IMPROVING
GUIDANCE &
COUNSELLING
IN ADULT LEARNING

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WHY | Background of this handbook

Dear reader!

This is an on-line version tool of a Handbook that has been developed in the frame of the Erasmus+ project **Improving Guidance and Counselling in Adult Learning (IGCAL)** and is a result of a consortium of four adult education institutions Työväen Akatemia (Finland), AFEdemy, Academy on age-friendly environments in Europe B.V. (The Netherlands), Cáritas Diocesana de Coimbra (Portugal), and Ljudska univerza Celje (Slovenia).

FOR WHOM | Main target groups

Counsellors and teachers, this handbook is intended for you!

With the aim to facilitate your guidance and counselling of the learning process in adult education, we present you a set of practices for mapping background learning parameters such as recognition of prior learning, self-awareness as a learner, ability to make independent choices and evaluations, adult learners' self-esteem, self-respect, and self-efficacy, metacognitive skills, motivation, social-economic background. Each of the presented practices

WHAT, WHEN, WHERE | Use parameters & practices

You're probably wondering why you would even use this online tool and how it can help you with your work?

The tool is an online version of the Handbook, which was built based on the best guidance and counselling practices in adult learning, to map background-learning parameters, collected by the consortium. The practices of the online tool will encourage adult learners to self-reflection and facilitate sharing their thoughts with educators, and thus help them to overcome the barriers to learning and studying.

We have tried them in different institutions and different countries. We were satisfied with the results. We present you with the options.

If you want to find out for who, when, where and why to use a certain parameter or practice, please go to the next sections.

BRIEF SUMMARY

Improving Guidance and Counselling in Adult Learning (IGCAL) is a project founded by European Commission Erasmus+ Program, KA204 – Strategic Partnership for adult education. **Project goal** was to increase the quality of adult education with an emphasis on counselling in the process of lifelong learning. **The aim was** to develop a pedagogical tool to map background learning parameters of adult learners, to expand and develop the skills of counsellors (as tutor/teachers/trainers/educators/social work technicians, psychologists, among others, depending on the context) who support these adult learners and, therefore, break new ground of lifelong guidance and counselling.

PARTNERS

The project was a cooperation between four adult education institutions:

- Työväen Akatemia (Finland)
- AFEdemy, Academy on age-friendly environments in Europe, B.V. (The Netherlands)
- Cáritas Diocesana de Coimbra (Portugal)
- Public institution for adult education Celje (Slovenia)

METHODOLOGY

The pedagogical tool will have elements and practices to map adult learners´ background learning parameters such as:

- Recognition of prior learning
- Self-awareness as a learner
- Ability to make independent choices and evaluations
- Adult learners´ self-esteem, self-respect, and self-efficacy
- Metacognitive skills
- Motivation

- Social economic background

THEORETICAL PART

Guidance and counselling in adult learning (REFERENCES ARE MISSING)

According to the Eurostat glossary (2019), **adult learning** means "the participation of adults in lifelong learning", usually after the end of initial education. Lifelong learning refers to *all learning activities undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within personal, civic, social or employment-related perspectives.*

According to the EU Resolution of the Council of 21st November 2008 , guidance "is an ongoing process that enables citizens of all ages and throughout their lives to identify their skills, competences and interests, to make education, training and employment decisions and manage their life course in education, training, work and other contexts." In fact, guidance and counselling in adult education has several functions (Krasovec, 2011) :

- Learn about personal characteristics, interests, and capabilities
- Learn new habits and motivations
- Inform about education offers
- Help to achieve objectives linked to education as well as personal and professional path
- Orientation to overcome various obstacles that appear during the education process
- Support in learning and educational technologies and development of methods and techniques for efficient learning
- Recognition of prior learning

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FOR WHOM | Main target groups

Presented practices for mapping background learning parameters can be used for different target groups: young adults (20-25 years), adults (over 25 years), adults (over 50 years old), younger older adults (65-79 years), very old adults (over 80 years old) and vulnerable groups such as migrants, the long-term unemployed former prisoners, people with special needs. See more details below.

We have tried them the suggested practices for all these groups. Try and see if they suit you too!

TARGET GROUPS

It is necessary to know the characteristics of specific groups of adult learners, such as their cultural and socioeconomic situation and prior learning, along with other background learning parameters, to plan and implement appropriate educational opportunities for them.

The pedagogical tool can be use for different target groups:

- **Young adults (20-25 years)** are, according to Loevinger's theory of development, at the so-called stage of self-awareness, which includes development as an individual and the acceptance of differences; this manifests itself as, amongst other things, the renunciation of traditional roles and protection mechanisms. Self-reliance is built through interaction with peers of the same age.
- **Adults (over 25 years)** retain all the diversity they bring from their childhood and adolescence into adulthood, but the diversity is still increasing or changing, just as the roles and tasks of adults in different periods of life. All this influences and determines the needs of adults for further education and learning, as well as their possibilities, abilities and concrete paths of education and learning.
- **Adults (over 50 years old) :** older people are usually more committed to their education, have lifelong experiences that they can share with others, and generally, they are intensively involved in the educational process.;
- **Younger older adults (65-79):** Looking at the general sketch of older adults, lifelong learning at older age (65+) could contain the following elements:
  1. Digital skills development, to remain connected to others
  2. Catch up or second chance education: learning a new language or other fields of interest, such as history, philosophy, political science. To compensate what has been missed in earlier life and can be caught up after retirement.
  3. Hobbies training and after retirement training: what to do with empty days and empty nests. Flower arranging, mindfulness, yoga, painting, and biography writing are some examples.
  4. Old-age learning: how to deal with losses (spouse or wife, friends, but also loss of mental or physical strength), how to deal with illnesses.

- **Very old aults (80+)** many of them suffer from chronic diseases (3/4 has multiple chronic diseases, such as heart or lung diseases, diabetes, dementia) or incidentally face mobility issues.
- **The vulnerable groups** such as migrants, the long-term unemployed, former prisoners, those in preparations of release, and people with special needs. The problems of these groups are reflected in unemployment, low education, homelessness and, consequently, further exclusion from society. Vulnerability can stem from physical characteristics, it can stem from social, economic, political, and cultural factors, from current conflicts, and so on.

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WHAT, WHEN, WHERE | Use parameters & practices

In front of you are the background learning parameters, the use of which will be described in detail below. They are the basis for understanding an individual's educational path in adult learning, which is of great help to counsellors/teachers in planning and implementing the learning process. Some of them can be used at the beginning of an education, others in the middle of the process. These are the parameters to background learning:

Figure 1: Parameters to map background learning

Self-awareness
as a learner

Adult learners' self-esteem,
self-respect, and self-efficacy

Motivation

Click on the parameters'
names for further reading!

02

04

06

01

03

05

07

Recognition of
prior learning
(RPL)

Ability to make
independent choices
and evaluations

Meta-
cognitive
skills

Social
economic
background
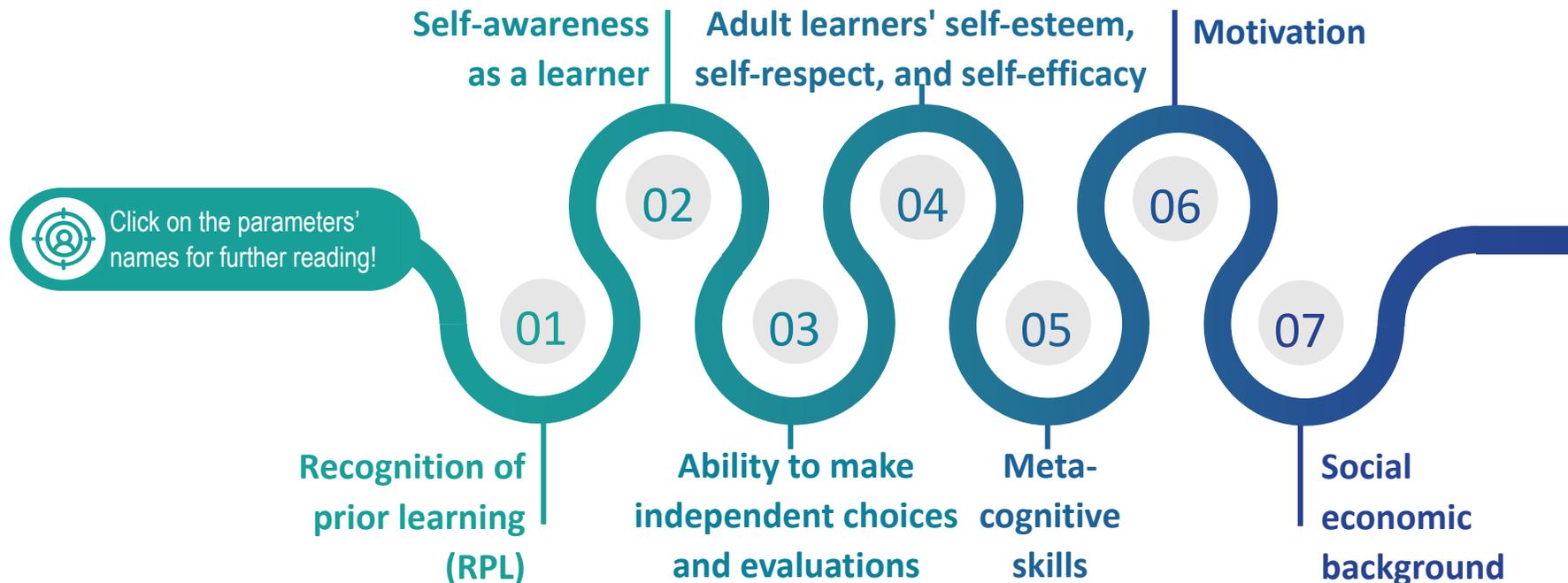
There are two types of practices for each parameter: practices for individual guidance and counselling and suitable practices for working in small groups.

The practices will get better results in a private (individual) or semi-private (a small group) discussion with a student and a counsellor or teacher. In some cases, there are practices that are suitable for both individual and small group activities.Counselling needs trust between the partners and it should be given at the right moment.

01 ⟩ Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

One of the most initial learning parameters in adult education to map is a Recognition of prior learning. Use it at the beginning of the education process. It can be used in individual or group counseling.

Recognition of prior learning is even more important to adult learners than to other students; the adult learner has gainzºed both formal and non-formal education from prior education and other experiences. The recognition of prior learning (RPL) describes a process used to evaluate skills and knowledge gained through life outside of formal education and training, for the purpose of recognising life achievements against a given set of standards or learning outcomes . All the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the standard should be considered in reviewing the prior learning of the learner and RPL should be a part of the learner eligibility assessment (GOV.UK, 2019) . In recognising prior learning, the following should be considered:

- Work experience;
- Prior education, training or associated qualification(s) in a related sector/subject/area;
- Any previous apprenticeship undertaken.

INDIVIDUAL

Suitable practices for individual guidance & counselling

Recognition of prior learning

Name of individual option 2

SMALL GROUP

Suitable practices for working in small groups

Name of grupal option 1

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01 Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

WHAT Short name/Introduction of the practice	**Recognition of prior learning**
TYPE	Questionnaire
FOR WHOM For whom and when to use each of the practices?	• Adults (over 25 years) • Adults (over 50 years old) • The vulnerable groups
WHY Benefits and purposes	Recognition of prior learning is more important to adult learners than to other students; the adult learner has gained both formal and non-formal education from prior education and other experiences. The recognition of prior learning (RPL) describes a process used to evaluate skills and knowledge gained through life outside of formal education and training, for the purpose of recognising life achievements against a given set of standards or learning outcomes.
WHEN When to use this practice?	We can use before going back to school/training. This could later serve as a starting point for face-to-face discussions with a tutor at the beginning of their studies.
EXPERIENCE Sharing the experience (from the partner point of view)	One of the most initial learning parameters in adult education to map is a Recognition of prior learning. Our experience is to use it at the beginning of the education process as you gain insight into the education and competencies achieved.

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TESTIMONIALS Short name/Introduction of the practice	L. K. (16 years old, woman): *"The questionnaire was not difficult to complete, but I do not yet have much experience to list. The counsellor helped me with the questionnaire, which I especially liked."* K. B. (36 years old, woman): "The question seems useful, because I became aware of what experience and knowledge I have gained so far."
IMAGES	
DESCRIPTION Detailed description of the practice	These questionnaires are used to evaluate past educational and work experience and acquired competencies. The questionnaire is used in introductory interviews conducted by the counsellor with the adult learner before enrolling in formal or non-formal education. Based on the answers, the personal education plan is built for the adult learners. The questionnaire is also used in individual or group counselling in order to evaluate the previous work and educational experience of the adult learners and according to the answers we advise on further educational opportunities.
USE	**DOWNLOAD** **editable version (WORD)** **DOWNLOAD** **printable version (PDF)**
WHAT NOW What to do now with the results	Based on the answers, the personal education plan is built for the adult learners. The questionnaire is also used in individual or group counselling in order to evaluate the previous work and educational experience of the adult learners and according to the answers we advise on further educational opportunities.

Go back to selection of options for

🎯   **Recognition of prior learning (RPL)**

Go back to the selection of parameters in

🎯   **Figure 1**
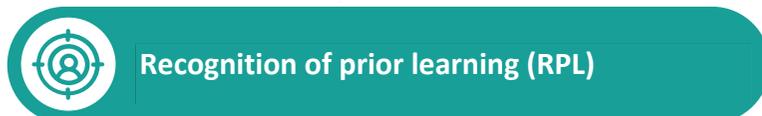
- **Questionnaire**

Recognition of prior learning through a personal education plan
Identify the highest level of education you obtained, as well as the establishment where you completed it
Other completed education
Incomplete education (education that was started, but left unfinished)
Working experience in a field of your current education
Based on your curriculum, mention the professional functions performed, as well as the learning acquired in the different experiences
Informally acquired knowledge (knowledge acquired outside of the formal education – through hobbies, working with a computer, household work etc.)

Recognition of prior learning

Academic path:

- Identify the last level of education you obtained, as well as the establishment where you obtained it

Training courses path:

- Please indicate the training actions you have attended so far

Professional path:

- If you have worked, please indicate your professional experience
- Based on your experience, refer the functions performed as well as the learning acquired in the different experiences

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

The construction of the **portfolio**[1] is an important resource and it should begin with the collection of official evidence, for recognition of prior learning, personal data, and/or other documentation that is considered relevant for the definition of the profile of the candidate, considering the following topics:

- Sex and age

- Education level

- Current professional situation

- Reasons for enrolment

- Expectations/Interests

- Education/Training courses

- Work experience

- Skills acquired through formal, non-formal, informal learning experiences.

- Life context

- Assessment of accessibility

- Availability for learning/pursuing studies

- Availability to seek voluntary work, internships, student exchange programmes, professional mobility.

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[1] ANQEP - AGÊNCIA NACIONAL PARA A QUALIFICAÇÃO E O ENSINO PROFISSIONAL (2017). *Lifelong Guidance at the Qualifica Centres: Methodological Guide.* [Online] Available from: https://anqep.gov.pt/np4/file/339/Ori_Longo_Vida_GM.pdf [Accessed: 15th January 2020]

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- **Stages of intervention in the orientation process**

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            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │     OPENING SESSION     │
            └─────────────────────────┘
                        ⇩
            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │    INITIAL ASSESSMENT   │
            └─────────────────────────┘
                        ⇩
            ┌─────────────────────────┐       ┌──────────────────────────┐
            │   INFORMATION AND       │       │   Vocational education    │
            │     COUNSELLING         │       │  and training available   │
            └─────────────────────────┘       └──────────────────────────┘
                        ⇩                      ┌──────────────────────────┐
            ┌─────────────────────────┐ ⇒     │      Recognition and      │
            │        GUIDANCE         │       │      validation of        │
            └─────────────────────────┘       │       competences         │
                                              └──────────────────────────┘
                                                         ⇩
                                              ┌──────────────────────────┐
                                              │   Skills certification    │
                                              │    (partial or total)     │
                                              └──────────────────────────┘
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▪

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in** *Figure 1*

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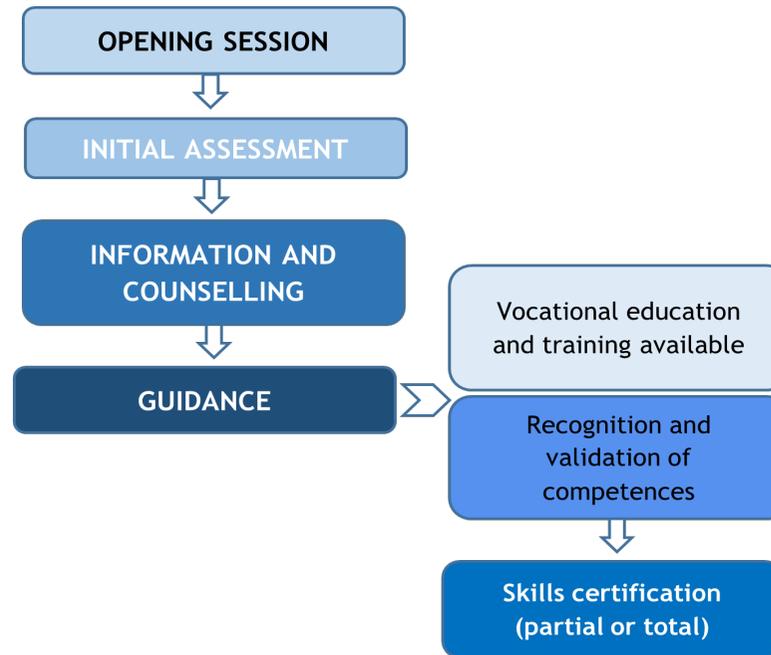
02   Self-awareness as a learner

How does the adult see himself as a learner? This parameter helps focus our intention on ourselves. If used helps us to become self-conscious as objective evaluators of ourselves. It's more suitable to use it in a face-to-face discussion with a counsellor or a teacher. These are the examples used in individual counselling practice.

If you want to make such a discussion in a small group, try the SWOT analysis. It provides helpful baseline information for a group that wants to vision the future or analyse a problem. We try it, it suits us. Try if it suits your work too.

INDIVIDUAL

Suitable practices for individual guidance & counselling

SMALL GROUP

Suitable practices for working in small groups

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02 | Self-awareness as a learner

- **Institutional questionnaires for analysis/evaluation of the previous and current educational path, professional experience, motivation, skills and interest and the individual career project**
- **Supporting activity (learning aid/guidance – face-to-face)**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

- **SWOT-analysis (One´s own Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)**
- **Factors of self-awareness:**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

03 — Ability to make independent choices and evaluations

We used these questionnaires to map Factors of self-awareness that are obtained by encouraging self-reflection of adult learners and to facilitate sharing their thoughts with counsellors or teachers.

With them, you can measure the ability to make independent choices and evaluations, self-esteem, self-respect, and self-efficacy. Use it in a private discussion. It is not always true that adult learners have sufficient self-guidance skills to take responsibility for their learning. The counsellor has a very important role in making this plan for a learner.

INDIVIDUAL

Suitable practices for individual guidance & counselling

SMALL GROUP

Suitable practices for working in small groups

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

03 — Ability to make independent choices and evaluations

- **Profile survey (completed by the candidate) to collect information about the training/formation path, professional experience, motivation, skills and interest and the individual career project Practices suitable for working in small group**
- **Group activities where students can choose news and/or topics to develop in a debate with the class or in short opinion texts**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

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04 Adult learners self-esteem, self-respect and self-efficacy

INDIVIDUAL

Suitable practices for individual guidance & counselling

SMALL GROUP

Suitable practices for working in small groups

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04   Adult learners self-esteem, self-respect and self-efficacy

- **Profile survey (completed by the candidate) to collect information about the training/formation path, professional experience, motivation, skills and interest and the individual career project**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

- **Workshops about self-efficacy, learning strategies and study methods. First theoretical background and then discussions in pairs or small groups about these topics.**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

05 ⟩ Metacognitive skills

Metacognitive skills. How to measure them? You can try these practices. The answers are very useful to encourage self-reflection and critical thinking about the learners' skills and personal strategies used in different situations. It can be extremely useful to analyze and explore adult learners' perceptions and to promote better learning results.

INDIVIDUAL

Suitable practices for individual guidance & counselling

SMALL GROUP

Suitable practices for working in small groups

- **Question form**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in** *Figure 1*

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05   Metacognitive skills

- **Prepare a summary of certain part of the study material. The summaries will be presented and shared with the rest of the group according the timetable provided by the teacher.**
- **Portfolio. The portfolio is an assessment tool that provides an overview of what the students can do with what they know and at the same time detailed on the student's learning process**
- **Survey**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

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06 ⟩ Motivation

Motivation is always important. How to motivate the learners? We used the following questionnaires to encourage participants to complete the educational process. These are the options. Try it. You can use it at the beginning or in the middle of an educational process and is suitable for an individual or group discussion.

INDIVIDUAL

Suitable practices for individual guidance & counselling

SMALL GROUP

Suitable practices for working in small groups

- **Question form**
- **Remember the goals**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in** *Figure 1*

06 Motivation

- **Autoscopy**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

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07 Social economic background

The cultural and socioeconomic background is the parameter that is usually obtained at the beginning of the educational process. We used the following questionnaire to determine which are the factors that influence the successful completion of the educational path: social status, conditions/obligations in the family, time available for education.

INDIVIDUAL

Suitable practices for individual guidance & counselling

SMALL GROUP

Suitable practices for working in small groups

- **"Diagnosis" form**
- **Questionnaire**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***

- **Icebreakers techniques, as effective way of starting a training session, team-building event or an orientation/guidance session and, also allows, to collect cultural and social information.**

- **Go back to the selection of parameters in *Figure 1***