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HOW TO WORK WITH ADULTS DURING COVID PANDEMICS

COVID 19 PANDEMIC PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS IN ADULT EDUCATION IN LATVIA

On November 6, 2020, the Latvian government decided to declare a state of emergency throughout the country from 9 November 2020 to 6 December 2020. (See Cabinet of Ministers Order No. of 6 November 2020 655 "On the declaration of a state of emergency" at <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/318517/redakcijas-datums/2020/11/06>)

The Emergency Order provides for compliance with the following requirements in the field of education:

- to interrupt the learning process in person in all educational institutions and to ensure distance learning, with the exception of the practical parts of vocational education programs acquisition which is necessary for the learning professional skills or qualifications and which cannot be performed remotely. Choir rehearsals and wind instrument classes are not allowed.
- to determine the following work organization during 17.10.2020. - 06.11.2020:
Individual classes are allowed from October 26, 2020. to November 6,2020 for:
 - ✓ the English language program participants;
 - ✓ computer courses with little or no prior knowledge;
 - ✓ drawing-painting program participants;
 - ✓ ceramics program participants;
 - ✓ participants in the new parenting program;
 - ✓ participants in the piano program;
 - ✓ guitar playing program participants;
 - ✓ flute playing for program participants;
 - ✓ for participants of the vocal music program.
- The managers of adult education centres schedule the consultation time and organize the receiving feedback process.

Grobiņa Adult education centre also switched from group work to individual training on October 26, 2020. until November 6, when the incidence of Covid 19 rapidly deteriorated in the country and distance learning was offered. The distance learning model using the Zoom platform could only be used by members of the English language group, but not all, because there was a lack of sufficient IT skills or the family had to use several family members at the same time (including students learning remotely).

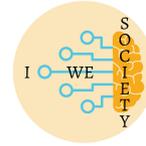
Adult education in the form of organized groups became very problematic. There are other reasons as well: adult classes are paid for by the participants themselves, therefore, due to the fact that full-fledged face-to-face classes could not be offered, a large part refused to learn remotely. Grobiņa Adult education centre offered online programs developed in the previous Erasmus + project Nr. 2015-1-LV01-KA204-013388 “Developing EU through online innovations “- English, computer training, choice of hobbies, communication and self-improvement.

Conclusions and necessities Covid-19 has taught adult educators:

1. In adult education, the distance learning model does not justify itself, socialization is also very important for adults.
2. In Grobiņa Adult education centre the offered programs were not suitable for distance learning, in Covid-19 situation different content courses have to be offered.
3. Adults 55+ lack basic IT knowledge.
4. Opportunities to acquire IT skills at different levels must be continued.



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5. Adult education centres have to seek opportunities to offer residents free of charge educational courses paid for by the local government.
6. It is necessary to continue to identify the wishes of the population in the offering of new programs.
7. The development of new courses of adult education in the digital environment must be continued.

Mārīte Bruža

the manager of Grobiņa Adult education centre



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ACTIVITIES AT LJUDSKA UNIVERZA ROGAŠKA SLATINA DURING COVID-19 SITUATION

In 2020 Ljudska univerza Rogaška Slatina, as all other educational institutions around the world, was faced with a completely new and unique situation when the pandemic started. As a result, all educational programs at the organization were stopped and employees were faced with a big challenge of how to go on and continue the educational process in all programs. At the beginning, our main goal was to at least stay in touch with our learners for which we used emails and regular posts and were regularly sending them learning material and encouraging them to do some self-studying at home. Soon afterwards some of our lecturers started doing some online lessons, using Skype and Jitsi Meet applications, although there were quite many troubles with internet connection and the performance of both applications. Somehow we managed to finish the school year more or less successfully.

So when the summer started, we did not rest. We knew that there is a big possibility we will have to continue with this kind of education when the next school year begins in autumn. We were lucky enough that we received free of charge access to several online teaching applications, such as Zoom, Microsoft teams and Moodle, from our Ministry for Education, Science and Sport. We used the summer time for training our lecturers in how to use these applications for distance learning. Our ICT expert organized several trainings for them and taught them how to use Zoom and Microsoft teams. At the beginning of the school year, when our learners came back, we also organized several trainings for those learners who needed to gain additional skills in using these tools.

So when the new school year began, we started online lessons for our formal vocational programs using the combination of Zoom online lectures and individual work in Microsoft Teams. We were quite surprised by the feedback coming from our learners in vocational programs, because they accepted the online learning in a very positive manner. They expressed great satisfaction with this form of learning, because it saved them a lot of time and money, because they did not have to drive to their lessons. At the same time, the success in the final exams was not any worse as in previous years.

Naturally, it was a bit different in other, non-formal programs. The biggest problems occurred in some national projects, since the ministries in charge of certain projects did not allow some of the projects to continue in online form, so they had to be stopped completely for a certain amount of time, which caused some delays in carrying out certain activities and in reaching the set indicators. Such programs were programs with the Employment centre, where we are running a program for social activation of long-term unemployed people. We had to wait to continue this program until we were allowed to carry out face-to-face activities again, which was a big shame, since they are the population that needs these kinds of activities and social inclusion the most. The situation was very similar with our programs for Slovenian language for foreigners.

Another category of learners that was at the biggest risk of being excluded was the big group of our members of the University for Third Age Rogaška Slatina. Since they are elderly people over 65, many of them did not have any ICT skills to continue their activities in online form, so we tried to keep contact with them through sending them telephone messages and learning material with answers through regular posts. We were able to organize some Zoom lessons for members of English, German and Italian courses, as well as Yoga practices and computer courses, but there is still a big number of seniors that are not taking part in these online activities. Another problem occurred when we were allowed to have face-to-face activities again, because these elderly members, being a high risk group, were naturally too afraid to come back to classes.

A big change also occurred in the area of our international projects, since all the transnational project meetings and trainings were moved to online form. We believe this is a temporary solution, but we really miss face-to-face meetings, which give you more opportunity to share experience, examples of good practices and to get to know different cultures.

So now in the year of 2021 we have to make many adjustments from one week to another, according to the rules that come out every week. We continue to have all of our vocational programs in online form and in other programs we are making different combinations using online applications and face-to-face activities, depending on the



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current situation with Covid-19. At the moment of writing this article, Ljudska univerza Rogaška Slatina is closed down due to the total lock-down, but next week our doors will be open to the public again and some activities will begin in face-to-face form again. For how long, nobody knows, but let us hope for the best.

Mojca Vukovič

project manager at Ljudska univerza Rogaška Slatina



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GOOD PRACTICES IN AIFED AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN GRANADA DURING COVID - 19

Due to covid-19, the world has been involved in a massive change of how education is taught. In 2020, AIFED and several institutions working with us have faced an unexpected situation with no time to adapt everything to online.

Where all the lessons and workshops were face-to-face, I suddenly went online. Work from home, school from home, study from home... adult education was not a difference.

Because of the urgency and in order to avoid the loss of the courses, in Spain we had to adapt ourselves to the new circumstances.

For AIFED it has been hard because we used to make workshops and some training activities face to face and we value a lot the contact in person but we have reinvented us and adapted ourselves to the new situation. We have created some courses on platforms like Google Classroom and we have developed talks and webinars online through Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams... in order to not interrupt our training activity.

For example, there has been one particular project in which an orchestra conductor conducted a concert online. Moreover, the concert performers were each one at different places because of the restrictions and it was a success combining technology and adaptation.

Also, we offer talks and webinars online with other partners because of the impossibility of travelling and meeting face to face. It is not the same because of the loss of direct interaction but it is effective and quick.

In AIFED we collaborate with two organisations related with adult education and they have told us their experience through this crazy adaptation to pandemic time.

SECOT, which is an association to globalise knowledge and offer mentoring, had to evolve seniors who help the youth to set up small companies that were available only online. They created a map of talent, in which senior people register their professional profiles in order to be reached by the youth people and their mentors of SECOT to offer their service, knowledge and experience to them.

Also, they have uploaded all of their services and adapted to online through meeting by zoom, meet, teams... phone calls, emails and the use of their platform in SECOT.

Another institution we work closely with is OFECUM. It is an organisation that is focused on active aging and working with adults and elderly people. Before COVID-19, they used to do lots of activities such as dance, theatre, English lessons, trips... When everything happens, they work on their online content, trying to keep in touch with their students through calls, video calls and emails.

Some of the activities had been cancelled but now they are coming back to normal and they have again a big offer of activities.

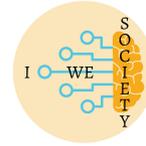
These kinds of methodologies also have some good things, like the money you save and time because you do not have to commute but the attendance, attention and satisfaction is worse than before. People need to socialize and to be in touch with other people.

Nevertheless, as we have said before, OFECUM or SECOT has been available to their users and customers to phone calls and video calls to make people feel less lonely.

Due to recent changes on restrictions in Spain and that everything changes daily because of the vaccine, the virus and the situation, we are constantly adapting ourselves so, COVID-19 has been a life-changing experience and



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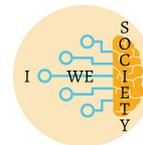
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has changed the perspective of traditional education. Currently, changes are our daily routine and we need to be able to face them.

But for now, all we can do is to wait a little bit more to know how many of these changes are for the best and have come to stay.



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CHALLENGES OF ADULT EDUCATION DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC SITUATION IN CROATIA

The sudden, rapid and new situation caused by the COVID 19 pandemic also affected the Republic of Croatia in March 2020.

In Croatia, from March 16, 2020, in accordance with the Decision of the Ministry of Science and Education ([https://mzo.gov.hr/vijesti/uputa-svim-osnovnim-i-srednjim-skolama-vezano-uz-nastavak-organizacije-nastave-at-a-distance / 3592](https://mzo.gov.hr/vijesti/uputa-svim-osnovnim-i-srednjim-skolama-vezano-uz-nastavak-organizacije-nastave-at-a-distance-3592)) switched to an online teaching system in all educational institutions due to the pandemic COVID 19. This decision strongly affected the education sector and adult education due to sudden and rapid changes. Everyone involved in the process of adult education in a short time had to show great creativity, strength and will in adapting to the new situation.

In September 2020, the Ministry of Science and Education published a version of the document Models and Recommendations for Working in Conditions Related to COVID-19 in the Pedagogical / School Year 2020/2021. in which models are proposed and recommendations are offered for educational work and teaching in kindergartens and schools. According to the instructions, all educational institutions, including adult education institutions, could conduct classes according to the following three models:

1. Model A - teaching in an adult education institution
2. Model B - mixed form of teaching
3. Model C - distance learning.

In accordance with the instructions of the Ministry on the teaching in the regular system, adult education institutions have been teaching according to Model A since 21 September 2020, in accordance with the approved programs and approved manner of conducting a particular program. Provided that in the event of a worsening of the epidemiological situation, distance learning will be conducted again, considering the possibilities and needs of the participants themselves.

IGOR, Lifelong Learning Center conducts non-formal adult education trainings that until the pandemic were conducted only face to face because they are of the workshop type. When the decision was made to switch to the online model, we were completely unprepared, because we had not conducted online education until then. During this period, we worked intensively on adapting education to the online environment and learning how to use the online tools like Zoom and Teams, which we used the most. In the beginning, online education was a great challenge for trainers who are faced with the need for quality preparation of workshops and teaching content in the online environment. On the other hand, the participants had to adapt to working with online tools, provide an available computer and a quality Internet connection, which was sometimes difficult for some trainees (several family members worked online from home and did not have enough computers and / or sufficient Internet connection).

As time went on our trainers were increasingly instructed in the ability to work with Zoom and Teams tools, but also other applications they used during the online training.

The government has continuously adopted new measures and rules for conducting trainings, which we have regularly monitored and adjusted our work to the new instructions. When measures were adopted to allow face-to-face classes, we immediately began to use this option in compliance with all epidemiological measures related to the maximum number of participants in education and the distance between them, wearing masks, etc. This was again a big challenge for us because we had to find ways to organize education because we could not apply different methods and forms of work on education due to the epidemiological conditions of education. For trainers, this meant a new investment of time in designing how to conduct education and achieve learning outcomes with limitations caused by the pandemic (it is not allowed to interfere with participants during training such as: working in pairs, in groups, using different methods of work).



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Participants expressed much greater interest in face-to-face work than in the online teaching model. Most participants in online training lacked direct contact with trainers and other participants in the training, which enabled them to achieve learning outcomes faster and with better quality. Often, their social distance during the learning process affected their motivation to learn. The duration of each online training (2, 3 or more hours in one day) was exhausting for some participants, so the trainers were focused on working at shorter intervals of 25 to 30 minutes with more breaks. Some adults and the elderly have resistance to the use of IT or do not have enough knowledge to use it, which made it difficult to implement online education, and sometimes meant the withdrawal of some participants from education.

On the other hand, participation in online training has reduced their travel time, allowed them to participate in training no matter where they are currently, and if we are Webinars, then the ability to independently organize the time and dynamics of individual training. During online trainings, the theoretical parts of individual trainings passed relatively well and easily, but understanding and practical application of newly acquired knowledge is much more demanding in the online environment than when we conduct face to face training. The blended learning model is suitable for that.

All of this directs us to continue to develop trainings for implementation in the online and face to face model in order to be ready to respond to future possible challenges related to the pandemic situation. Through feedback from the participants of our trainings, we will be able to continuously improve the quality of our trainings, regardless of the way we conduct them, face to face, online or blended learning model.

In the future, in order to provide supportive conditions in situations of teaching in times of crisis, it is necessary for participants to develop support capacities in various ways, such as through:

- implementation of affordable education programs in the field of health and risk management,
- developing and providing alternative learning opportunities to help compensate for the interruption of formal education services and to combat the worsening of the learning crisis; and
- creating opportunities for reflection on common values such as global responsibility, solidarity and active citizenship and more.

Creating supportive conditions requires investing in creating an environment that enables their implementation, namely: investing in digital infrastructure at the national, regional and local levels; creating more online opportunities to strengthen the capacity of staff, managers and teachers in adult learning and education, and training staff to use digital opportunities and counselling participants.

With the intention that the way of conducting education is directly related to the quality of conducting education, and the less conditioned pandemic situation, let's hope for the best in the future.

Igor Štavlić

IGOR, LLLC



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ADULT EDUCATION IN THE TIMES OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC: THE CASE OF CYPRUS

In the light of the ongoing pandemic, the need for high-quality learning opportunities and a variety of learning experiences accessible to people of all ages has become even more urgent. The European project I.We.Society. aims to fulfil this need, focusing specifically on the vulnerable part of the society facing challenges and hardships, some of which were a result of Covid-19. In order to improve adult education opportunities, though, it is important to reflect on how education providers have responded to this crisis so far.

Covid-19 has changed our lives in many aspects from how we socialize to how we travel, work, learn and so on thus challenging our physical and mental health and wellbeing. Adult education, which is invaluable, especially in times of crises, also had to be adapted to the new reality. Almost overnight, educators and education providers, in order to keep loyal to their learners, had to upgrade their digital skills by moving their work online, trying out and investing in digital tools and platforms and exploring different methodologies aiming to reduce isolation, strengthen their resilience and protect their mental health.

However, the pandemic experience has not been the same for everyone. Covid-19 has hit harder vulnerable individuals such as the elderly, the unemployed or those with low income, people with disabilities or health problems, people in remote areas, refugees and migrants or individuals from ethnic minorities who have already been struggling and who might not have a solid support system to help them get through these difficult times. Although adult education was fast to respond to the new situation, unfortunately, these people, who would benefit the most from it, particularly during the pandemic, often had limited, obstructed or no access to it.

With most educational opportunities taking place online, people with inadequate connection, insufficient equipment, or with poor digital skills were excluded from participating, as was often the case with elderly people. Moreover, for many, who found themselves struggling to secure an income, balance their family and work responsibilities with hardly any chance to socialize, their priorities changed and education was put aside.

It is therefore important to reflect on how adult education providers have responded to this global emergency so far, appreciating the effort put and creativity on the one hand and recognizing the limitations and gaps on the other. Such a reflection provides an insight on what can be done to be better prepared in order to achieve a more inclusive adult education which will respond better to the needs of the learners in any crises that may arise in the future.

The case of Cyprus:

In Cyprus various adult education providers responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with different initiatives:

Formal Education: Most universities and colleges adapted quickly from the beginning of the pandemic, continuing their operations switched to e-learning, blended learning with a few exceptions where presential learning was allowed.

Youth Board of Cyprus (ONEK): [ONEK](#) is a semi-governmental institution which focuses on youth work and provides youth-oriented services such as counselling, volunteering and funded educational opportunities, creative spaces and information. In the light of the pandemic, the organization gathered all its services that could support youth during these difficult times on one [page](#). It features information on how to deal with online interviews with the possibility of having an online meeting with a specialist, a video on navigating real and fake news on social media, contacts for psychological support, opportunities for competitions and challenges and information regarding COVID-19. Moreover, the project ReOVer20 concerns the funding of pilot actions, programs or activities, aiming to respond to the consequences of the pandemic.

[Adult Education Centres \(Epimorfotika Kentra\):](#) The Adult Education Centres fall under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and they offer a variety of interdisciplinary courses which focus mainly on the teaching of foreign languages, arts and crafts, cultural programmes, health and other issues of general interest, as



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well as on teaching professional and vocational skills. During the pandemic, they suspended their activities following the decision of the Ministry. It was only in a few cases where after personal initiative and arrangements from the instructor that some of the classes were transferred online.

Cyprus Third Age Observatory (Paratiritirio Tritis Ilikias): Cyprus Third Age Observatory is an NGO which promotes healthy and active aging. It operates an open structure for the elderly which provides various therapeutic and recreational programs such as physical exercise, occupational therapy, music therapy, drama therapy, group sessions, outdoor activities, games, creating constructions through thematic units, weekly monitoring by a psychologist and more. During the pandemic, the centre suspended their activities for some time. However, some workshops on basic digital literacy and the use of digital means of communication, were organized for the beneficiaries, who being particularly vulnerable were at risk of isolation.

Reflecting on how adult education providers in Cyprus responded to the global pandemic, we can see that although there have been some initiatives, there is a lot of room for improvement. Besides the digital tools, other methodologies and adaptations have to be explored in order to ensure the inclusion of those who might not be able to use digital technologies. Research on what has been done in other countries is important to exchange good practices in order to optimize adult education in Cyprus.

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ADULT EDUCATION CHALLENGES DUE TO COVID-19 IN HUNGARY

COVID-19 pandemic situation changed our life in many areas. Education systems had serious challenges all over the world. There are many lessons to be learned from the pandemic in the field of education, but differences in education systems generate different conclusions.

In Hungary during the first wave of the COVID-19 all schools closed on March 16 2020, until the end of the school year (15 June). Schools had to switch from traditional in-person education to remote education and online teaching in a matter of days. The schools and teachers had to find the proper online education platform, make digital curriculum, ensure the digital equipment and revise the forms of assessment and evaluation within days. Due to the unpreparedness of the education system, including schools and teachers, the transition to remote education has been accompanied by many problems.

Adult education's situation is easier than primary or secondary education as there are a lot of courses used online education or online tools even before COVID-19. For the schools and educational institutions who already had experience with online courses it was easier to adopt the methods to other project because they were familiar with online tools. The main problem was that there were teachers/tutors who did not have any experience with online programs/platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Classroom...etc. It was a quick change without preparation time, so people had to be flexible and had to learn quickly new techniques to be able to continue teaching/tutoring.

The biggest problem of online education in Hungary was the lack of technical facilities. There are a lot of regions or disadvantaged areas where the teachers/students did not have internet access in their home and they also did not have technical equipment like PC, laptop...etc. Without these things online education is not possible. Another difficulty that in the disadvantaged areas libraries and other social institutions provides internet and PC-s to the public, but in pandemic situation these kind of institutions were closed.

Investments in equipment by families played a major role. In many families, parents and several children were at home, which also caused a problem as this was the fact that why not everyone had access to a computer at a same time. There were families where the parents stayed in home office but they have to use their devices all day and they did not have the possibility to buy new devices to their children for online education.

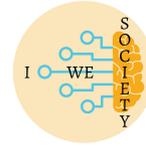
It was helpful that the families, whose child participated in remote education, was able to get the fee of their internet subscription reimbursed afterwards. However, this support did not reach disadvantaged families who did not have a monthly subscription, only a prepaid subscription. It was also a big help that some school and institution provide laptops to students for their home for some months.

Ecocenter had the following experience during COVID-19 in connection with adult courses. Depends on the target group and the course itself three possible ways were implemented:

1. Online education is possible – educational materials are available online, participants have internet and technical equipment to individually follow their courses, they can use online tools, self-assessment tasks to evaluate themselves.
2. Mixed education – educational materials are available online, participants have internet and technical equipment. Participants are not able to learn individually they need tutors/trainer/teacher. Instead of face-to-face sessions online meetings are provided, tutors are available online and they are ready to help in the learning process.



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3. Temporary cancelled courses – participants are not able to work online, they do not have internet possibility or technical equipment or the target group is special like elderly people who are not having the IT skills to continue a course online.