP involves three major points:

- 1) The Collection of Best Practices – a document giving insights into the best practices used by partner organisation in regards to digitalisation in education.
- 2) The Further Training Framework – giving advices for professionals that are involved in the development of digital skills of adult learners.
- 3) The Country Specific Development Proposals – containing useful recommendations for the partner country supporting the digital switchover of adult education.

This country-specific professional material with factually listed proposals will be widely disseminated among organisations involved in adult skills development as well as professional decision-makers.

In the following, the development proposals for policy professionals and decision-makers, training providers, and authorities and other organisations are summarised.

Development Proposals:

1. Proposals for policy professionals and decision-makers:

- The Framework provides a valuable theoretical basis which could serve as a guiding document to produce or create a collection of resources and materials to be used in practice.
- We recommend that the framework programmes should be used to develop programmes, assessment tests and learning materials (digital learning materials) with public or EU funding, as not all countries have a profitable adult education system for individual education providers.
- To even improve the usefulness, the general Framework should be used and adapted to country specific circumstances.
- As digitalisation knowledge and competence might heavily vary among users, it is recommended to use a variety of assessment methods and tools, to make sure to have a sufficient analysis of the digital skills in the first place.
- Cooperation is key – it is important that different training providers that work in the field of digitalisation for adult education can collaborate and work together. As seen in the MAP project, it is important to exchange experiences and learn from one another and that this can have a great effect on improving digitalisation in individual organisations. Therefore, it is recommended to support national and international collaboration projects on the topic of digitalisation and commonly achieve greater results.
- It is recommended that existing and completed assessment tests be made available to business organisations so that they can incorporate them into their selection processes. The use of these tests will make it easier for them to place job seekers in jobs that match the level of digitalisation and can also support intergenerational cooperation.
- It is recommended that policy makers develop recommendations for public sector and competitive organisations to reduce the generational gap resulting from the different levels of digitalisation.
- It is recommended to develop comprehensive training programs that cover all levels of difficulty (from the most basic concepts of technology to the most advanced skills and knowledge), adapted to the specific needs of adults in Estonia to ensure their autonomy in their daily lives.
- It is necessary to ensure that the digital skills training that currently exists in Estonia is accessible to all interested parties, taking into account all socially excluded groups, through the use of platforms and resources that are accessible.

2. Proposals for training providers:

- It is recommended to customize digital skills training to adapt to the different levels of prior knowledge of participants, from beginners to advanced learners and to implement active methodologies that encourage participation and practice,

such as case studies, hands-on projects, and simulations, to improve knowledge retention.

- We also recommend that adult education instructors would measure and analyse the basic skills of adults to better understand the needs of disadvantaged target groups with low basic skills according to different age groups, social and labour market position, and place of residence. The better understanding of the lack of basic skills in adult age groups can give institutions the opportunity to develop and implement targeted training programs tailored to specific subgroups.
- It is recommended to not only concentrate on the digital skills development of the learners, but also of those of the teachers and trainers. The teachers and trainers have the function of multipliers in the use and application of digital skills. If the trainers and teachers are keen on involving more digital skills in their education processes, they have the chance to also improve not only their own digital skills, but also those of the learners along the way.
- We consider it particularly important to sensitize the teaching staff to the lack of general and digital competence experienced among adults, as the growing gap between the groups most affected by the lack of basic skills and the groups that perform excellently poses significant dangers. The relationship to lifelong learning and the ability to integrate into the labour market are key factors from the point of view of the economy, society and the individuals.
- To make sure that courses for developing digital skills achieve the greatest effect on the learners, it is highly important to assess the state-of-art of the learners' digital competence first. Assessments can help to reduce the variety of knowledge and skills levels within one group and make sure to separate groups according to their current skills and competences. This helps to achieve a better effect when teaching digitalization, since otherwise if working with heterogeneous groups, some learners might find it too easy and get bored while others have difficulties to keep up with the learning pace. Thus, different forms of assessments (e.g. online assessments, written assessments or oral feedbacks) can help to find out the current state of the learners' digital competences.
- It is important to keep an eye on the duration of digitalisation courses and adapt them according to the needs of the learners. Especially those learners with only basic digital skills might need more time than initially planned, therefore, it is recommended to keep the timing and duration of digitalisation courses as flexible as possible.
- When adult educators use digital tools and methods in their teaching, they need to be made aware that not each learner might be able to understand and apply digital methods, since some of them might only have very limited digital skills. Therefore, it is considered to be important that each teacher and trainer gives instructions on digital tools and makes sure that each learner feels comfortable and familiar to use them.
- As digital requirements, methods and resources are constantly changing and being adapted to new circumstances and even further technological developments, it is important to keep the knowledge, skills and competences up to date. Therefore, it

is recommended that teachers and trainers participate in regular trainings, workshops and seminars making sure their digital skills are up-to-date and constantly expanded. Very important is to create opportunities for participants to establish support networks, either in person or online, facilitating connections with other trainees and professionals to share experiences and knowledge.

- We also recommend paying attention to the development and maintenance of basic digital competences when developing and implementing training programs for professional education and training for adults - especially digital basic competences relevant to the given profession. We also recommend that the development of basic digital skills would be combined with professional practical content of interest to the training participants. In addition to incorporating professional knowledge, this also supports the prevention of dropping out of training.
- As the Framework provides a great basis, it would be a good idea to develop and collect practical training materials based on the Framework that are ready to be used in teachings and trainings (e.g. make a collection in a specific platform linked to the Framework).

3. For authorities and other organization:

- It is recommended that digitalisation is implemented on all organisational levels. E.g. often supervisors or those in higher positions are involved in digitalisation trainings, however it is important that also lower-level employees are part of the digitalisation process. Therefore, it needs to be either ensured that supervisors pass on their knowledge on digitalisation or that specific workshops and learning events for all level employees are organised.
- As seen in some of the best practices, it is a valuable approach to either use incentives or combine digitalisation with other aspects of learning. Often digitalisation is an abstract topic, that some employees might be afraid of. Therefore, in order to increase their motivation, digitalisation trainings could be combined with incentives or they can be involved in trainings with another topic that the employees feel more familiar and comfortable with (e.g. a Business English course that uses digital tools).
- Exchange of experiences – it is recommended that organisations become part of networks or form networks with other organisations interested in the same topic. This provides a valuable basis for learning from each other and gives them a space to exchange their experiences, as digitalisation is a topic that nowadays should concern all organisations.
- We recommend to make significant investments in digital infrastructure, including high-speed Internet access and affordable devices, to ensure that all adults can participate in digital literacy training programs and to establish grant and funding programs for educational organizations, institutions, and businesses that offer digital skills training programs for adults, thereby promoting the expansion and accessibility of such programs.