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**3LMindset**  
LifeLong Learning



# Supporting people with migrant background in lifelong learning

**bit** *schulungscenter*  
member of *bit* group



  
eurospeak



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# 1 Executive Summary

The goals of this policy paper are to highlight the importance of supporting low-skilled adults with migrant backgrounds in participating in lifelong learning, as well as to provide adult education institutions with some recommendations on how to deal with this group of learners when it comes to continuing education.

During the research activities within this project, it became visible that the participation rate of low-skilled migrant adults in continuing education is quite low, and that a lot of people with migrant backgrounds have a fixed mindset when it comes to lifelong learning (LLL). They are faced with different barriers, and they would have to change their mindset in order to see these barriers as possibilities to grow and as something they can overcome if they take over responsibility for it.



To shape the mindset of these people and to promote lifelong learning, adult education institutions have to take action. It is crucial that they adapt their offers and methods to the specific needs of these people and that they support them in developing the required competences as well as the motivation and self-confidence to participate in continuing education. By explaining the concept and importance of lifelong learning and making learning more attractive, adult education institutions can contribute to more people participating in continuing education, and thus to a lower unemployment rate as well as a better social inclusion of people with migrant backgrounds.

As adult education plays such an important role in supporting low-skilled immigrants, this policy paper contains a lot of practical recommendations at different levels – at the systemic level, the organisational level and also for adult educators in their teaching process.

## 2 Introduction to lifelong learning of low-skilled immigrants

In this chapter, an introduction to the main topic of this policy report, which is lifelong learning of low-skilled people with migrant backgrounds, can be found. First, the terms “lifelong learning” and “Growth Mindset” are explained.

Then, the challenging situation of low-skilled immigrants in the partner countries Austria, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia is described and it is highlighted why it is crucial to promote lifelong learning amongst adults with migrant backgrounds.

At the end, a short description of the research methodology that was the basis for the creation of this policy report can be found.

### 2.1 Definition of the Issue

The Project 3L Mindset aims to support low-skilled migrants to develop a **Growth Mindset**, or in other words, the curiosity and motivation to learn something new. Thus, in this chapter, the terms “Lifelong Learning” and “low-skilled” are explained to provide a common basis of understanding.

EurWORK defines Lifelong learning as follows:

*“Lifelong learning is a broad concept concerning an individual's education that is viewed as flexible, diverse and available at different times and places throughout life. The scale of current economic and social change, the rapid transition to a knowledge-based society and demographic pressures resulting from an ageing population in Europe are all challenges that demand a new approach to education and training, within the framework of lifelong learning”. (cf. EurWORK 2017)*

**Lifelong learning** and adult education **contribute to social inclusion and active citizenship** in several ways. According to the OECD, lifelong learning can give learners new skills and knowledge so they can remain engaged in society and competitive in the job market. Lifelong learning supports active citizenship by improving health, educational, and income outcomes for low-skilled migrants and provides social mobility and capital. It can also reduce rates of

unemployment, early school leaves, or poverty in certain communities. Lifelong learning is the key to developing skills needed in today's labour market. In addition, it reduces the economic costs for low-skilled migrants as there are reductions in the costs for social welfare and gains through the payment of taxes.

The definition of the term "**low skilled**" is based on formal vocational training and/or on the highest school-leaving qualification at the end of the first educational pathway. Thus, it includes all people without a vocational qualification or vocational training as well as all those people who only have a compulsory school-leaving certificate or have even not completed compulsory school (cf. Ziegler, 2016; Mörth, 2015).

The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) typically defines low-skilled adults as those with less than level 2 proficiency in literacy and/or numeracy on a scale that goes up to level 5. Individuals are classified into different levels of numeracy and literacy based on their probability of being able to respond to tasks of different difficulty levels.

## 2.2 Background of the Issue

Given the new challenges that globalisation continues to pose to the European Union, **every citizen will require a wide range of skills to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing and multiply interconnected world**. In its dual role - social and economic - education and training have a key role to play in ensuring that Europe's citizens acquire the key skills needed to be able to adapt flexibly to these changes.

Specifically, taking advantage of the diverse individual competencies, the different needs of learners should be met by **ensuring equal access for those groups** who, as a result of educational disadvantages caused by personal, social, cultural or economic circumstances, need special support to develop their educational potential. Examples of such groups are:

- people with low basic qualifications, in particular those who have difficulties in reading and writing
- early school leavers
- the long-term unemployed
- people returning to work after a long period of absence
- the elderly
- people with disabilities
- migrants who are the main target group in this project.

Below are some figures on the percentage of the population with a migrant background in each of the partner countries in order to make the target group more visible:

- In Austria are living 2,240,300 people with a migration background – that is about 24,4 % of the total population of Austria (cf. Statistik Austria, 2022).
- In Spain, the number of migrants increased from 172,456 persons during the first half of 2022, to a total of 5,579,947 migrants as of July 1. They account for 11.7 % of the population, although the more than two million nationalised Spanish who were born in a different country are not taken into account.
- According to the 2022 *Population and Migration Estimates* published by Ireland's Central Statistics Office, approximately 700,000 non-Irish nationals live in Ireland making up 13.8 % of the total population. In 2021, the office estimated there were approximately 650,000 non-Irish nationals consisting of 12.9 % of the population, indicating a significant increase in migration over the past year.
- According to the Statistics Office of Slovenia and data for the first quarter of 2022, 2,107,180 people were living in Slovenia, with 1,934,738 native inhabitants (946,521 men and 988,217 women) and 172,442 foreign residents (111,174 men and 61,268 women). The number of foreign residents has increased compared to the same period in 2021, 2020, and 2019.

Since the number of migrants is continuously increasing in every project country and this group is at the same time disadvantaged in terms of education, the next chapter will now focus on the importance of continuing education for this target group.

### 2.3 Importance of the Issue

Data, available through Eurostat, suggests that **people with higher formal education levels tend to participate more in lifelong learning activities**, whereas those who have **lower educational levels** and skills tend to lose their skills earlier because they **do not participate in learning programmes**.

The following description of the current situation regarding the participation of low-skilled migrants or low-qualified employees and workers in further education in each project country is intended to show the relevance of the project topic.

## **Austria**

For Austria, there are only a few empirical studies on the educational participation of adults with a migration background, especially of low-skilled migrants: People with a migration background take less part in further education than people with Austrian citizenship. According to the AES (Adult Education Survey) 2016, more Austrian people take part in non-formal education activities (50,1 %) than migrants with a total of 38,0 %.

## **Spain**

According to Eurostat, in 2020, Spain is one of the countries that had the highest proportions of foreign-born persons with low educational attainment (36,1 %). Moreover, among the 17 EU Member States for which data are available, Spain has the second-highest share of foreign-born early leavers from education and training (29.0 %).

## **Ireland**

According to a 2005 Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP) survey, only 35 % of low-qualified employees received training provided by their current employer in the past two years, whereas 60 % of employees with third-level qualifications participated in training. Similarly, only 28 % of unskilled manual workers received training compared to 63 % of highly skilled professionals.

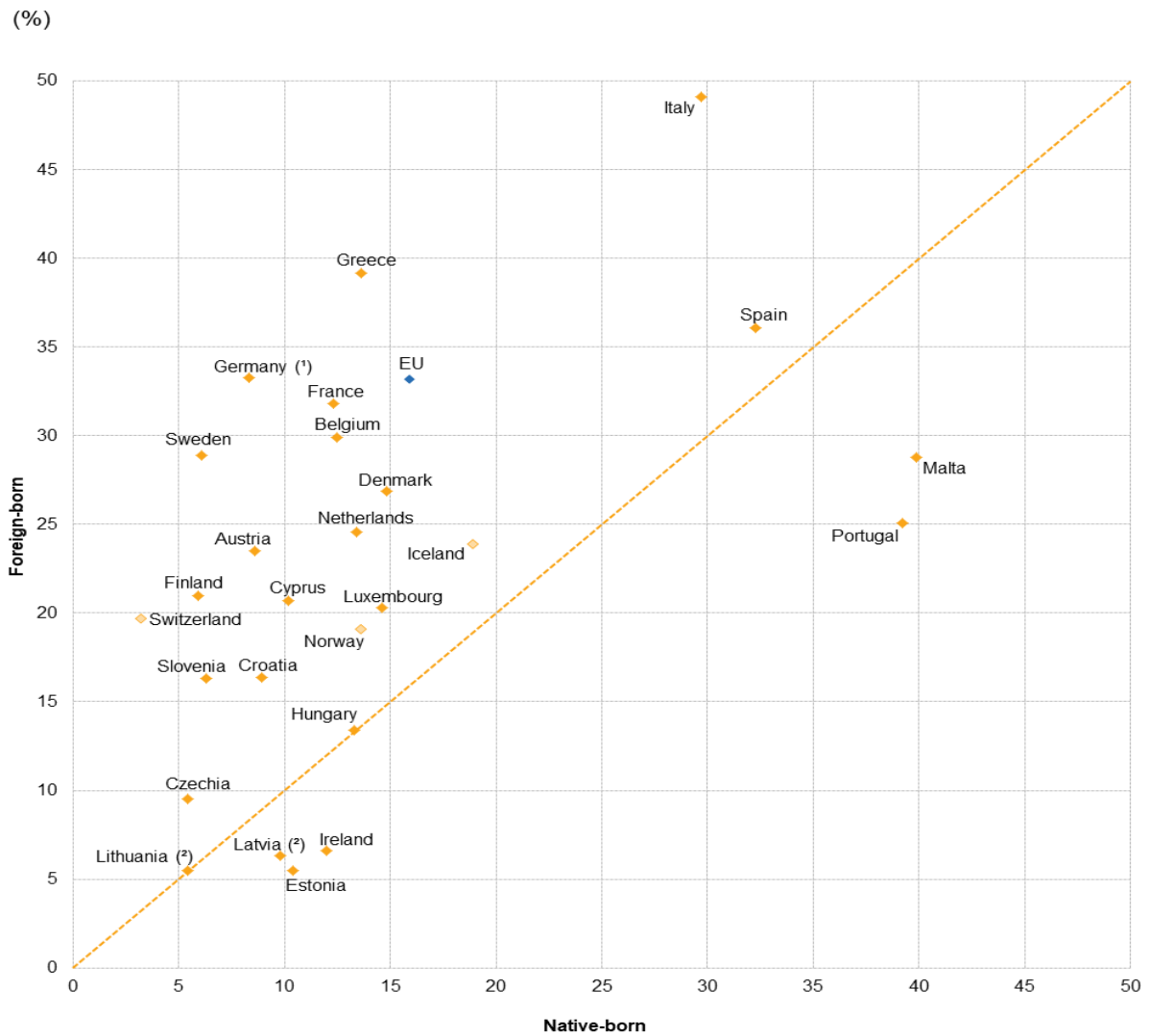
## **Slovenia**

According to the article *Education as a part of the integration of young migrants without primary education*, migrants, those with lower levels of functional literacy, are people at a disadvantage. The aim of education or integration programmes for migrants in Slovenia should be to help them to apply for better-paid working positions and thus improve the quality of their lives.

To make these findings visible, an overview graphic comparing the different European countries can be found in the following. It shows the share of the population aged between 25 and 54 years with at most a lower secondary level of educational attainment, by country of birth, in 2022.

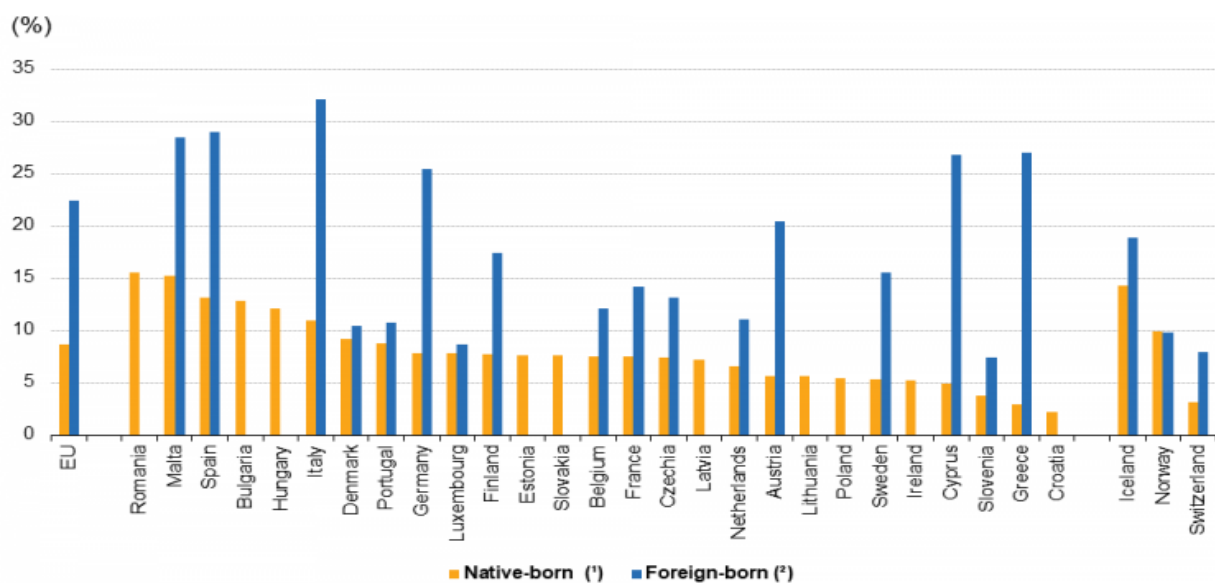
The graphic highlights that there are many people in the European countries that only have a low level of qualification. And in most countries, the percentage of people with migrant backgrounds is especially high when it comes to a low qualification level.





**Source: Eurostat**

For example, when it comes to early dropouts from education, foreign-born people are at a higher risk than native-born persons. In the following graphic, an overview of different European countries can be found. It highlights the share of early leavers, aged between 18 and 24 years, from education and training, in 2020.



Source: Eurostat

In the desk research, the following reasons for the lower participation in continuing education of migrants in the partner countries Austria, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia were found (cf. Sprung, 2013; Reiter/Humt/Öztürk, 2021; Accem 2020; Mooney/O'Rourke 2017; OECD 2018):

- School absenteeism
- Lack of language skills
- Lack of Digital Skills
- The fear of exam requirements
- Discrimination (confrontation with xenophobic and racist behaviour)
- Lack of information about education and training opportunities
- Lack of knowledge about the structure and requirements of the labour market
- Difficulties in accessing formal training for adults
- Teachers with little or no training in interculturality
- Lack of grants and scholarships for training
- Lack of adaption of the programmes to the specific needs of migrants
- Institutional barriers (e.g.: design of welfare systems, rules for access to training opportunities)
- Employment in sectors where there are fewer training opportunities (e.g.: retail, construction)
- Financial reasons, family responsibilities, and lack of self-confidence

Moreover, the research in Spain pointed out that an early school dropout, which is more frequent among migrant students than among Spanish students, as well as the greater

difficulties of migrants to continue their post-compulsory studies, make access to training for adults one of the main needs demanded both by experts.

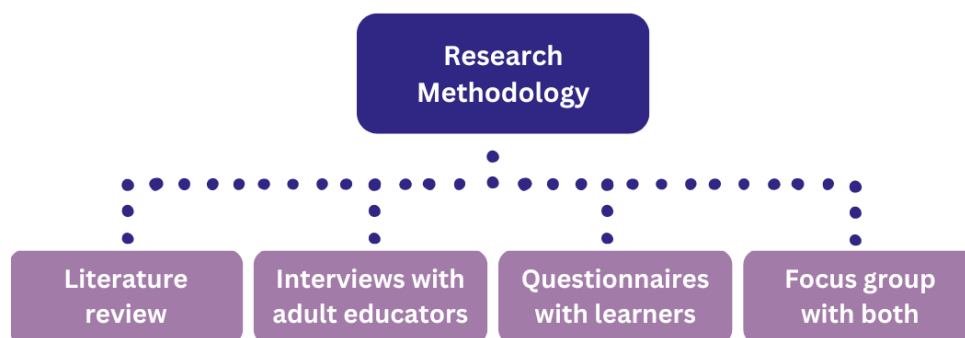
It is also mentioned that in Spain, 75 % of young people of foreign origin aspire to obtain a higher education degree. However, even with family support, one in three drop out of school early. One of the main causes of this dropout is the lack of confidence they perceive in their teachers. Early dropout from education and training makes these young people more vulnerable to unemployment and at greater risk of social exclusion than native youth.

In Ireland, research by O'Connell and McGinnity in 2008 also found that migrants face higher unemployment rates than non-migrants and tend to have low-paid, shift or temporary work. Migrants from non-English speaking countries were the least likely to be employed. Migrants from ethnic minorities faced several barriers to further education, including language barriers and minimal outreach to communities of foreign nationals.

The importance of continuing education from the perspective of the target group of migrants was examined in more detail in a survey with 98 respondents and in the focus groups conducted in all project countries. The survey showed that continuing education is considered very important by a large part of the target group in each project country (60-70 % of respondents). Furthermore, between 80 % and 85 % of the respondents in Austria, Spain and Ireland have a very positive attitude towards continuing education, in Slovenia even 100 % of the respondents stated that they have very positive feelings. In Austria, the results of the survey show very clearly that a large part of the target group sees continuing education as an opportunity to find a job more easily (70 % of respondents). Most participants of the focus groups also stated in all project countries that the desire to find a job or a better job is the main motivation for attending a language course.

## 2.4 Research Methodology

The research activities within this project result were carried out by all project partners from Austria, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia. The methodology used for this policy report was divided into four parts:



First, a **literature review** was conducted by each partner organisation to find out more about the current situation of the participation of low-skilled immigrant adults in lifelong learning activities. Each partner compiled a short national summary including diverse graphics and statistics that highlight the most important facts.

To bring also the perspectives of different members of our target groups into this research, the second step of this research was the conduction of **interviews with adult educators** by each partner organisation. In total, 18 people were interviewed. The participants were asked about their opinion on the accessibility of educational programs for people with migrant backgrounds, the barriers that exist, and the motivation of these for learning. In addition, they were asked about the educational institutions they are working in and the different courses and support they offer to this target group. Also, good-practice examples in the work with these people were highlighted.

To find out what immigrants think of lifelong learning, a **questionnaire** was created and filled out by them. **98 adults with migrant backgrounds** answered this questionnaire in total. They were asked about their mindset relating to learning, the barriers that exist and the things that could be changed to make education easier and more attractive for them.

As the last part of the research activities, **focus groups** were implemented in all partner countries, where **immigrants and adult educators** were brought together and could exchange their ideas and thoughts. In total, 41 people participated in these focus groups, where most of them were adults with migrant backgrounds. Both, teachers and learners, were

asked about their attitudes towards learning, the challenges that appear and how these challenges could be overcome.

This policy report has been compiled based on the findings of all research activities conducted during the project lifespan.

In the following chapters, the situation and challenges identified during our research activities are described in detail. In addition, some recommendations for policy makers, educational institutions and adult educators relating to their work with low-skilled immigrants can be found.



### 3 The role of adult education in social inclusion

At the latest since the 1948 UN Convention on Human Rights, it has become clear that **education is a fundamental right** that does not end with the formal completion of education (cf. UNICEF, 2010). Especially in adulthood, this right should be carried out since lifelong learning demonstrably enables people to **participate in different areas of society and to live self-determined lives**. In order to make these opportunities accessible and holistic, barrier-free adult education settings are needed (cf. Sonnenberg, 2017). Social inclusion, which is composed of social and political participation, can benefit from the broad inclusion effect of education.

Education for adults has a special social significance, as education links individual as well as collective consequences. Individuals benefit from the development of (basic) competences in the setting of lifelong learning in multiple areas of life. Education has a great **personal intrinsic value** in that newly acquired alternatives for action promote self-confidence and self-determination, resulting in positive consequences for social inclusion as well as better life chances overall. In society, lifelong learning has the potential to pass on social norms as well as collective knowledge and competences and thus **promote living together in harmony** (cf. Hillmert, 2009).

The organisations participating in the interview have already started to implement this theory. In all institutions, the focus is on the inclusion of migrants, especially women, in order to contribute to their inclusion in society. These offers mainly take the form of free language courses, but also job application support.

#### 3.1 Interrelation of adult education and social inclusion

In practice, the role of adult education in the promotion of active citizenship has been weakly recognised and conceptualised. The policies and practices for adult education and active citizenship have been influenced strongly by the humanitarian migration across the EU as well as by the implications of the 2008 economic crisis, which resulted in the rise of unemployment across Europe. Both these trends have contributed to the **risks of exclusion and disengagement** for a number of people who find themselves in vulnerable positions, for example as migrants or NEETs (not in education, employment or training). The response of adult education to these challenges of social exclusion has been to set up programmes and strategies with the aim of integrating refugees and migrants into domestic labour markets and facilitating their social inclusion. Fostering active citizenship, both directly and indirectly, is an

area where many adult education programmes overlap, and this has become a core approach to social inclusion. Adult education is now increasingly recognised as a means of **promoting social inclusion and participation** in society. By supporting participants to take an active role as citizens in their respective social environments, their individual **prospects and life chances improve**. Consequently, adult education and lifelong learning hold the potential to realise the following opportunities and thus contribute to social inclusion (cf. Kersh et al., 2021):

### **Lifelong learning in the context of adult education...**

- ...can promote the development of competences that meet the demands of the modern **labour market** and contribute to adaptability in a changing world.
- ...supports **active citizenship** and improves health, education and income opportunities for marginalised groups, thus promoting social mobility.
- ...can reduce **unemployment and poverty**, thus conserving state economic resources.
- ...can enable new opportunities for personal, social and economic **development and progress**.
- ...enables low-skilled people to gain access to knowledge that helps them to **cope with societal challenges** (cf. Kersh et al., 2021).
- ...can have a positive impact on overall **well-being**, including mental health, by promoting self-confidence and self-determination (Mooney, et al., 2017).

## **3.2 Inclusive design of European adult education systems**

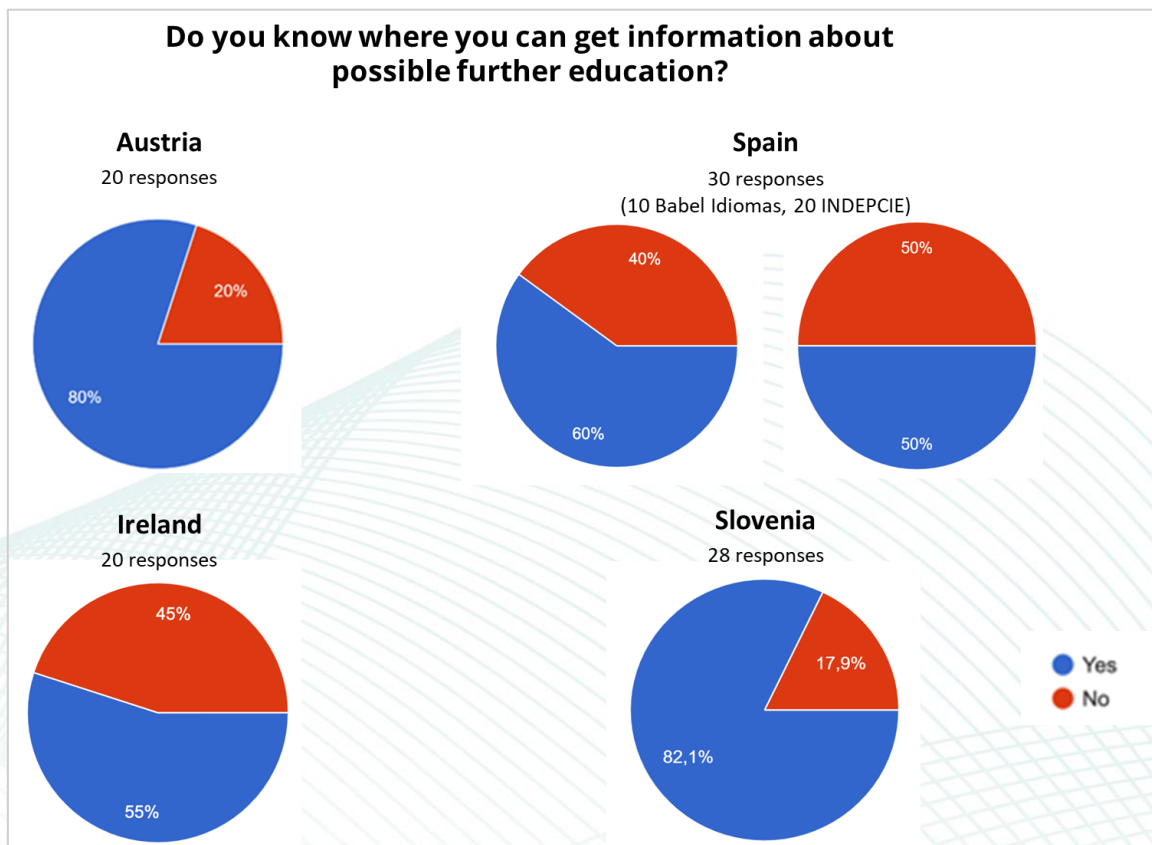
Nevertheless, there is still a **need** for action in European adult education systems **to meet the educational needs of different target groups**. Marginalised groups, such as people with a migration background or refugee experience, would benefit from lifelong learning and should therefore be given special consideration (cf. EPALE Austria, 2019). Lifelong learning and adult education provision can contribute significantly to overcoming the threat of exclusion and disqualification. Currently, however, access and participation often still correlate with inequalities between social classes, ethnic groups and genders. **Adult education is only inclusive if it is aware of this fact and takes it into account in its offers and didactic concepts** (cf. Kronauer, 2010).

### 3.3 Recommendations for educational institutions

In order to anchor lifelong learning in institutions, to pave the way for access also for marginalised groups and thus to contribute to increased equality of opportunity overall, educational institutions can be guided by the following recommendations in the future. Enabling access to lifelong learning and adult education for migrants requires a comprehensive approach and consideration of various aspects.

#### 3.3.1 Overcoming barriers to access to lifelong learning

When asking people with migrant backgrounds if they know where they can find information about continuing education offers, it became visible that many of them do not know that:



Thus, in order to ensure that the offers really reach the target group, it is essential to continuously focus on the **dissemination of information**. Educational institutions should actively communicate about their educational offers to ensure that migrants know about the available opportunities and can make use of them. To ensure accessibility in this context, it is essential to provide information in several languages and to cooperate with organisations for migrants.



Communication is the key to mutual understanding, which is why **language barriers** can severely limit access to educational programmes. It would therefore be beneficial to offer basic foundation courses in several languages to create a common level. In a further step, it is essential to support language learning and to meet the needs of the target group at different levels in order to facilitate access to further education and information.

For inclusion to take place, **cultural sensitivity** should also be a key focus. Educational institutions should understand the needs and cultural backgrounds of migrants and integrate them into their curricula and offerings, as this contributes to an inclusive learning environment and reduces any fear of contact with new cultures. To achieve this, intercultural events can be organised that include traditional food, music, dance, sports and clothing to engage in cultural exchange. The provision of cultural mentors can also help the target group to find their way around institutions at the beginning and to break down initial barriers.

Often, educational settings or personal learning phases take place online, using **digital media**. However, as access and financial means to electronic devices are not available to all, it would be essential to provide lending models.

Another aspect that can break down barriers is **flexible learning options** to meet different needs, family commitments or different working hours. In this regard, hybrid models, evening classes or online modules can be helpful.

**Mentoring programmes** can help learners achieve their educational and career goals by providing individual support and guidance.

### 3.3.2 Self-perception as a social part of the group

It is of utmost relevance that persons with a migration background perceive themselves as a social part of the group and experience opportunities for participation, as this promotes social inclusion. To realise this, it would be beneficial to promote the **participation of the target group** in neighbourhood, cultural and student associations.

The inclusion of adult migrants should have a clear focus on **community projects**. To this end, sufficient resources must be made available to enable participation in various forms of organisation and social activities. **Adult education centres** play a crucial role in this by informing the target group about the different existing associations and their characteristics.

By implementing these measures, educational institutions can contribute to promoting migrants' access to lifelong learning and adult education, supporting their **inclusion into society**.



## 4 Barriers for low-skilled immigrants relating to adult education

When it comes to continuing education, people with migrant backgrounds often face a lot of barriers, as already mentioned. According to Sprung (2013) and Reiter/Humt/Öztürk (2021) who elaborated on the situation in Austria, some of the socioeconomic factors for a low participation rate in continuing education apply to migrants particularly:

- Disadvantages in the school system have an impact on participation in further and adult education too
- Negative experiences in courses discouraged migrants (e.g. the impossibility to follow lessons due to a lack of language skills)
- Discrimination from teachers and other participants
- Fear of exam requirements
- Lack of information about education and training opportunities
- Lack of knowledge about the structure and requirements of the labour market which results in a disorientation of the further and adult education market
- Financial reasons, family responsibilities, and lack of self-confidence

Also, the **accreditation situation** in Austria **reduces the participant rate**. Accreditation of foreign educational qualifications and professional experiences would bring facilitation for further education. The educational level and the occupational position are participation barriers, especially for low-skilled migrants (cf. Bundeskanzleramt, 2011).

According to the report *Study on the needs of the immigrant population in Spain: trends and challenges for social inclusion* by Accem (2020), experts pointed out the following as the main challenges and difficulties faced by low-skilled migrants to continue their studies (by relevance):

- Lack of awareness of the need to acquire and validate socio-labour skills
- Lack of literacy and language learning resources
- Difficulties in accessing formal training for adults
- Teachers with little or no training in interculturality in the classroom
- Lack of digital skills
- Lack of grants and scholarships for training
- Xenophobic and racist behaviour in the classroom
- School absenteeism
- Difficulty in reconciling

A study by OECD in 2019 pointed out that it would be helpful for migrants if the **migration paperwork** in Spain was **made easier** for professionals, entrepreneurs and university students, and if the conditions to stay in the country were improved. During the research activities of this project, it was also stated that in many cases, visas for studying in Spain are denied, which is an important barrier.

According to the Global Education Monitoring Report (2019), a lack of **language proficiency** is an educational disadvantage, as it hinders socialization, relationship building and a sense of belonging, and increases the risk of discrimination. A poor resolution of the needs of these students in the learning of the language of communication can imply, in many cases, the consolidation of deficits and school delays that are never overcome. It is also pointed out that **teachers need support** to teach a diverse student population, but 52 % of teachers surveyed in Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia and the UK did not feel adequately supported by school administration to manage diversity. Not only being able to teach diverse students is important, but also diversity among teachers is an issue. Some evidence suggests that **teacher diversity** is linked to better outcomes for immigrant students, higher self-esteem and a sense of security.

In Irish research, it was pointed out that **migrants are less likely to be employed in professional sectors that offer in-house training, continuous professional development, and subsidised education**. Instead, they are likely to work in retail, construction, and similar sectors where employers are less likely to provide training opportunities. Another main challenge is the **language barrier**. A study by the National Adult Literacy Agency (cf. NALA, 2012) highlighted that English as a Second Language courses are essential to allowing low-skilled migrants to access further education. According to a stakeholder survey by SOLAS in 2017, low-skilled migrants may also face issues of **adult literacy and mental health barriers** when considering educational opportunities. This could be due to a lack of fundamental skills such as literacy, computer literacy, essay skills, and self-confidence. Those facing long-term unemployment are especially likely to be affected by this barrier.

According to Slovenian research, foreign-born adults face **financial and non-financial barriers to active participation in adult education and training**. As migrants are generally less wealthy than natives, this might prevent them from investing in training activities. According to Skills on the Move (OECD, 2018), »non-financial barriers might include a wide range of factors, such as lack of time due to family or work commitments, lack of information about training opportunities, discrimination or programmes' lack of adaptation to the specific needs of migrants or institutional barriers, such as those related to the design of welfare

systems, to the rules for access to training opportunities, or laws governing the rights of foreigners to live in the host country.« Other factors that were mentioned are:

- Lack of language courses or their inability to be adjusted to individuals or their educational background
- Lack of recognition of previous education (many illiterate migrants) and often no evidence of previous education
- Lack of proper living conditions, which leads to affecting inclusion (ghettoization),
- Non-adapted vocational training programmes (training at the workplace, combined language, and vocational training)
- The need for and lack of mentors and cultural mediators

#### 4.1 Barriers from the teachers' perspective

During implementing the research activities within this project, teachers and trainers were asked about the barriers that migrant people face when it comes to continuing education and lifelong learning. According to the teachers participating in the interviews and focus groups, the following factors are challenging for migrants:

- One huge barrier is **lacking skills** for participating in adult education. To be able to participate in educational programmes, it is necessary to be able to speak the course language. And this is something many migrant people are not able to do. Also, the lack of other competences like digital skills is a problem when it comes to lifelong learning.
- Relating to the **motivation of learning**, some controversial opinions came up: According to the participants, on the one hand, many migrants are not willing to learn something new, even if a lot of courses were available for free. This may be, for example, due to previous negative experiences. On the other hand, it was stated that for many migrants, the motivation for further development is there, but access proves to be difficult due to certain barriers, such as language barriers. Continuing education programmes are not offered to the extent they would like.
- **Personal attitudes** and family as **cultural factors** also play a role.
- One of the interviewees mentioned that further education for migrants offers an opportunity that people don't usually have in their home countries. Thus, they **don't receive enough information** about their possibilities and where to find this information.
- It was also stated that lifelong learning may **not be a priority for low-skilled migrants**. "The first thing that matters a lot to low-skilled migrants, they have to first earn a living

and earn a lot.” (2. Interviewee\_IE). They want to work and care for their family, so that they can survive in the new country. Further education is often seen as hours that are lost because they cannot be used for working and earning money. In addition, continuing education often means additional costs, and these people often do not have enough money for participation.

- Another barrier mentioned during the interviews was that many courses are too **time-consuming** so that migrants can't do it while working and caring for their children.
- For migrants that **live outside of cities**, it is difficult to participate in courses as these are often not offered in rural areas.
- Many people only have a **low level of self-esteem** and/or fear education in a foreign language.
- The process of **validating education** obtained abroad is very complicated in many countries.

## 4.2 Barriers from the migrants' perspective

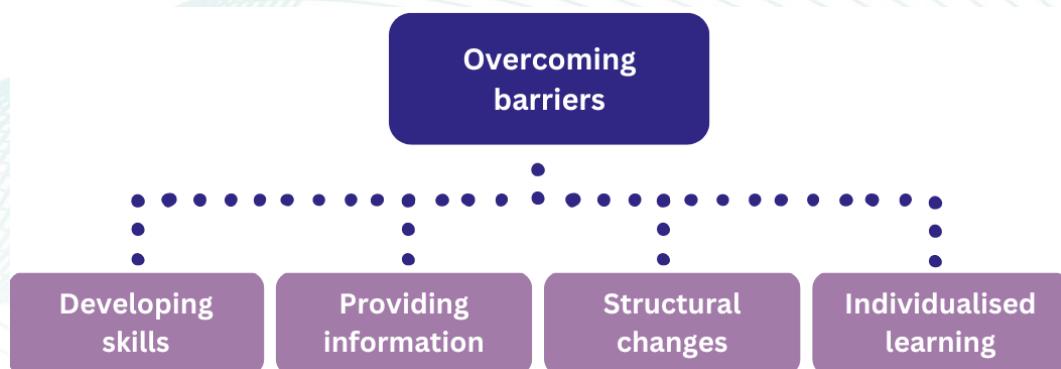
The persons with migrant backgrounds participating in the questionnaires and focus groups of this project stated the following aspects as major barriers to participating in continuing education:

- **Comfort zone and age:** It was mentioned that when being older, it is not that easy to learn anymore. And many people prefer to stay in their comfort zone and are afraid of stepping out of it.
- **Balance of work and private life:** This balance is already difficult, and thus, it is even more difficult to find time to participate in educational programmes.
- **Cultural factors:** For example, women are often responsible for childcare and do not find any time for learning. Also finding childcare for the course duration is difficult and costly.
- **Accreditation:** Many things already learned abroad are not accredited in many countries.
- **Access to courses:** It is often difficult to access adult education programmes because they are often only offered in the national language.
- **Costs:** Many courses are too expensive.

- **Information:** Many migrants do not know where they can find information about continuing education offers.
- **Learning methods:** Some participants mentioned that they are not able to follow many courses, e.g. due to lacking competences like digital or self-learning skills.
- **Obligation:** It was also stated that further education is often seen as an obligation which results in a low motivation of migrant people.
- **Infrastructure:** Many migrants live in areas without any educational offers and they are not able to get to educational institutions.
- **Interest:** Some people mentioned that they have not found any courses they are interested in yet.
- **Motivation:** A lack of motivation to learn something new was also mentioned by some participants.

### 4.3 How to support migrant people to overcome these barriers

To contribute to higher motivation amongst migrant learners to participate in continuing education, it is important that educational institutions support these people in overcoming the barriers they are faced with.



#### 4.3.1 Support in skills development

Many people with migrant backgrounds lack the skills necessary for learning, like language skills, digital skills or the ability for autonomous learning, or they have not learned for a while, which also makes learning more difficult. Thus, adult educators should **develop a plan** together with the learners **to further develop their competences**. They should become aware of what skills they have to improve and how/where they could do that.

In this context, it is particularly important to support these people in **strengthening their motivation** to learn something new, as well as their **self-confidence**, so that they get the feeling that they are able to set new goals and grow.

### 4.3.2 Providing information

When people come to a new country, they often do not know a lot about the educational system or the educational offerings in this country. And their priority at the beginning is to find a job and earn money to be able to care for the family. Searching for continuing education offers is not the most important thing. Thus, it is crucial to **provide them with the most important information about the possibilities** they have. This can be done, for example, by refugee centres, or also by adult education institutions.

Immigrants should receive information about:

- the educational system itself
- the educational institutions that are relevant to them
- courses, workshops and other educational programmes that are offered especially to people with a migrant background
- courses and other programmes that are offered to the general public
- possibilities to learn new hobbies
- where they can find more information about all the points mentioned above

### 4.3.3 Organisational changes

To make continuing education easier for immigrant adults, adult education institutions should consider the specific needs of these learners, if possible. In detail, this means that it could be advantageous to **design the course offers more flexibly** (some courses in the morning, and some in the evening, offering blended or distance learning to save time and money, etc.). As **childcare** is a big issue for a lot of migrant women, it would also be good to offer childcare possibilities in educational institutions, so that women can concentrate on learning.

In addition, it would be important to **make accreditation easier**. If a person has a degree in a subject from another country, why should this person not be able to perform this job in the new country? And wouldn't it also be possible for some jobs to speak, for example only English? Is it really necessary to speak the national language? The role of continuing education should be to support these people in developing the skills they need in addition to what they have already learned in their country of origin, and not to learn the same things again, only because they are in another country.



#### 4.3.4 Offering individual learning possibilities

To increase the interest and motivation of migrant people in learning and to make learning more beneficial, educational institutions should offer **individualised** and also **modular learning opportunities** to these people. Thus, it can be ensured that the time for learning is used efficiently as people can focus on subjects they are interested in and/or need to know. By offering modular learning, people can choose what topics they want to learn about, and they do not have to participate in courses that only contain some content relevant to them and a lot of content they are not interested in. This makes learning more attractive to this target group.

## 5 Competences required for successfully participating in continuing education

In the context of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the European Parliament and the Council, competencies are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to a specific context. Key competencies are those that all people need for their personal fulfilment and development, as well as for active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

The reference framework establishes the following eight key competencies:

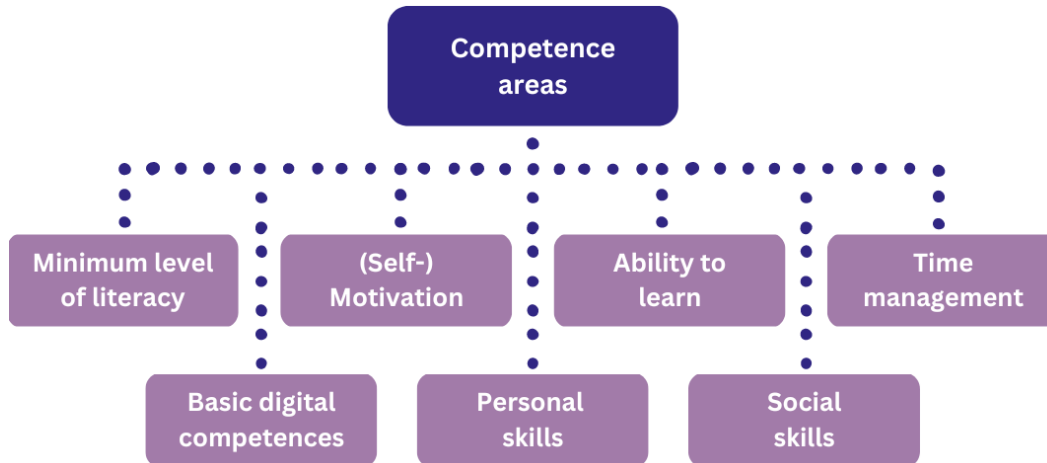
- communication in the mother tongue
- communication in foreign languages
- mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- digital competence
- learning to learn
- social and civic competences
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurial spirit
- cultural awareness and expression.

Key competencies can contribute to success in the knowledge society. Many of the competencies overlap and intertwine: certain essential aspects in one domain support competency in another. Competence in the fundamental basic skills of language, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technologies (ICT) form the essential foundation for learning, while all learning activities are underpinned by the ability to learn how to learn. There are a number of themes that apply throughout the framework that cut across the eight key competencies: **critical thinking, creativity, resourcefulness, problem-solving, risk assessment, risk management, decision making and constructive management of feelings.**

In the following, the competences that are necessary for successful participation in continuing education are listed.

## 5.1 Competence areas

The competences mentioned during the research activities of the project have been categorised into the following areas:



All these competence areas are described in more detail below.

### 5.1.1 Literacy

To be able to participate in educational programmes, it is necessary that adults are able to **speak the course language**. They must be able to understand how they can sign in for a course and they also must have the ability to communicate with the teacher, to understand the course content and, in some cases, to take exams. To be able to follow a course, they additionally need at least a minimal level of literacy, and often also numeracy. The ability to write, but also to read and understand texts, which can be for example information or written communication, is crucial for further education. One aspect that has also become crucial for today's educational programmes is the competence to deal competently with digital media.

### 5.1.2 Motivation

Every adult can choose if he or she wants to learn something new – or not. Thus, a **high level of motivation** is needed to choose and complete further education programmes or, to learn, for example, a new hobby. Adults need the ability to motivate themselves, may it be through **extrinsic or intrinsic factors**. To be able to motivate oneself, it is important that a person is interested in a topic. This can be divided into different aspects:

- general aspects (I want to further develop myself and learn something new)
- professional aspects (I am interested in a topic because it is useful for my profession)

- private aspects (I want to promote, for example, my biking skills)

Adults need the desire to improve the quality of their life with the newly acquired knowledge.

### 5.1.3 Ability to learn

To successfully participate in continuing education, adults need the ability to learn. They must be able to understand what a teacher is explaining, but they must also be able to learn autonomously, without the help of a teacher. Thus, adults have to develop **self-learning skills**, like the ability to set goals for themselves, to create a learning plan and time schedule and to define learning strategies for themselves. They must develop **positive habits** when it comes to learning. In addition, they need the skills to find all the information and support they need.

### 5.1.4 Time Management

Another important competence for participating in lifelong learning is the ability to **manage one's time** so that learning can be combined with other factors like a job, children or the household. People have to find enough time for learning, but on the other hand, they also have to be able to create a schedule for learning, so that they can learn everything in time. They need to plan when they have to learn what, but also when to take breaks and for how long so that their brain can relax in between.

### 5.1.5 Digital Competences

Nowadays, a lot of educational programmes are offered as distance learning or blended learning. And also in face-to-face lessons, different digital devices are used. This means that learning without possessing **digital competences** is hardly possible anymore. Adults have to be able to work with digital devices, different applications, video conferencing tools, learning platforms, etc. They need the ability to create digital content and to communicate digitally with others. Also, the ability to use the internet and to protect their personal data is crucial.

### 5.1.6 Personal Skills

One of the most important factors when it comes to lifelong learning are the **skills related to one's personality**. Lifelong learning is only possible when adults develop a growth mindset – when they have a positive attitude towards learning and when they can recognise the benefits of learning something new. They must be able to identify and eliminate barriers to learning. Additionally, they need a high level of self-confidence to be able to recognise that they are able

to reach their goals. Also, the abilities to manage one's emotions, deal with stress, critically reflect on information, make decisions and persevere are important when it comes to learning.

### 5.1.7 Social Skills

In most cases, learning is not an issue that affects only one single person. When it comes to continuing education, many courses are held in a group, and also when individual learning is offered, the learner is in contact with a teacher or trainer. And also in private life, when it comes, for example, to learning a new hobby, many people are doing that together with others, e.g. their friends. Therefore, it is important that adults possess different **interpersonal skills** to obtain a good relationship with these other people. This includes competences like intercultural skills, emotional intelligence, communication skills, the ability to learn in a group, conflict management skills, etc.

## 5.2 How to support migrants to acquire these competences

As not all adult learners possess all of these competences, it is important that they are supported by educational institutions and teachers in developing them, to make lifelong learning more successful. In the following, some recommendations on how to support migrant adults to acquire the necessary competences can be found:

- Before starting with the course content, it is recommended to **evaluate the current level of competences** of each learner. Course participants might come from different backgrounds, and also from different countries, which makes it even more important to create individual learning plans for each learner.
- At the beginning of a course, a short **basic training in class** to develop the skills required for the course could be done, with the teacher supporting all learners face-to-face. In this introductory phase, each learner could focus on developing the competences he or she needs for this course. This refers to digital competences, e.g. how to deal with the learning platform and applications used, but also cognitive competences, e.g. how to plan and manage one's learning.
- This **support** by the teacher should not only be provided at the beginning of a course, but it is important that the teacher is there for questions and problems of the learners **during the whole course**, be it during face-to-face lessons or during self-learning phases. It is important to give the learners the feeling that they are allowed to make mistakes and that the teacher can help them out.

- When working together with people with special needs, it is even more important to **be patient and treat everybody with respect**. For many people, it is difficult to further develop their competences in some areas. They need a person that understands their needs, stays calm and motivates them. In this context, it is also important to **consider the different cultures** of the course participants. The learning content should be taught in easy words and explanatory videos could support learners in understanding different contents.
- When people come to a foreign country, they often have the feeling that further education is not the most important thing at the moment and they only do a course because they need it, for example, a language course. Thus, teachers should try to motivate these learners and increase their interest in special topics. The **importance and benefits of continuing education should be highlighted**, which could be, for example, being able to find a job a person is interested in, being a role-model for children, or being able to better connect with other people. This could motivate them to participate in more courses in future.
- Teachers could create individual learning goals and plans with each learner. Thus, each learner knows exactly how to develop their competences. An important issue in this context is to **give the learners the feeling that** they can be proud of themselves because they want to learn something new, and that **they are able to reach their goals**. This also includes giving the learners a sense of success during the lessons. They should be confronted with challenges they can solve so that their motivation increases for further developing their competences.
- Also, the use of methods and examples that are relevant to the learners' lives is beneficial for learners to develop their competences. Thus, the focus of teaching different skills should not be on theoretical knowledge, but on **practical tasks** and examples. In this relation, it is also important to let the **learners explore things on their own**. In this way, they learn to work autonomously and to be prepared for other learning settings, like e.g. distance learning. But it is important that the teacher supports the learners, also during self-learning phases. In this way, the learners know that they are in a safe environment and that they are not alone.

By offering a lot of support to migrant learners, they can become more self-confident and motivated for lifelong learning.

## 6 Fostering a growth mindset amongst low-skilled immigrants relating to LLL

Every individual has a mindset. This can be defined as a **belief or perception that an individual has about themselves or about life** in general.

The mindset that a person has determines what they believe, how they think and how they act. The mindset is very important because it determines how a person approaches life and moves around the world. It has a direct impact on themselves and the people that surround them, both in the present as well as the future.

Mindsets can take a person towards their goal, or it can refrain them from doing so. Certain mindsets could even be hurtful to the person themselves and those around them.

Although every person has a “main” mindset, it is likely that they also have minor mindsets that are related.

### 6.1 Different mindsets

There exist different types of mindsets that a person can have. Many of them have been explored and researched in the past and it's likely that others will develop and arise in the future.

Some of the most common and commented-upon mindsets are:

- Growth Mindset
- Fixed Mindset
- Creative Mindset
- Positive Mindset
- Productive Mindset

In general, a mindset includes a continuum, which goes from a particular mindset to the complete opposite. Examples of these continuums could be growth vs. fixed mindsets or positive vs negative mindsets.

A person with a certain mindset can be on any part of that continuum. This means that 2 different people with a similar mindset do not have to have the same intensity or level of that mindset. To set an example: one person could be 85 % on the growth mindset, whereas the other could be at a full 100 %.

### 3L Mindset

The 3L Mindset can be considered a spin-off from the growth mindset or even a mindset on its own. The 3 Ls, standing for LifeLong Learning, aim at a mindset where the individual embraces learning opportunities, both formal and informal, throughout their lifetime. It focuses on the ability to develop their skills through hard work and instruction and to create better opportunities for themselves on the job market as well as in society in general.

## 6.2 The importance of a growth mindset

The term Growth Mindset has been explored, researched and heavily promoted by Dr Carol Dweck from Stanford University.

It's probably also one of the most studied types of mindset, as it has been linked to success in a variety of life domains (cf. Yeager et al., 2019).

A growth mindset is the tendency for people to **believe that their abilities can be developed through hard work**. With a growth mindset, you try harder, you want to learn new strategies, and you seek out feedback when you are stuck (cf. Dweck, 2015). It could be said that any person is born with a growth mindset. Any baby wants to learn how to crawl, stand up, talk and walk, and does so through very hard work.

Nevertheless, **mindsets can change over time**. When a child or teenager has a growth mindset, they will most likely show eagerness to learn, discover new things and work hard at school and in life. This will, then, lead to higher academic success. These same people will, as adults, be able to have better responses to any problems or setbacks that occur in life and will not give up easily.

Nevertheless, a person with a fixed mindset is more likely to throw in the towel when things get hard. These individuals believe that a person is born with a set of traits and abilities that cannot be altered over time. As examples, these traits can be intelligence, sportsmanship or a talent for music.

Dr. Dweck suggests that fixed vs growth mindsets result in a person living by different self-implemented rules (cf. Dweck, 2009).



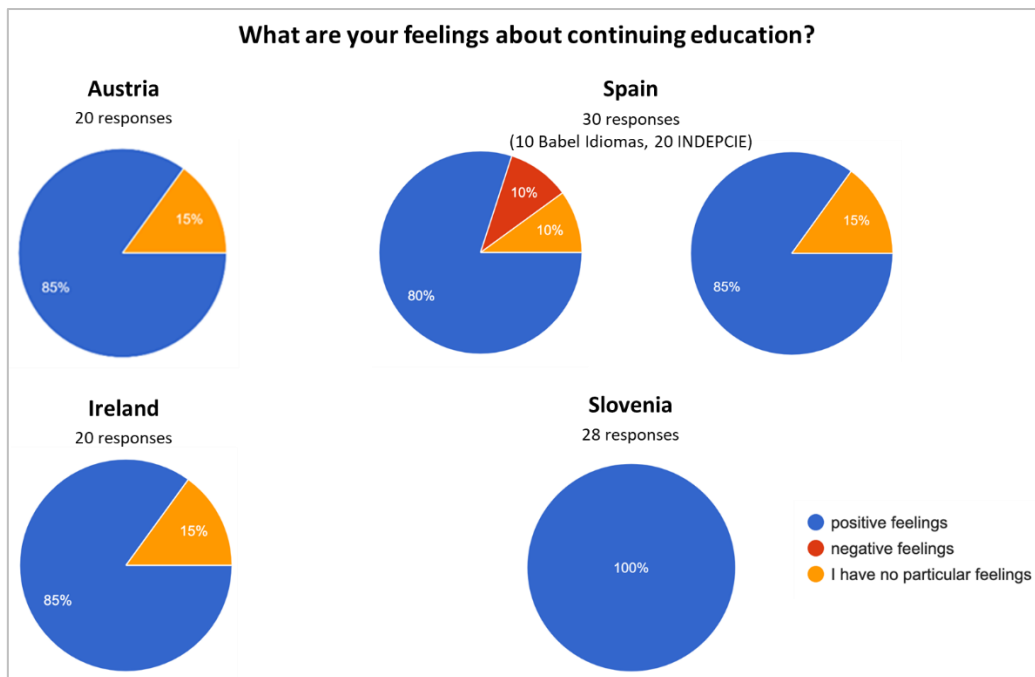
### 6.3 The mindsets of the research participants

During the focus groups conducted within this project, some people mentioned that they are open to learning something new because they enjoy it and want to grow personally, but it became visible that **many low-skilled immigrant adults have a fixed mindset** when it comes to lifelong learning. They often see continuing education as something that is boring and a lot of them only attend courses to be able to find a job and earn money. LLL is seen as something that demands a lot of time, and many participants mentioned that they do not want to spend so much time on it. They often don't see LLL as something they can benefit from.

Also, the target group of adult educators that participated in the research, expressed the opinion that there are some people with migrant backgrounds who are really motivated and willing to learn something new to grow personally. But most of these people they are working with only participate in LLL when it is a necessity for them

The results of the questionnaire filled in by low-skilled immigrants showed, on the other hand, that there are many people amongst this group of people that are motivated to learn something. For example, out of 98 participants, 66 said that it is very important to them to learn something new, and 28 people said that it is important to them. Only 4 people mentioned that they see learning not as that important.

The participants were also asked about their feelings about LLL. These answers were also very positive. More than 80 % associate positive feelings with continuing education, and only one person mentioned negative feelings:



These results show that there are already a lot of people with an open mindset when it comes to continuing education, but there is still a lot of work to do to promote the development of such a mindset amongst the target group of low-skilled immigrant adults.

## 6.4 Shaping mindsets

It is proven that **mindsets can be shaped**. In many cases, the shaping of mindsets starts at a very young age and is done by parents, teachers and other authoritarian figures in a young person's life. One way of doing so is by labelling a child, assigning it certain characteristics or traits like being intelligent, being a good singer, being very pretty.

Mindsets are also shaped by the opinions of the people that surround us. They could be based on stereotypes, like "boys are better at math than girls". But they could also be generic opinions like; "when you are born poor, you will never be rich".

Our mindsets, especially during the early stages of our lives, are shaped by the society we live in. While those with a clear fixed mindset might not agree, Dr. Dweck suggests that people are capable of changing their mindsets and creating a growth mindset.

Because of our quickly changing environment, and also to promote our personal happiness, it is crucial that we stay on track and learn something new from time to time. But for people that are not familiar with that, that have a fixed mindset, this is a difficult issue. Thus, it is important

that **adult education institutions motivate these people to change their mindsets** and **support them** in developing a mindset for lifelong learning.

In the following, some recommendations for adult education institutions can be found:

#### 6.4.1 Presenting different learning possibilities

Immigrant people should be made aware that learning is much more than sitting in a seminar room and learning difficult things. Show them that they can **learn everywhere and not only in a formal setting**. If they think of a topic or a hobby they are interested in, they could for example go to YouTube and watch tutorials. Or they can find inspiration on different platforms like Pinterest if they want to learn something creative. There are also a lot of free learning games on the internet, like escape rooms, which make learning more fun.

#### 6.4.2 Implementing different methods

When learning takes place in a classroom or seminar room, adult educators should make the **teaching-learning process motivating and interactive**, and implement different methods to bring variety into the lessons. Thus, the learners see that learning does not have to be boring, but that it can be fun. This will motivate people for continuing education and contribute to shaping their mindset towards lifelong learning.

#### 6.4.3 Practical relevance

In education, it is important to show the learners the practical relevance of the contents. Teaching only theoretical themes should be avoided. Instead, it should be **highlighted how the things they have just learned can be used in their professional or private life**. It is also recommended to let learners explore things on their own. The learners should be made aware that they can benefit from a learning occasion, for their profession but also personally, and that learning is more than, for example, a way to earn more money.

It should also be communicated to low-skilled people that there are so many different possibilities for learning and that they should try to find a topic or a hobby they are really interested in. Because when learning something a person is interested in, it is much easier and much more fun.

#### 6.4.4 Explaining the concept of intrinsic motivation

As observed during the research activities of this project, extrinsic motivation is one of the main reasons for people with migrant backgrounds to participate in continuing education. It also became clear that many people connect learning only with external factors (learning a language to find a job, doing education to earn money, women not attending courses because they are responsible for childcare, ...), and only a few participants associated learning with something that is beneficial for their personality.

Thus, it is crucial to explain the concept of intrinsic motivation to this group of learners. They have to understand that they should **be willing to learn new things to promote the growth of one's personality**. For example, they should not learn a language only because they need it to find a job, but the focus should be to learn this motivation to feel better, to make one's own life easier and to be able to talk to others and build new relationships. Therefore, adult educators should support these people in setting goals and further developing their intrinsic motivation.

#### 6.4.5 Promoting positive thinking

Many people often have a negative mindset when challenges appear. The first thing they think is "I am not able to do this" or "I don't want to deal with that". Thus, these people have to be supported in **changing their mindset and thinking more positively**.

Adult educators should support learners in **problem-solving**. They should give them some input on how they can find a way to overcome a challenge. For example, a plan to solve it could be elaborated together. It should also be highlighted that challenges should not be seen as something negative, but that every person will grow personally after overcoming a challenge.

In addition, the **self-confidence** of these learners **has to be strengthened**. It is important that these people get the conviction that they are able to manage different things on their own. This will give them the confidence to learn new things because they know that they can complete a course. And as soon as people see that they are able to solve problems on their own, they will be willing to further educate themselves to find out about more possibilities for problem-solving.

#### 6.4.6 Supporting learners in taking over responsibility

Some participants of the focus groups mentioned that they are, for example, not good enough to work in certain professions because they are lacking different skills like for example

language skills. Also, many women said that they do not have any time for continuing education because they have to care for their children, or they have to manage all the household.

Therefore, it is important to support these people in understanding that they have to take over the responsibility for their happiness. **Each person is responsible for one's own luck.** Adult educators can support their learners, for example by helping them in strengthening their self-esteem or by showing them different possibilities and contacts to take action.

By offering support to these people, adult educators will also contribute to a change in their mindset. As soon as these people are convinced that they can reach their goals, they will take action to reach these goals. And this will contribute to being motivated to learn something new.

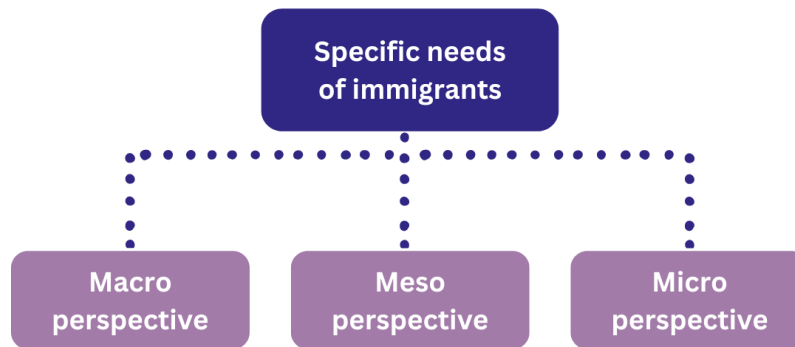
#### 6.4.7 Structural changes

In Austrian research, it was stated that subsidies for people with migrant backgrounds when it comes to educational costs are necessary. This is also something that is important for the future. To make it easier for these people to participate in continuing education, it is necessary to offer courses for free or to offer **financial support**. Further, the **course times must be compatible** with family commitments and the **course location must be best accessible** by public transport. It is even better to bring education to the home of these people, for example by offering some courses in areas where many people with migrant backgrounds live. Also, the **accreditation situation** in Austria is problematic and has to be changed. At the moment, many migrants do not meet the requirements for participation in further education courses. As a result, demotivation sets in (cf. Bundeskanzleramt, 2011).

This means that it is important to make further education as easy as possible for the target group, by lowering requirements for participation, by offering cheap or free courses, by offering flexible course times and by making course locations easily accessible.

## 7 Considering the specific needs of low-skilled immigrants in adult education

In the following section, the needs of the low-skilled are divided into needs at the macro, meso and micro levels.



On the one hand, there are needs that relate to the political and monetary framework conditions as well as to the conditions in educational institutions, and on the other hand, there are needs that relate to the situation with teachers.

### 7.1 Specific needs from a macro-level perspective

From a macro perspective, there are several needs in the field of lifelong learning for low-skilled migrants in order to promote their integration and personal development in society.

Firstly, **free childcare** is of great importance, as many low-skilled migrants often have young families and need to be able to look after their children while participating in learning opportunities. Another need is the provision of **free language courses**. Language is a key factor for integration and participation in society, and a free language course enables migrants to learn and better understand the national language. It is also important to promote the importance of migrants' **personal development**. This can be done through targeted support and guidance aimed at identifying and building on their individual skills and strengths.

The OECD recommends **financial support for all educational costs and time off work to participate in learning**. This ensures that participation in education is financially feasible for low-skilled migrants and allows them to focus on learning.

**Individual guidance and counselling** for each learner is also important. Educational opportunities can be confusing and overwhelming for potential learners, especially for migrants

who may not know what options are available to them. Individual counselling enables them to understand the most appropriate educational pathways for them and to identify existing skills on which to build.

## 7.2 Specific needs from a meso-level perspective

From a meso-level perspective, there are different needs in the field of lifelong learning for low-skilled migrants. **Organisations, educational institutions and the work environment have an important role to play in meeting the needs** of this group of learners and promoting their participation in lifelong learning.

**Time management and flexible working hours** are important aspects to be considered. It is important to understand the individual needs of learners, especially women, who may not always be able to attend courses due to family responsibilities. Low-skilled migrants may also lack basic skills. The **provision of basic skills courses** is therefore essential to fill these gaps and provide a solid foundation for further learning opportunities.

The **opportunity to learn with others** is also important. An Austrian focus group emphasised that some women who have little contact with people outside their family are happy to be with other women and in a supportive learning environment. In addition, **origin-specific resources** can make an important contribution to making educational experiences more accessible and relevant for migrants. **Organising events that bring migrants and enterprises together** is another important aspect of promoting labour market integration and providing learners with opportunities to apply their newly acquired skills.

The OECD recommends creating interesting and relevant **learning opportunities**, ideally offered **in modular form**. This allows for adaptation to learners' needs and ensures that courses are interesting, relevant and applicable to them.

Overall, at the meso level, it is important that organisations, educational institutions and the work environment take into account the specific needs and challenges of low-skilled migrants and create tailored educational opportunities to support their participation in lifelong learning.

## 7.3 Specific needs from a micro-level perspective

The needs of low-skilled migrants in relation to lifelong learning at the micro-level, i.e. at the individual level, are diverse and require an open and supportive learning environment. It is

essential that teachers treat the learners with respect and understanding, **taking into account the cultural differences** and past challenges of these individuals. As many of them have not studied for a long time, they need special support to develop study and concentration skills.

In order to increase their motivation and self-confidence, it is important to **show them the many possibilities of lifelong learning**. Teachers should support by facilitating organisational matters such as finding out about opportunities by word of mouth, registering for a course or exam and providing the necessary documents for the labour market service.

Courses should be offered in a **simple language** to overcome language barriers and better reach participants. At the same time, it is important to **identify individual skill deficits and provide appropriate support**. Extending the courses over time allows learners to better manage the learning workload and gradually improve their skills. **Success stories of other migrants** who have already made progress can serve as inspiring examples and increase motivation. Real-life teaching with content that is relevant to learners is particularly important as it allows them to see direct benefits and practical applications. A **positive culture of failure** is crucial to creating a fear-free learning environment. Mistakes should be seen as opportunities for improvement and teachers should explain how mistakes can be avoided.

Creative learning opportunities and different methods are needed to meet individual needs and interests. For example, a singer on the course might sing German phrases to motivate herself and practise pronunciation. Incorporating learners' names, hobbies and interests into the lessons can increase participation and identification with the content.

## 7.4 Recommendations for adult education institutions

To make lifelong learning more attractive to low-skilled migrants, adult education institutions should take targeted action at different levels. At the **macro-level**, educational institutions and policy makers should take measures to address the lifelong learning needs of low-skilled migrants. This can be done through **financial support** and free educational services to facilitate access to education. **Individual guidance** and support for personal development are crucial to ensure inclusive education and to increase the chances of successful integration and participation in society.

At the **meso-level**, educational institutions and organisations should thoroughly understand the needs of low-skilled migrants and take targeted measures to ensure needs-based educational support. **Flexible timetables, provision of basic education and shared**



**learning opportunities** can support migrants' integration and participation in lifelong learning. Providing **origin-specific materials** and organising events with enterprises can promote vocational integration and make education more relevant and attractive to learners. Implementing the **modular approach** recommended by the OECD can enable learners to choose relevant and interesting learning opportunities according to their individual needs.

At the **micro-level**, adult education institutions should create a sensitive and individualised learning environment to meet the needs of low-skilled migrants. This can be achieved through **open-minded teachers** who are **respectful** and understanding of each other and of the cultural differences of the learners. **Teaching study and concentration skills**, as well as a **positive culture of making mistakes**, are crucial to increasing learners' motivation and self-confidence. Creative learning opportunities and diverse methods that take into account learners' individual interests and abilities can facilitate the learning process and encourage a commitment to lifelong learning.

**Educational institutions** should also **provide all relevant information** on adult education for immigrants and **train their teachers** in cultural understanding and information transfer. Limited learning time can be taken into account by covering all learning content in class so that no homework is required. **Incorporating new technologies** allows learners more flexibility, for example through distance learning, and helps them to develop relevant skills for their professional and personal future.

It is important to employ teachers who are also immigrants or who speak the mother tongue of the learners to enable better communication and understanding. The promotion of educational opportunities should be targeted through social media and the institution's website, as well as through leaflets in areas where many people with a migrant background live.

Good practice examples, such as the "FAGUAS" programme, which provides an integrated intervention with women in socio-familial settings, can serve as inspiration and show how migrant participation can be promoted.

By combining these recommendations at different levels, adult education institutions can make lifelong learning more attractive and accessible to low-skilled migrants. By responding to learners' needs and creating a supportive and empathetic learning environment, they can help to promote the integration, participation and career development of this target group.

## 8 Conclusion

In our society, a still widening educational gap is visible: Those who already have a high level of qualification are more likely to participate in continuing education in future. At the same time, people with a lower level of qualification, especially those with a migrant background, do not often attend continuing education courses. But it is very important that people stay up-to-date and learn new things, be it for staying competitive on the labour market or for personal satisfaction and growth.

As adult education plays an important role in the social inclusion of people with specific needs, it is crucial that adult education institutions support these people in their further development. By adopting the offers to the needs of these people and developing a holistic concept to support them, adult education institutions contribute to a higher satisfaction, active citizenship and a lower unemployment rate among adults with migrant backgrounds.

Reasons for the low participation rate of low-skilled migrant learners in continuing education are very diverse: On the one hand, there are a lot of systematic challenges. For example, it is sometimes very difficult for these people to get access to educational programmes, or also to jobs, because educational degrees from foreign countries are often not accepted or courses (or jobs) are only offered to people who are able to speak the national language. Also, financial issues and lacking information about their possibilities are reasons. On the other hand, many people do not want to attend courses because of lacking interest, time or motivation. They do not see further education as their highest priority. They also often do not have the skills required for participating in lifelong learning. Thus, it is the responsibility of adult education institutions and their staff to support these people in overcoming all these barriers and motivating them to further develop themselves.

The competences that are crucial for continuing education are the following: literacy, motivation, the ability to learn, time management skills, basic digital competences, personal skills and social skills. If people are lacking some of these skills, learning gets difficult for them and they might lose interest and motivation. Adult educators should do their best to create strategies for these adult learners to develop the competences they do not possess yet. Some skills could be further developed within the course itself, and for the other competences it would help to develop a plan together with the migrant learners on how and where they could improve their skills in the different areas. One important factor in this context is also strengthening the self-esteem of these people. They must be convinced that they are able to set some goals for their future, to learn something new, and thus to reach their goals.

This has also to do with the mindset of these adults. According to the research within the project, a lot of people have a fixed mindset when it comes to lifelong learning. They are not interested in learning something now, or they are afraid of facing challenges. They do not recognise the benefits of learning. Thus, adult educators should support these people in shaping their mindset. The aim is to reach a growth mindset – a mindset where challenges are seen as possibilities to grow personally and where a person is highly interested in further developing him- or herself. This can be done, for example, by supporting people in positive thinking, in increasing their intrinsic motivation, or in recognising their own responsibility for their lives.

To ensure that learning is interesting and motivating for low-skilled migrant learners, it is important that adult education institutions consider the specific needs of these people. Courses and learning programmes have to be developed that support these people in the best possible way. Beside making the access to learning programmes easier for this group of adults, adult education institutes should also offer individualised learning possibilities, respecting the specific needs and cultures of immigrants. When these people and their cultures are treated with respect and patience, and individualised, modular learning while using different methods is implemented, this can contribute to a higher participation rate of these people in adult education.

In conclusion, it can be said that low-skilled migrant learners are confronted with a lot of challenges when it comes to lifelong learning. But when adult education institutions support them appropriately, they might change their mindset and participate more in continuing education in future.

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