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EMPOWER REPORT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

EMPOWER - Lifelong Learning Skills for Educational Trainers in Europe

Erasmus+ Small-scale Partnership in Adult Education (KA210-ADU)
Project no. 2025-1-RO01-KA210-ADU-000357575

Asociația Rubik Educație Alternativă (Romania, coordinator)
LearnGuides SLU/ Learnlife (Spain, partner)

October 2026 · Project period: 1.11.2025– 31.10.2026

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Executive summary

Empower - Lifelong Learning Skills for Educational Trainers in Europe set out to answer a simple question: **what keeps adults learning once nobody grades them anymore?** Over 12 months, Asociația Rubik Educație Alternativă (Romania) and Learnlife (Spain) worked with **adults**, trainers and non-formal learning facilitators to build their capacity to sustain lifelong learning, in themselves and in the groups they work with. The programme rested on three pillars: social-emotional learning (SEL), self-directed learning and digital wellbeing, all grounded in Self-Determination Theory (connection, competence, autonomy).

Interest exceeded expectations. The project received 194 applications, worked with 85 participants against a target of 60 (+63%), delivered 24 online workshops, took 15 facilitators on a learning mobility to Learnlife in Barcelona, and published the free Facilitator's Guide for Lifelong Learning: about 70 pages, 20 practical tools, available in Romanian, English and Spanish, with more than 300 downloads across both countries.

The central message of this report is that learning facilitators need to be treated as learners themselves: investing in their social-emotional, self-directed and digital competences is one of the most cost-effective levers for keeping adults engaged in learning. Our key recommendations are:

- Make learning facilitators a priority target group in Erasmus+ and national adult learning policies, because every facilitator trained reaches dozens of adult learners.
- Recognise SEL, self-directed learning and digital wellbeing as core facilitator competences, in line with the EU LifeComp and DigComp frameworks, and include them in occupational standards and continuing training.
- Fund short blended formats and local communities of practice, combining online training with a few days of on-site immersion, and supporting facilitators after a project ends.
- Recognise and validate non-formal professional development, for example through micro-credentials, so that facilitators' learning counts.

1. The project

1.1 Context and need

Adult learning workshops often end on a high note, yet a month later few participants have returned to the materials. The problem is rarely lack of interest. After formal education ends, nobody keeps the pace for us and adults need the motivation, the self-management skills and the attention to keep learning on their own. Facilitators who work with adults are well placed to nurture these capacities, but they are rarely trained to do so and they face the same pressures themselves, not least a digital environment that fragments attention.

A note on terms. In the project application the target group was called “educational trainers”. In this report we use learning facilitators for everyone who guides groups of adults through learning: trainers, adult educators, non-formal learning facilitators, NGO staff.

1.2 Objectives

- O1: To cocreate an innovative educational learning path for 60 educational trainers in 3 months.
- O2: To develop key lifelong learning skills (self awareness, self management, executive functioning skills, design experience, self directed learning, digital literacy) for 60 educational trainers through 6 online workshops and one learning event in Barcelona for 10 participants and 4 coordinators.
- O3: To raise awareness and promote Lifelong Learning practices across Romania and Spain through a Facilitator Guide on three topics (How to Facilitate Social Emotional Learning / How to facilitate Self Directed Learning / How to Navigate Digital Environments in Learning).

1.3 Partners

Asociația Rubik Educație Alternativă (Romania, coordinator) brought its expertise in social-emotional learning, digital inclusion and digital wellbeing. **Learnlife** (Barcelona, Spain) brought its experience with autonomous, self-directed, learner-centred education and hosted the learning mobility. The two organisations co-designed the curriculum and co-authored the guide.

1.4 Approach

The programme combined two blocks. First, online training: each country ran their local groups and each group followed six online workshops built around the three pillars. Second, an on-site learning mobility at Learnlife in Barcelona, combining observation of two Learnlife hubs, workshops with Learnlife trainers, and structured reflection on what participants could transfer to their own practice. The guide was then built from the tools and experiences that worked best, and launched publicly through two dissemination events.

1.5 Who took part

Participants were selected through an open call in each country. Applicants completed an online application form and submitted a letter of motivation. The selection criteria were agreed jointly by the two partners: professional background in education or facilitation, motivation and commitment to the full programme, potential impact on the groups they work with, learning potential and readiness, and contribution to the diversity of the group (gender, regional, cultural or social).

Priority was given to applicants facing economic, social, educational or health barriers. About 19 people recruited came from vulnerable backgrounds, in line with the project's target for participants with fewer opportunities.
The call was addressed to educational trainers and facilitators working in afterschool programmes, learning communities and NGOs, freelancers, particularly in underserved communities, as well as to adult lifelong learners and parents involved in their children's learning.

Attendance in the first workshops was lower than planned (around 47 of 60 participants per session), mainly because of personal and professional obligations and a lower commitment to free-of-charge programmes. In April 2026 the partners therefore ran a second recruitment round: Learnlife opened a new call in Spain and Rubik invited applicants from its waiting list of 94 people in Romania. This round placed a stronger emphasis on commitment to attend all three thematic modules, and it is why the programme reached 85 participants in total.

1.6 How we measured results

The findings in this report draw on several sources:

- Application and attendance data: applications received, participants enrolled, workshop attendance and completion.
- End-of-programme feedback forms
- Video interviews with participants and staff recorded at the end of the project (see Section 5).
- Partner reflection sessions after each workshop cycle and after the mobility.
- Dissemination data: guide downloads, event attendance and online reach.

2. Outcomes

2.1 Key figures

Indicator	Romania	Spain	Total
Applications received	120	74	**194**
Workshop participants	44	41	**85** (target: 60)
Online workshops delivered	12	12	**24**

Participants in the Barcelona mobility	7	8	**15**
Download copies of the guide	278	129	**407**

2.2 Results against plan

Obj.	Planned result	Achieved	Status
O1	Co-created learning path for learning facilitators	Curriculum co-designed by both partners: six workshops around the three pillars and a four-stage learning path, later integrated into the guide.	Achieved
O2	Learning facilitators trained in SEL, self-directed learning and digital wellbeing	85 participants in 4 groups (2 per country), 6 online workshops each – 24 workshops in total	Exceeded (+63%)
O2	Learning mobility at the partner organisation (10 participants + 4 coordinators)	15 people (7 RO + 8 ES) at Learnlife, Barcelona, 15–17 June 2026.	Achieved
O3	Facilitator's Guide for Lifelong Learning	About 70 pages, 20 tools with facilitator notes and printable worksheets, in Romanian, English and Spanish; 300+ downloads	Achieved
O3	Dissemination events	Online launch event in Romania, 6 October 2026. Online dissemination event in Spain, 8 October 2026.	Achieved
O3	Dissemination materials	Press releases, three EPALE articles, newsletter, “EMPOWER in numbers” infographics	Achieved
O3	Results on the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform	Guide, workshop materials, infographics, video links	Achieved

2.3 The main result: the Facilitator's Guide

The **Facilitator's Guide for Lifelong Learning** turns the project's experience into a ready-to-use resource for trainers, non-formal learning facilitators, NGO staff, adults and educators working with groups of adults. It explains the *why* (Self-Determination Theory and the three layers of the EMPOWER framework), proposes a four-stage learning path, maps the competences involved and offers **20 tools**, each with steps, timing, a facilitator's note and a printable worksheet. Examples include the Mood Meter, the Empathy Map and Meta-Moment (SEL), the Self-Determination Matrix, the Self-Direction Map and the Learning Plan (self-directed learning), and the Digital Life Reflection, the App Traffic Light and Device-Free Rules (digital wellbeing).

The guide is free to download: Romania - https://formatorzvac.ro/erasmus Spain - https://www.learnlife.com/es/empower-gu%C3%ADa-gratuita

2.4 Contribution to Erasmus+ horizontal priorities

- **Inclusion and diversity.** About 19 participants recruited came from vulnerable backgrounds: facilitators living in villages and rural areas with limited access to training opportunities, with a low socio-economic status, who work with vulnerable people. They were given priority in the selection process. The online format and the free guide, available in three languages, made it possible to take part and use the results regardless of location or budget.
- **Digital transformation.** Digital wellbeing was one of the three pillars: participants worked on their own and their learners' relationship with devices, not only on digital tools. During the mobility, participants documented their learning in real time in a shared digital mobility journal and shared stories, posts and short clips in shared folders as they happened.
- **Environment and fight against climate change.** Delivering the training online kept travel to a single short mobility. In Barcelona the group travelled by public transport only, visited the Eco Hub in Castelldefels, a learning space built with respect for the environment, and reflected on responsible consumption.
- **Participation in democratic life and European cooperation**. Facilitators from Romania and Spain brought their own practice and learned from Learnlife's perspective. During the mobility they designed a change in their own communities in a dedicated workshop, and interviewed learners about how children and adults in Barcelona practise active citizenship every day. The guide is available as an open resource for practitioners across Europe.

2.5 Impact on participants

Participants' self-assessment, collected before the programme, after each module and at the end of the project, shows a clear increase in confidence across all three pillars. In Romania, the average self-rated competence rose from 3.81 to 4.48 out of 5; in Spain, it rose from 3.5 to 4.1 after the modules. In both countries, the largest gains were in the areas where participants had started lowest: executive functions and digital balance in Romania, digital safety and digital balance in Spain. Across both countries and all cohorts, the three modules were rated between 4.7 and 4.8 out of 5. The Barcelona mobility received the maximum score for the overall experience from all respondents, and most said the activities supported their learning goals more than they had expected.

The end-of-project survey shows that learning has already reached practice. Participants use tools from all three pillars in their work and family life, most often self-regulation techniques, the Mood Meter, reflection journals, personal learning plans and the App Traffic Light. They have passed the guide and tools on to colleagues, teams and their own learners, reaching an estimated several hundred people indirectly. To see how these practices last over time, the partners will run a short follow-up through the alumni learning group six months after the project.

Indicator	Results
Satisfaction, Social-emotional learning module	4.77 / 5
Satisfaction, Self-directed learning module	4.72 / 5
Satisfaction, Digital wellbeing module	4.71 / 5
Barcelona mobility, overall experience	5 / 5
Barcelona mobility, likelihood to recommend	5 / 5
Mobility participants who achieved more than expected	11 of 15

3. Lessons learned

The lessons below come from the partners' reflections and participants' interviews.

1. **Facilitators need to be learners again.** Participants who experienced the tools as learners, in their own emotions and goals, used them more confidently with their groups afterwards. Training for **learning facilitators** works best when it is experiential, not a presentation of methods.
2. **Learning is emotional before it is cognitive.** The strongest moments of the programme were those that touched participants personally. Tools that start

from feelings and needs (Mood Meter, Self-Determination Matrix) opened the way for the more structured self-directed learning tools.

3. **Flexibility is a core facilitation competence.** The curriculum had to be adjusted session by session to the dynamics and needs of each group. A fixed programme would have worked less well; future programmes should plan for this adaptation explicitly.
4. **Seeing it in practice changes minds.** Meeting Learnlife's learners, and hearing them describe their own projects with pride, made self-directed learning tangible in a way the online sessions could not. Combining online training with a short on-site immersion proved very effective.
5. **Demand for this kind of development is high and under-served.** 194 applications for 60 planned places, and 85 people actually trained, show a clear appetite among **learning facilitators** for development in SEL, self-direction and digital wellbeing, especially in Romania (120 applications).
6. **Digital wellbeing works through awareness, not prohibition.** Participants responded better to tools that help them notice and choose their digital habits than to rules imposed from outside.
7. **Complementary partners create more than the sum of their parts.** Rubik's focus on SEL and digital wellbeing and Learnlife's on autonomous learning combined into a framework neither organisation would have produced alone. Small-scale partnerships are a good format for this kind of co-creation.

What we would do differently

- **Recruitment and selection.** The selection process worked well: criteria were agreed jointly by the two partners and applied consistently. We first enrolled 64 participants (34 in Romania, including 4 extra places as a buffer against dropouts, and 30 in Spain). After the first workshops, attendance averaged around 47 per session: some absences had personal or professional causes, but there was also a lower commitment to a free-of-charge programme. In April 2026 we ran a second recruitment round – a new call in Spain and invitations to applicants from the waiting list of 94 people in Romania – which brought the total to 85 participants. Next time, we would accept more applicants from the start, since demand was high and some dropout is to be expected in a free programme, and we would record the online sessions and send the recordings to participants who could not attend, so that they can catch up and stay in the programme.
- **Retention.** Six workshops over several weeks compete with participants' workload. We would add a short check-in or peer “learning buddy” between sessions to keep momentum.
- **Follow-up.** We would plan an alumni meeting a few months after the programme, so that participants can share how they used the tools and the

partners can update the guide. In Romania an alumni community has already started (see Section 6); next time we would plan this follow-up from the start, in both countries.

4. Policy recommendations

The recommendations below build on the lessons in Section 3 and connect them to existing European frameworks: the **European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021–2030**, the **LifeComp** framework for the personal, social and learning-to-learn key competence, the **DigComp** digital competence framework, and the Council Recommendations on **validation of non-formal and informal learning** and on **micro-credentials**.

4.1 For European institutions and the Erasmus+ programme

- **Treat learning facilitators as a priority target group in their own right.** Continuous professional development for trainers and facilitators multiplies impact: every facilitator trained reaches dozens of adult learners.
- **Recognise social-emotional learning and digital wellbeing as core competences of learning facilitators**, alongside digital skills, and reflect them explicitly in Erasmus+ priorities.
- **Keep small-scale partnerships accessible and add a light follow-up option**, so that newcomer organisations can sustain communities of practice and update open resources after the project ends.
- **Value short blended mobilities for learning facilitators** (online preparation + a few days of on-site immersion in an innovative learning environment) as an effective, low-cost format.

4.2 For national authorities and agencies (Romania and Spain)

- **Include social-emotional learning, self-directed learning and digital wellbeing in the occupational standards and continuing training of learning facilitators** (in Romania, e.g. the trainer occupational standard and accredited training programmes; in Spain, the relevant national and regional adult education frameworks).
- **Recognise and validate non-formal professional development** completed by **learning facilitators**
- **Fund local communities of practice for facilitators** (libraries, NGOs, adult learning centres) where open resources such as the EMPOWER guide can be used and adapted over time.

- **Promote open educational resources from Erasmus+ projects** through national channels (EPALE national support services, national agencies), so that results reach practitioners beyond the partner networks.

4.3 For adult education providers and NGOs

- **Start from motivation, not content.** Design programmes around connection, competence and autonomy, and check regularly which of the three needs is missing in a group.
- **Build reflection and goal-setting into every programme**, so that learners leave with a plan for continuing on their own, not only with materials.
- **Address digital habits explicitly and without moralising**, helping learners observe and choose how they use devices.
- **Give your own staff time and space to learn**, including peer exchange and exposure to other learning environments.

4.4 For practitioners

- Try one tool before changing a whole programme: the Self-Determination Matrix takes 10–15 minutes and works online.
- Adapt the tools to your group; the guide is designed to be modified, not followed rigidly.
- Share your experience with other facilitators, for example on EPALE, so that the tools keep improving.

5. Testimonials

The quotes below come from the video interviews recorded at the end of the project (English, lightly edited transcription).

5.1 Participants

“The whole experience of the online course has been mind-blowing for me. I will always remember the group activities, the sharing activities and reflection, because it was about working with ourselves and getting answers to a lot of questions.”

– Victoria Raulier, Spanish participant

“I set this goal that I want to spark curiosity and questions. I forgot how it felt to be curious until yesterday morning, when I came here, and I see how valuable it is.” “So I'm trying to create some intentional context for question-asking and reflection during the summer camps.”

– Smaranda Ioana Gliga, Romanian Participant

"From both days of the mobility, the most impactful was meeting the learners, seeing the way they describe learning, the way they describe the school, and seeing their eyes light up when talking about learning, when talking about their projects."

"Lifelong learning for me is joy. It's the meaning of life. It's giving meaning to life, to the past, but also to the future."

– Andreea Tomescu, Spanish participant

5.2 Partner organisations

"During the EMPOWER program I had many hats. From my facilitator role I understood that agility, flexibility and adapting to the group dynamic and needs is very important. […] Learning is not about memorizing information, knowledge, but it's about emotions and how people feel while learning. […] There is a love of learning inside each and every one of us."

– Luiza Florea, project manager, Asociația Rubik Educație Alternativă

"What we tried to tackle was adult learning, basically. So how learning experiences can be co-created between institutions in different countries that are experts in different fields. We worked with Rubik, they are very focused on digital inclusiveness, digital wellbeing, but also social-emotional learning, and Learnlife, we're very focused on autonomous learning, self-directed education."

– Joan Urgell Farran, project manager, Learnlife

6. Sustainability and next steps

6.1 Open access to the results

- The guide remains freely available in Romanian, English and Spanish, on the partners' websites, on EPALE and on the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform.
- The English version is submitted to the SALTO-YOUTH Toolbox for Training, so that youth workers and trainers across Europe can find it.
- The project website, video reels and infographics will remain online for at least 3 years after the end of the project.

6.2 Use in the partners' work

- Rubik will integrate the EMPOWER tools into its trainer and facilitator programmes, workshops for NGOs and adult education providers.
- Learnlife will use the tools in its guide/educator training and adult learning offer.

- Both partners will update the guide based on feedback from practitioners who use it.

6.3 Multipliers and community

- Participants act as multipliers in their own organisations, NGOs and communities.
- **An alumni community of practice has continued in Romania** and meets once a month. Eight former participants take turns as hosts: each month, one of them prepares a poster with resources, facilitates a learning session and offers an additional support session on request. Two sessions have already taken place, each led by a different Romanian participant as host: the first focused on self-esteem and the second on polarities and how we make decisions. The third one will take place in November and will be about Serious Play. The community keeps the tools in use after the project, gives former participants a chance to practice **facilitation with their peers and allows them to continue learning together.**

7 Contact

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