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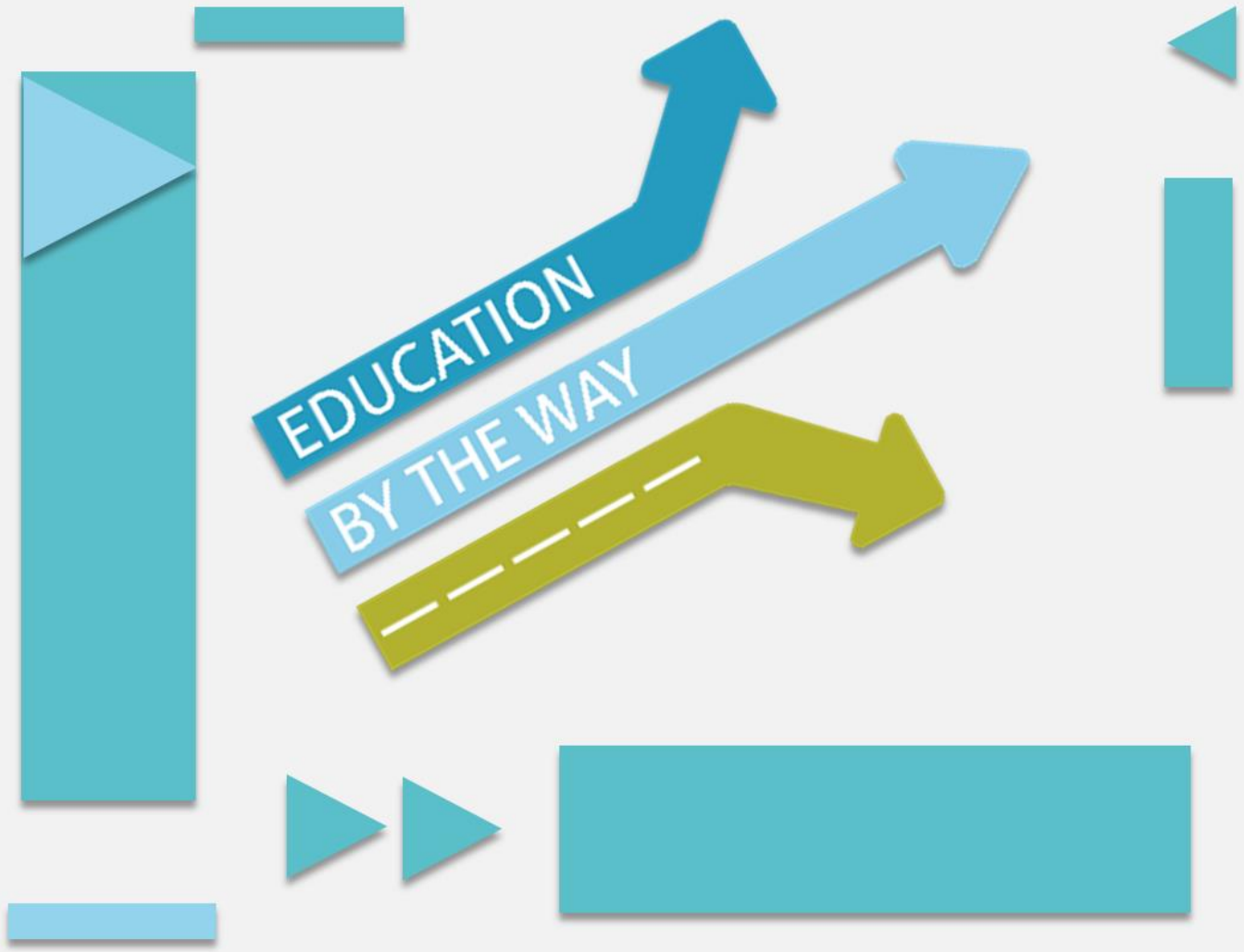

HOW IT WORKS

Recommendations and description of implementation of Manual for education activists working with people with low competences

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Appendix to Manual

TRAINERS CONDUCTING PILOTS

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CONSORTIUM

The project EDUCATION BY THE WAY (www.edu-btw.eu) involves a consortium of expert organizations in the field of adult education from 5 countries: Polish NGO Trainers' Association (STOP), The Association of Czech Experts in Andragogy (AOA CR), The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (KVS), Replay Network and The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

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INTRODUCTION

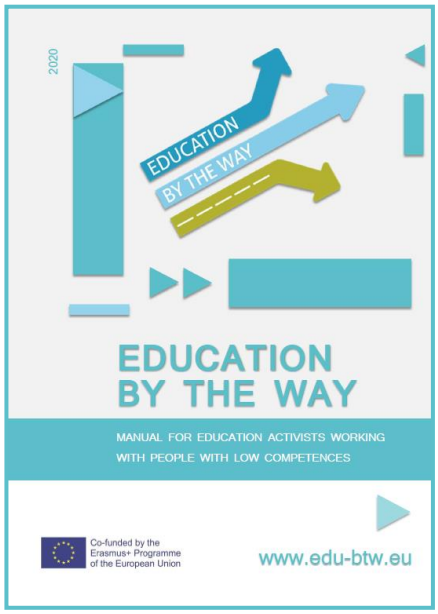
This appendix to "Manual for education activists working with people with low competences" is elaborated by a transnational team of experts in the frame of Education by the way project (www.edu-btw.eu) supported by the Erasmus+.

Education by the way is an international project that aims to invent and promote new forms of non-formal adult education directed to adults with specific needs.

Trainers and educators from the four partnering countries, Czech Republic, Finland, Italy and Poland, have exchanged knowledge and skills during three training workshops. Educational tools and methods suitable for working with groups with low competences were shared amongst them and tested through demos, peer review, analysis and critical approach to used methodology.

After the first draft of the manual was put together, each of the trainers worked on their own with their target group and piloted a selected tool with the instructions from the manual. **The aim was to test the tools with different target groups and also the descriptions and instructions of the tool in the manual.** This appendix will give a summary of the results of the pilots.

Get inspiration and enjoy!



READ Manual for education activists working with people with low competencies

SUMMARY OF THE PILOTS

Altogether 233 participants took part in the 16 pilots conducted by the voluntary trainers of the Education by the way project. The pilots were conducted in Czech Republic, Finland, Italy and Poland from November 2019 till February 2020.

The trainers were given a free choice which tool to pilot and eight different tools were piloted. Tools “Life ship”, ”Speed learning”, “Pop-up museum” and “Applied improvisation” were tested on multiple pilots, the rest one time.

> Trainees of the pilots were the target groups trainers usually work with. Target groups included for example unemployed, immigrants, seniors, inmates and young adults from difficult social backgrounds.

The conclusions were collected with identical forms, national language could be used in answering. Questions were placed for both the trainers and the trainees. The trainees’ answers could be collected with the form, by interview or by video. Besides the background information of the group in question, the following questions were asked.

Questions for the trainer	Questions for the trainees
Why did you select especially this tool?	This session was…
Strengths of the tool(s)	I liked…
The challenges and pitfalls of the tool(s)	I disliked…
How would you improve the tool to be more beneficial for the learner?	I benefitted from…
How would you improve the instructions to be more beneficial for the trainer?	To me, challenging was…

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PILOTS

1. HOW DO YOU SAIL ON YOUR LIFE SHIP?

This tool was piloted four times and with the following target groups:

- women held in custody,
- unemployed young people,
- unemployed people with low competencies
- participants of expressive therapy workshop.

The aims of the education sessions this tool was selected for example: to help unemployed people define their training needs, to increase intrapersonal skills, self-esteem and motivation, job interview training and preparing participants for the first steps after leaving the prison. One of the sessions modified the tool for a specific need.

The trainers' conclusions

The tool was selected by the trainers because they were either convinced that it would work with their target group or they wanted to test whether it would. Using self-coaching questions allows participants to work on their self-development and important areas of life their life and identify in their own words and at their own pace. This coaching method can bring the new perspectives and help the target group to find the solution by themselves.

Instructions in the manual and process of the tool were seen clear. The tool was described versatile, multi-functional and suitable for different target groups. Advantage of the tool was that it doesn't just focus on positive but can give a realistic assessment and participants can learn something new about themselves.

The tool was described to enable to engage a participant in introspection, while the level of introspection is controlled by the participant. The creative and visual aspects of the tool would help also the professionally less experienced people without higher education. Using the image of a ship, helps participants to not perceive this tool as learning, but as a game.

The trainers see that the tool requires a calm and peaceful session with enough time to consume. As the topic is deep and personal trust needs to be established with the group beforehand. A skilled, experienced trainer and possibly a group that has been together for a while was recommended.

As an improvement it was suggested that participants could draw the boat themselves to further develop their creativity. Each participant could then have an option of either choosing a pre-printed picture or draw it themselves.

A part of the trainers appreciated the fact that the participants do not have to share the outputs with each other, which leaves them to be very open. It also proved beneficial that the participants wrote down the most important points after finishing and shared the parts they chose with each other. Other trainers would have introduced more discussion in the process, so that after each question there would be a partner discussion and then a group discussion.

The trainees' conclusions

The tool was described as interesting, comforting, concrete, extensive, demanding and useful for reflection.

> "When I was writing my ideas on the ship, they became real"

> "I realized that I am responsible for my choices."

The participants found challenge in facing specific issues they became more aware of, admitting the risks and threats and being honest. For some, sitting still and concentrating for longer period was a challenge.

Participants found the tool beneficial and noticed they found out new things about themselves. The visual and metaphorical part of the ship were overall praised. The physical end product that can be taken home and looked again was seen as a great benefit. Some participants liked the sharing part and would have extended the time for that while others felt intimidated by sharing.

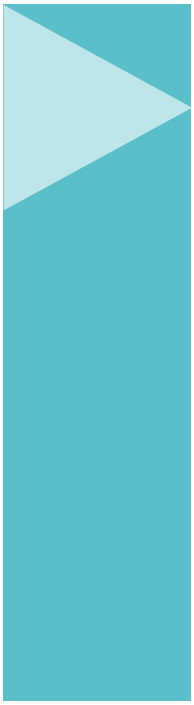
2. SPEED LEARNING

This tool was piloted three times and with the following target groups:

- 50+ women,
- women with small children,
- people with disabilities,
- language learning immigrants.
- One of the sessions used the tool concentrating only on a job interview practise.

The aims of the education sessions this tool was selected for were for example: getting to know each other and strengthening social bonds, improving the communication skills, practising selling and self-selling or self-presentation.

The trainers' conclusions



The tool was selected by the trainers because of its ability to improve more than one skill in one session, to enhance one-to-one communication and learning to act and react in real-life situations. Also the method allows to quickly create a large information base about these people and can be used very flexible with questions in different topics.

The tool was described to be flexible, engaging and secure since working in pairs, not with the whole group. It gave a good opportunity for people to move around and have everyone speaking.

It was noted that the tool needs some preparation beforehand, for example setting the chairs. It is important to explain how the method works in a very simple and understandable way, since there multiple components such as changing the places and changing the questions. Sample sets of questions could be made beforehand.

Lack of language skills could be a big hindrance for the usage of the tool, even if the teachers can provide more vocabulary for the pupils. The tool was recommended as a useful tool to apply for real-life situations, such as for practising for job interviews.

Good experience with language learners was to make the questions as simple and concrete as possible and write them on paper so that they can listened and also read. Since the questions were thought already prior the session, the pupils had a chance to prepare themselves for the job interview in both roles.

The trainees' conclusions

The tool was described as great, pleasant, funny, interactive and beneficial. The repetitive nature of the tool was praised by many.

> "I had an opportunity to think deeper"

The demanding preparation time and the chaos at start were mentioned.

It was challenging for the trainees to talk about topics they don't think about in daily life or private topics with unknown people. Challenging was also to speak about oneself positively and to express an idea in very short time. Some participants liked to talk and for some it was too much talking. Sometimes the language difficulties hindered the process.

> "Repeating was not boring at all, but very beneficial"

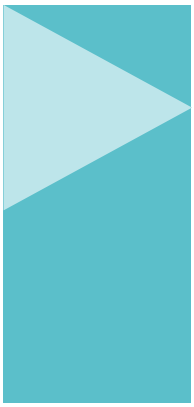
3. APPLIED IMPROVISATION

This tool was piloted two times and with the following target groups:

- immigrants with little work experience on the specific field,
- asylum seekers and refugees from a comprehensive school for adults.

The aims of the education sessions this tool was selected for were to make newcomers familiar with the key processes and topics of the work and to help participants relax before rehearsing for job interviews.

The trainers' conclusions



The tool was selected by the trainers because of the boring topic can be made interesting by playing a game around it. Amid long and hard studying this is what the group needed. It was seen important to let the participants let go of too much brain work and simultaneously learn to express your feelings and learn also words for that, not only academic and everyday-stuff.

The tool was described to be learning by doing and learning while having fun. The participants had to work together and help each other.

It was established that this tool only works with people who want to participate and give. Choosing the most appropriate exercise from many can be hard. Also, some improv techniques need more language skills. Perhaps some exercises could be turned into competitions to engage people more.

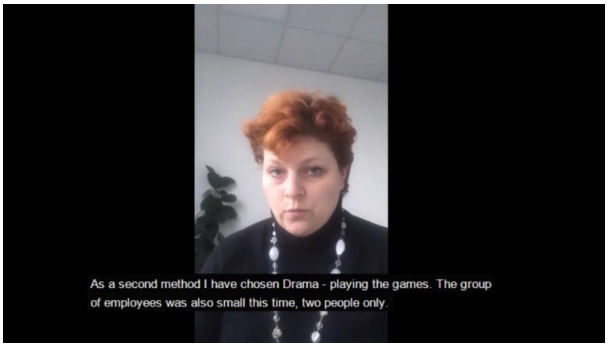
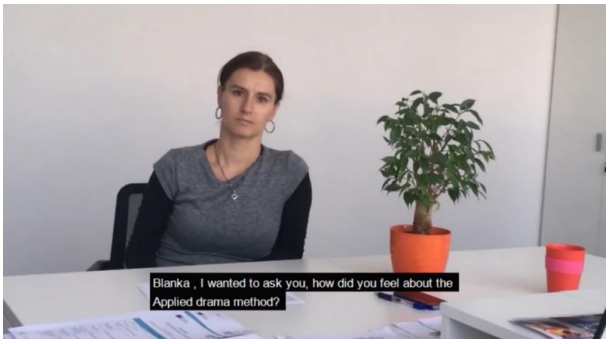
The trainer can and has to be creative using this tool, selecting proper ones, creating new games or modifying the known ones.

The trainees' conclusions

The tool was described as activating and funny.

> "I laughed a lot and got some positive energy"
> "I want to do this two times a week"

Learning new words was beneficial as well as the stress release. The participants praised learning by doing and the combination of the important topic and playful way of training. None mentioned any challenges.

Watch the trainer's comments on the tool	Watch the trainee's comments on the tool
	
https://vimeo.com/466480818	https://vimeo.com/466480491

4. POP-UP MUSEUM

This tool was piloted two times and with the following target groups:

- adult inmates and
- seniors with low competencies.

The aims of the education sessions were to support team building, to enforce participation into social activities, to stimulate curiosity and interest in the works of art and to make participants acquainted with the artistic heritage.

The trainers' conclusions

The tool was selected by the trainers because cultural affiliation and identity are strongly built on the cultural heritage and there was a need to introduce subjects such as history, religion, mythology, ethic and aesthetics to adults with low-competences but willing to learn.

The tool was described as interesting for providing emotional and touching moments.

The tool gives a engageing possibility to work on local topics and perhaps visit a museum. If there is not a possibility to visit a museum, art magazines, art books and videos can be used instead. Art as a medium encourages questions and gives a chance to share thoughts, feelings, ideas and impressions.

It needs to be noted that the tool takes some time to arrange and some target groups need more time on the tasks. Specific examples of materials used, objects transformed, pictures of the exhibition were missing from the tool instructions.

The trainees' conclusions

The tool was described as exciting, engaging and stress-relieving. Participants benefitted from learning in a group and sharing ideas in a relaxed environment.

> "I thought it would be too difficult for me but I was wrong"

5. LIVING BOOK

This tool was piloted for two separate groups by one trainer. **The target groups were local and foreign adult students with low skills, low schooling, difficult social backgrounds and language difficulties.**

The aims of the education sessions were to share knowledge and experience among participants, learn from each other, encourage self-learning and fight stereotypes and prejudices.

The trainers' conclusions

This tool was selected since it focuses on personal and interpersonal skills and was adaptable to the classroom setting.

The strengths of the tool were the motivational and participatory aspects and it supporting becoming aware of own abilities.

For some of the students using written (foreign) language was a challenge. For some it wasn't easy to open up to others by talking about themselves and their own experiences, some had to overcome the barrel of shyness.

The trainees' conclusions

The tool was described as interesting, difficult and as an opportunity to express own dreams. Trainees enjoyed and benefitted from listening and learning about their colleagues' backgrounds and cultures and being able to share their own experience. The tool helped in overcoming the shyness.

> "It was good for me to write my story"

Trainees mentioned language problems and shyness to talk as challenges. For some, sharing personal, sometimes painful, experiences was hard.

Watch the trainer's comments on the tool	Watch the trainee's comments on the tool
https://vimeo.com/466541210	https://vimeo.com/466535641

6. STORYTELLING

The tool was piloted in a onetime training with new employees, not familiar with the processes important for the job. Aim was to brush their professional skills.

The trainers' conclusions

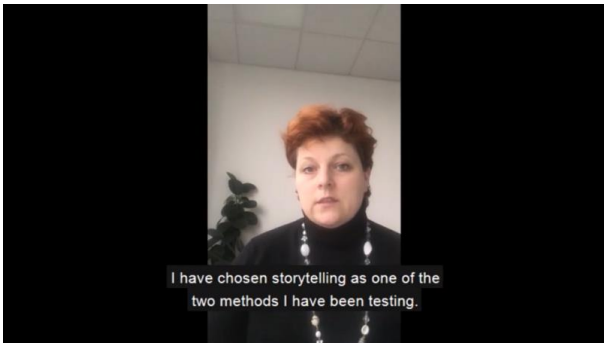
The tool was selected since processes itself are a boring topic, a tool with creativity, story and a "hero" would be an easy way to remember the key issues.

Some advices about rules concerning creating the stories or tips how to create a good story would be useful in the tool instructions. One could modify the story by letting the learner influence the story and seeing the impacts of the decision.

The trainees' conclusions

The tool was described as playful, fitting, fruitful and visually interesting. They thanked the possibility to make learning of a process easy and interesting and easy to remember.

"Combination of the important topic and interesting way of training"

Watch the trainer's comments on the tool	Watch the trainee's comments on the tool
	
https://vimeo.com/466480773	https://vimeo.com/466480657

7. ESCAPE ROOM

The tool was piloted with two families. The aim was to get to know each other more deeply and talk about behavioural addictions, especially on mobile phone and internet. Increasing knowledge about addiction in family and support them in the solving the possible problem was also the objective.

The trainers' conclusions

The tool was selected since there was a need to review the addictions of mobile phone or internet. Escape room gives families space to talk about this topics in safety and engaging way.

Tool unleashes curiosity, that builds higher motivation and engagement of participants in the topic In fiction story they get to know more about topic and try to find solutions for problems presented in it. The tool makes it easier to review generally difficult, shameful or unfamiliar for participants.

Cooperation of families or family members can be a challenge. In this case the trainer who is inside room, must gently support the family.

Especially the adults need time to adapt to a new situation, they are shy or withdrawn. The role of trainer is to encourage them for playing, learning, making mistakes in the escape room.

It was noticed that having only one family in the escape room at a time is more beneficial for the learners. Families get more time to get to know each other and the topic in this way and do not have to compete with other families. Also, a set of reflection questions after the experience helps families to embrace the moment and resume the time and learnings together.

The trainees' conclusions

The participants enjoyed the tool and the time it gave them together. Although it was challenging, the tasks of finding solutions for problems was educational.

> "I liked searching solution together, it was good for us"

8. PEER LEARNING EXERCISE

The tool was piloted in an eight-day social competence training with unemployed people with different professional experiences. The aim was to increase social skills and strengthen faith in one's own abilities. The essential goal of the training was to help getting employed.

The trainers' conclusions

The tool was selected since it can easily be adapted to the level of the group. There was a need to boost self-confidence and work in small groups. The tool was conducted by establishing a map of professional activity. Participants were sharing their personal professional experience and seeking strengths based on experience and the needs in the region.

The tool was described as easily adaptable and not school-like, which can be an asset.

The possibility of using various working techniques, such as painting, tests, working in pairs or groups was thanked.

It was noted that the tool can be difficult to apply at the beginning of course/class. With a very diverse group, it may be difficult to find a common language. There is also a potential that the form of the tool becomes more important than the content.

The tool is best used when the group already knows each other, since good integration of participants is needed.

The trainees' conclusions

The tool was described as interesting and good for self reflection. For some, sharing with others or empasizing their own strengths was difficult.

Watch the trainer's comments on the tool

https://youtu.be/PuQGTs2sUsQ

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

4	11	16	233
COUNTRIES	TRAINERS	PILOTS	PARTICIPANTS

For the purpose of testing the manual produced in the Education by the way project, 16 different pilots were conducted by 11 trainers in 4 countries. Altogether 233 people took part in the pilots. Each session had separate number of participants ranging from 4 to 30.

Trainers were given instructions to carefully follow the manual and the instructions for every tool. Some trainers nevertheless modified the tool for their purpose.

Target groups were varied, and learning aims were different with each pilot. There was never a one skill the trainers hoped to brush in the pilot, but instead the skill sets where sometimes very complex. It is safe to say all the tools pursuit many skills.

With the tools piloted with different target groups, there was not any major differences in succeeding. It can be concluded that all the showcased tools are suitable for different target groups considering the special needs, such as low level of language.

It would have been possible to collect more and equal knowledge based on the pilots if there was a separate evaluator collecting the information and feedback from trainers and trainees after the sessions. Now the challenge was that the abilities of trainees to reflect their own learning was very varied. Also, within trainers there was a language issue in reporting where the distinction between the words trainee and trainer was not clear.

Some useful modifications were proposed by the trainers for some of the tools taking into account a certain learning aim or target group. Also, some clarifications and adjustments for the tool instructions were proposed to be added in the manual.

The overall experience of trainees from the pilot sessions was very delighted. The participants were eager to try new learning methods the tools provided and were very happy especially about the participatory aspects of them. With many tools the participants mentioned the fun and the possibility to express themselves as key factors to their amusement and learning.

Majority of the trainees commented on the good atmosphere that was present in the sessions. Could it be that when a trainer brings in a teaching tool, that is new also for them, it makes the trainer more devoted and committed on the training? Nevertheless, it can be concluded that none of the tools work well without an inspiring and committed trainer and vice versa