A SYSTEMIC, INTEGRATED MODEL TO WORK WITH DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

The context

One of the five Europe 2020 headline targets was related to social inclusion and consists of lifting at least 20 million people in the European Union (EU) from the risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2020. According to the latest Eurostat data available, in 2018 21.7 % of the EU population — or some 109 million people — was at risk of poverty or social exclusion, that constitute a transversal element for disadvantaged adults.

In the European Social Policy context, the term "disadvantaged" refers to a particular group of people with inadequate learning resources due to limited or restricted access to learning provisions. Ensuring that Europe's citizens keep developing their knowledge, skills and competence throughout their lives is vital for employment, competitiveness and innovation, and for each individual to develop and shape one´s life.

This is the challenge for adult education: be able to promote and support lifelong learning for everyone, above all for people in disadvantaged situations, since exclusion from lifelong learning is a substantial deficit which separates individuals from the civil society. This approach has to be systemic and consider the person in its whole, while very often the adult education organizations tend to tackle a single aspect of the disadvantage.

On these pillars we built the project PRINT - Good practices for a systemic integrated model to work with disadvantaged adults within the Erasmus+ Programme, KA2 – Adult Education - that aimed to exchange good practices to build a systemic-integrated model to support disadvantaged adults to make a step forward. The good practices exchanged among the six organizations involved (Work in Progress – Italy, C-Modulis – Latvia, Youth Hellenic Participation – Greece, Animam Viventem – Portugal, Association for Cultural, Economic, Heuristic and Linguistic Cooperation – Bulgaria and Asociatia A.S.E.L. RO – Romania) were about intercultural learning, digital learning, intergenerational learning, promotion of employability, active participation and supervision (all the information about the project are available at www.printeducationalmodel.com)

One of the project's results was the realization of a systemic-integrated model to work with disadvantaged adults, that consider them holistically, and thus can support adult educators to address them as complex and complete persons and not as a problem personification that needs to be solved.

Some key elements to understand the model

This is one of the final outputs of PRINT, that included and integrated what we had learnt from the exchange of good practices and that was co-created by the partners and the educators who participated in LTTM in Portugal (7-12 October 2022).

Before explaining the model, some clarifications are essentials:

- The word "disadvantage" is very broad. We – as group of organizations involved in the project – had never been more specific since we all work with people in different disadvantaged situations
- The way we bult the model was through the inductive reasoning

As a consequence, the model does not claim to be specific for a certain disadvantaged group and it lacks of a deductive contribution.

We also want to underline this model is a representation of an educational approach to human beings; it depicts the *forma mentis* of the creators involved, whose theoretical backgrounds and values are:

✓ The humanistic approach and the concept of self-actualization. For a person to "grow", they need an environment that provides them with genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (being

seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood). Without these qualities, relationships and healthy personalities will not develop as they should, much like a tree will not grow without sunlight and water. We believe that every person could achieve their goals, wishes, and desires in life. When, or rather if they did so, self-actualization took place.

✓ The person-centered practices, to ensure that the focus is on what matters to the people receiving support. The starting point is thus their needs and what each person recognizes as a primary concern

✓ The systemic theory. When applied to social work and education, systems theory is a practice that enables professionals to look holistically at a client's conditions and environmental factors to gain a better understanding of why they face issues or hardships. It means that when we look at and deal with disadvantaged adults we take into consideration: the interrelated/interdependent parts, the various systems in an individual's life that influence their behavior, the homeostasis and adaptation principles, the feedback loop.

✓ We consider social inclusion one of the main aims of adult educators and organizations and we define it as the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity.

✓ The purpose of education. In our perspective, education should foster self-actualization, individuals' development and democracy. Learning can be facilitated through environments characterized by reciprocal empathy, unconditionality, and authenticity that are flexible to the varied demands of many different learners and the broader educational system. Learning is facilitated primarily through social interaction with more competent adults or peers, who scaffold the learner's experience

Thus, we believe this model can be very useful to support adult educators and adult education organizations to structure their intervention with very different persons, situations and disadvantages in which the objectives are strengthening the values and the contributions of each individual and addressing needs in a systemic and holistic way.

The model

The short-term joint staff training events to build the model involved 18 educators and staff members. We used the GENERAL – PARTICULAR as a main criterion to work on the model construction. It means that for each step we had in mind the general framework and then each organization defined the correspondent particular situation/definition according to its experience and know-how in the good practice they are expert in.

THE FLOW	GENERAL PERSPECTIVE (where present)	PARTICULAR
Step 1: THE NEEDS According to the preconditions described, our starting point for the model are the needs. The person-centered approach taught us that whatever we offer is useless if it is not considered relevant by the person who receive it. Thus, whatever intervention in education should start from these 2 questions: what does my target need? Among these or other not identified needs,	What are the basic needs of a person to have a good quality of life? There are many studies and researches about it. We suggest the "Final report of the expert group on quality of life indicators" made by a group of experts and promoted by Eurostat in 2017 (here the link https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality_of_life_indicators_-_measuring_quality_of_life#Framework_for_measuring_quality_of_life) The areas considered are: health, economic & phisiycal safety, civic engagement, leisure	Each group, divided per organization, created a persona with her/his/their needs due to a lack of competence in the good practice the organization was expert in. So, what are the needs of a person who lacks employability? And how does look like a persona with low active participation?

what that specific person/group of persons consider a priority?	& social interaction, education, natural & living environment, jobs and main activities, living conditions, overall experience of life	
STEP 2: NEEDS SATISFACTION What might satisfy those needs?		Each group, according to their expertise on a specific good practice, brainstormed ideas of what can satisfy the needs identified in the step before
STEP 3: ORGANIZATION INTERVENTION Here the question is: how organization active in the field of adult education can structure their intervention and activities to fulfil those needs?		Each organization made specific proposal according to the know-how of the good practice they are expert in
STEP 4: ADULT EDUCATORS' COMPETENCES What competences adult educators should have to support learners in fulfilling those needs and put in practice the identified activities?	There are several competences' framework. We found very useful the European Training Strategy https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/trainingstrategy/ and Curriculum GlobALE https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/curriculum-globale-competency-framework-adult-educators created by the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE), DVV International, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)	Each organization defined the necessary competences of adult educators for the specific expertise area

The result of this approach is very holistic, systemic and integrated:

- Human beings needs to be considered in their whole; nobody is made by separate compartments
- Each need should be approached with different perspectives to offer to each person different input and solutions
- Different good practices lenses can be used to approach the same need
- There is no organization or educator that can provide everything by their own. Networking and cooperation should be a must

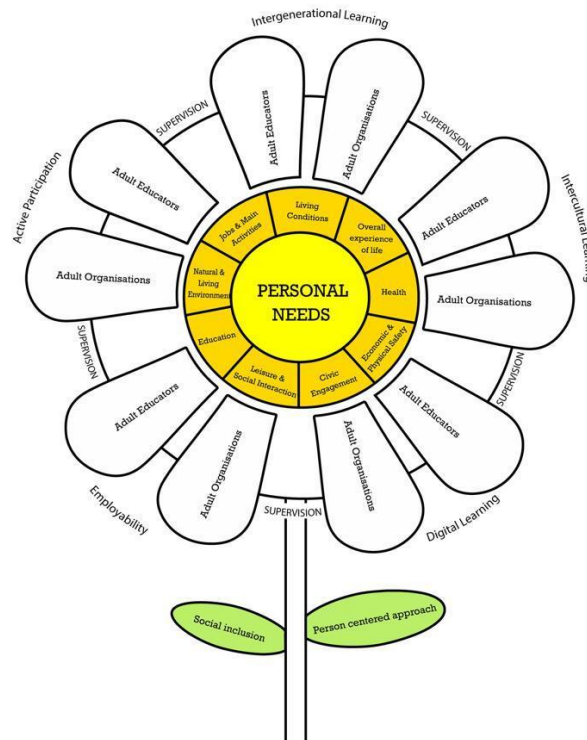In the following page you can find a graphic representation of the model

Fig. 1 - A graphic representation of the systemic, integrated model

The model cannot include specific tools by definition. Anyway, PRINT was an exchange of good practices project and we summarized some good practices, including tools, in this booklet https://printeducationalmodel.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-good-practices-model-1.pdf

A specific focus on the role of supervision in the model

Unfortunately, supervision is not a common, diffused practice in education. Educators are a part of the helping professions that have a fundamental importance for people wellbeing and development. Educators are at high risk of burnout and – as well as other helping professions such as counselors, coaches, psychologists – they are the main tool of their work. Supervision can provide the adequate support to educators for their professional development, case managements and prevention of burnout.

Thus, in this model we want to promote Supervision as an essential educational approach and tool to support adult education organization and adult educators. You can find more about it at this link https://printeducationalmodel.com/mooc/

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