

SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE
EPALE and Erasmus+ Adult Education 2021

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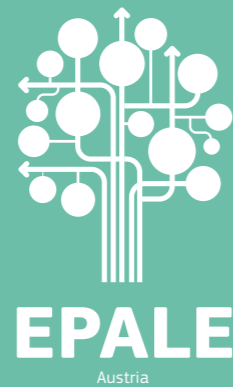


I am DIFFERENT. YOU are DIFFERENT.

Together we are diversity!

EPALE

Austria | E-Platform for
Adult Learning in Europe



I am DIFFERENT. YOU are DIFFERENT.
TOGETHER we are DIVERSITY!

Diversity in inclusive adult education

In the final phase of project implementation, the Entre4all partners are launching a grassroots initiative to promote the achievements of the project and to campaign for upscaling of the project at national level. You can offer your support by signing our petition at <https://entre4all.eu/en/petition>.

About equalizent

equalizent was founded in 2004 and has four main areas of focus: people who are deaf; people who are hard of hearing; Sign Language; and diversity management. equalizent's training and company concept are unique in Europe. Through various training and advisory services, equalizent supports people who are deaf and hard of hearing, as well as people with other disabilities, to find work.

A third of staff members are deaf. This means that deaf trainees are trained by deaf peers. equalizent organises the annual Diversity Ball – an accessible event which takes place in Vienna, Austria. equalizent also founded HANDS UP, an interactive exhibition, raising awareness about the Deaf world.

For more information about equalizent:
www.equalizent.com
(in German, Austrian Sign Language
and English)



Joanna Kinberger works as EU Project Manager at equalizent Schulungs- und Beratungs GmbH in Vienna, Austria. equalizent is a company with many years of expertise in the fields of Deafness, Sign Language and Diversity Management, offering courses and counselling in written German and Austrian Sign Language for people who are deaf, hard of hearing and hearing.

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DIVERSITY – Including migrants through organisational development and programme planning in adult education

Moving from a contingency approach ...

During the last decade, immigration put the European educational systems to the test. The large influx of refugees and migrants from different educational, economic and cultural contexts made the rapid creation of emergency response mechanisms imperative, resulting in a plethora of language and cultural awareness courses to promote integration. By the same token, those contingency schemes polarised the Adult Education (AE) system in most European countries, leading to a differentiation between 'AE for migrants' and 'traditional AE' along the entire cycle of the Adult Education value chain (i.e. from policy formulation, programme development, implementation, curriculum development, service delivery, etc). In many cases, 'AE for migrants' is even further subdivided into 'AE for refugees' and 'AE for other migrants'. Thus, migrants have been considered as a 'special' target group of AE with specifically tailored solutions. While this approach may be appropriate when responding to and managing needs resulting from

the contingency of sudden migrant inflow, it left migrants outside the mainstream AE provision; once migrants have completed the courses especially designed (and financed) for integration purposes, the current AE systems offer them little further perspective and few migrants transition into 'ordinary' courses. The next step must be a 'normalisation' of this target group in the eyes of AE and their strategic integration into the established pool of target audiences. To achieve this goal and to remain attractive, even long-term facilitators and provider organisations need to shift their perspectives and change up their internal processes, adapting management and programme planning strategies.

... towards a more diversity-informed Adult Education

The Erasmus+ project **DIVERSITY – Including Migrants through Organisational Development and Programme Planning in Adult Education** supports this process by developing training resources to enable AE to graduate



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from the contingency approach and move towards an operational model for a more diversity-informed AE. The principal objective of the project is to aid European AE systems in this mentality shift towards including migrants into the AE providers' regular programmes as an equal target group and thus to actively and directly foster diversity and inclusion in AE and in society. The project partners consider managers and programme planners in provider organisations to be key to reaching this overarching objective. They play a crucial role in committing institutions to openness through the structural and strategic decisions they make. Ideally, they would be spearheading a

whole-of-organisation/whole-of-society approach to embracing diversity. Our experiences suggest that training is needed for all actors in the process to support inclusion from the first point of contact to the final evaluation and exit strategy. To facilitate this approach we consider administrators, access programme staff, recruiters and evaluators to be particularly important in supporting a cohesive whole-of-organisation approach. In this vein, the DIVERSITY team is developing a training curriculum designed to address the specific requirements for this organisational shift aimed at management and programme planning staff.

The curriculum will include the following modules:

- Diversity Mindset
- Staff Development
- Language and Culture
- Administration of Learners
- Marketing
- Coaching
- Topics and Themes
- Focus on Learners
- Cooperation
- Diverse Learning Communities

These modules provide the framework for creating tailor-made trainings which will allow providers to a) assess their current practices for implicit barriers to migrant participation, and to b) develop appropriate avenues of evolution to realise their full potential by improving their strategies towards a diverse learnership.

Through their work on the project, partners further seek to raise awareness for migration-related diversity, its challenges and its opportunities not only among managers and planners in AE but also among policy makers who determine the parameters for integration efforts. To this end, the findings of the project will also be consolidated into policy recommendations which aim to secure the public support necessary to successfully navigate these target group readjustment processes.

Workshop to raise awareness

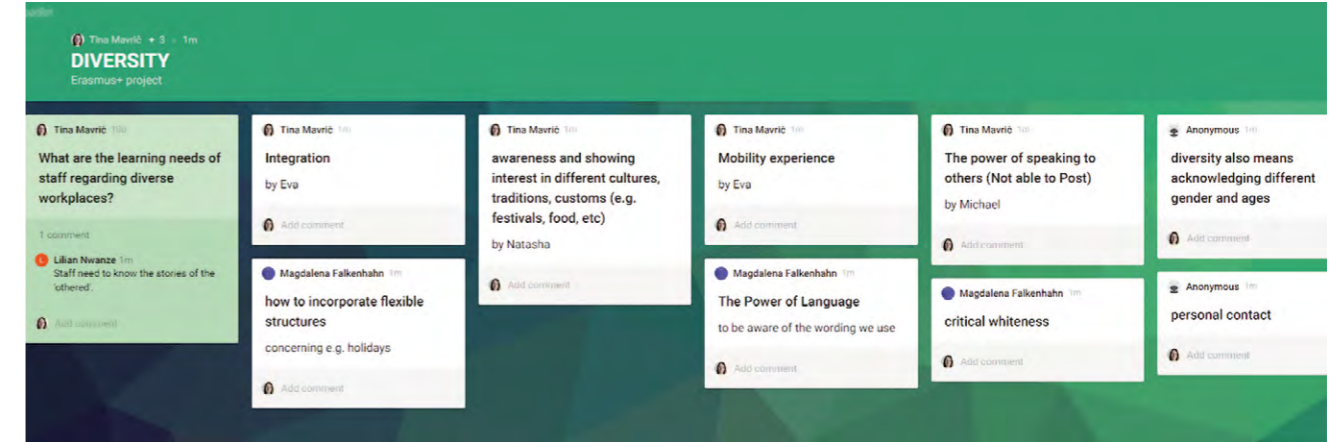
Raising awareness for the many facets of this process was also a key part of the EPALE workshop held at the Austrian EPALE and Erasmus+ Conference in May 2021. A considerable share of agents active in AE will already have worked with migrants and thus be very aware of the challenges and opportunities the last years have offered to teachers and trainers in particular. Many AE organisations have also skilfully responded to logistical challenges; however, these solutions tend to be short-term and tend to be group- and or teacher-specific. Many of the key barriers, such as language, will not be as prevalent once the target group have been living in the receiving country for a while (even though, for some groups language capacity building will be an ongoing process and challenge).



What does it take to create inclusive environments?
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Creating a diversity sensitive Adult Education organisation – who are the key players?
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What are the learning needs of staff regarding diverse workplaces?
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As DIVERSITY looks at the longer-term strategy of including migrants in the regular cohort of customers, as opposed to continually treating them as a special target group, the filter is slightly different. To achieve good policy recommendations that reflect the needs of diverse migrant and refugee groups of adult learners, we believe that consultation with member organisations and representative groups is vital. Such an approach will ensure that policy is grounded in practice and is cognisant of experiential knowledge.

Questions and Discussion

We approached the EPALE workshop with several aims in mind: to explore with the participants what we understand to be inclusive environments; to determine what the key components are that make up diversity sensitive AE organisations; and to facilitate a reflective process through dialogue, focusing upon how we approach and embrace diverse cohorts of migrants and refugees in adult education organisations. We agreed that it was important to have an interactive and engaging process due to the online nature of the workshop. To this aim, we asked three questions using two digital tools to facilitate collaboration in the online space – Mentimeter and Padlet.

The first question, **'What does it take to create inclusive environments?'**, resulted in a word cloud and showed that participants had already given the topics considerable thought. The forerunners among the many valuable answers were 'representation', 'respect', and 'dialogue' (see image).

Additional responses included: we are all one; one world view; unconditional care; love or care; great teacher training; training for teachers; everyone involved; critical cosmopolitan; mindset; honesty; accept difference; curiosity; one planet; politicians; open mind; democratic principles; reality vs stereotype; not self-centred; reflection; mindfulness; courage; empathy; trust; communities of enquiry; responsibility.

The second question **'Creating a diversity sensitive AE organisation – who are the key players?'** gauged where participants think the responsibility for inclusion and creating diversity-sensitive AE organisations lies. The answers showed a wide range, with 'diverse staff' being the most prominent. This ties in with the answers from the first question, where 'representation' was one of the key terms. However, 'everyone involved' was also a prominent answer and already hints at some potentially 'hidden' players we don't always think about. One such group, which was not specifically named, are administrative staff. While teaching staff are usually at the fore, administrative staff are actually the first people new learners will encounter (e.g. during registration). This first port of call experience can considerably influence the learning experience – whether

learners feel welcome and accepted at this first step may well determine if they come back or not.

Additional responses included: Programme managers; community at large; stakeholders; outreach; management; welcome difference; no educational segregation; respect difference; policy makers; critical friends; fear no diversity; teachers change the world; trainers; enable access; wider community; students; politicians; teachers, get away from technology; marketing.

Diversity sensitive AE organisations can provide opportunities for migrants to undertake further education beyond integration measures and work-related provision. Diversity sensitive organisations offer the space where contradictions and myths can be deconstructed, where multiple voices can be heard, and stories shared that facilitate understanding of the 'other' and where equity can be designed.

The responses suggest that a whole-of-organisation, whole-of-society approach to creating diversity sensitive AE organisations is needed.

The third question **'What are the learning needs of staff regarding diverse workplaces?'** gauged where participants had identified gaps in training and/or expertise through their own experiences. Some answers still reflect the topics of the previous years when migrants were absolutely new to the country and language was a prevalent issue. However, in the longer term this issue will become less prominent and some of the answers show that the skills required may not necessarily be ones that can be achieved through training. Some rely more heavily on personal experience and an openness that can only be gained through 'exposure'.

Responses included: Staff need to know the stories of the 'othered'; Integration; how to incorporate flexible structures; awareness and showing interest in different cultures and traditions, customs, festivals, food etc.; mobility experience; the power of language – to be aware of the wording we use; the power of speaking to others; critical whiteness; diversity also means acknowledging different genders and ages; personal contact; speaking or understanding different languages or have at least an idea how other languages work and who can help to translate.

The responses suggest that having a genuine interest in people, their culture, traditions and language is important to facilitate communication. It is also important for AE organisations, staff and students to be aware of the semantics, the wording and labelling of people as 'other' creates barriers to integration and inclusion and can create miscommunication. An interesting conversation developed about the concept of 'critical whiteness' and what it means to fully interrogate beliefs, values and practices.

While most agents in AE would agree that a diverse learning community is a desirable goal, most are also fuzzy on how to create this respectful, caring, supportive, appreciative, mutually beneficial reality. Changing organisations is notoriously difficult and while agreement on the overall vision is crucial, we need manageable, specific steps to take in the workplace that can eventually make a bigger difference.

The DIVERSITY curriculum does not promise the perfect blueprint for realising the vision, but it offers some guiding perspectives to aid the process. Because we believe in a future of diverse classrooms where migrants and non-migrants learn side by side rather than separately.

For that reason, we think that a co-design process is vital, where AE organisations and migrants co-create diverse learning communities.

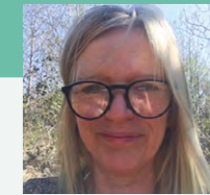
Once completed, results will become available as OERs for download at www.aewb-nds.de/themen/eu-programme/diversity as well as on the Erasmus+ Results Platform and EPALE.



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