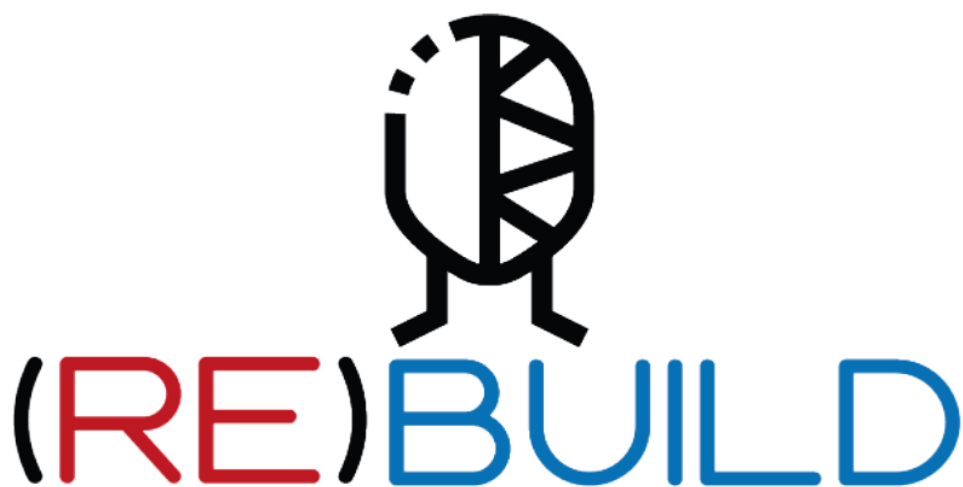


A lifelong career: learning
along the way

(RE)BUILD Policy Paper 2022

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Introduction to the (RE)BUILD project

Framing the policy paper

Globalisation, technological progress, and demographic change are having a profound impact on the world of work. These megatrends are affecting the number and quality of jobs available, how they are performed, and the skills that workers will need in the future to succeed in the labour market. At the heart of all these transformations are the significant technological advances that have been taking place in recent years at a rapid pace and simultaneously generating fast and profound changes in the structures and processes of the labour market. Research demonstrates that low-skilled adults are less likely to participate effectively in education and training, but also that their motivation to do so is somewhat lower than that of adults with higher levels of education. From a strategic point of view, lifelong learning and career management emerge as tools that can respond to the changes introduced by the reconfigurations of current social, economic, political, and cultural practices. By encouraging flexibility, diversity and accessibility in time and space to education, these concepts provide a set of conditions favourable to the promotion of change, from learning to change and from change to learning that social structures, organisations of work and citizens are continuously called upon in the current process of permanent adaptation to such different and complex realities.

From our collective experience of working with adults and jobseekers, the project partners at the outset of the (RE)BUILD project knew that low-skilled adults are less likely to participate effectively in education and training, but also that their motivation to do so is somewhat lower than that of adults with higher levels of education. Although the level of education is an important indicator of a society's human capital, it is not always valid for measuring the population's skills in different contexts. Skills acquired in the education system may become obsolete if they are not updated or, on the contrary, individuals with low levels of formal education may obtain a wide range of skills through their life and work experience. The (RE)BUILD project aimed to help marginalised adults coping with professional transitions or career readjustments, in order to facilitate the understanding of the labour market through the development of career management skills that enable adults with fewer opportunities to explore and plan their own career strategy. Funded by the French National Agency in 2020,



with support from the Erasmus+ programme, the project also set out to assist VET professionals, adult educators, and social workers working with low-skilled and marginalised adults to use the learning outputs and tools of the (RE)BUILD Project to support the development of career management skills and lifelong learning pathways.

Partner organisations from France, Ireland, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, and Slovenia have been collaborating over a 26-months period to develop innovative training materials, self-help resources, and self-guided practices that develop the skills, competences and confidence of low-skills adults and jobseekers across Europe. The project created a tailor-made compendium of career management resources (IO1: Career Management Toolkit of Resources) which has been piloted and used by more than 120 marginalised adults in six European countries. Working with 60 VET professionals and adult educators we developed and trialled a new In-Service Training Programme on Career Guidance, and more than 240 representatives of our main stakeholder groups participated in European (RE)BUILD career management workshops where we promoted access to the (RE)BUILD E-learning platform (IO3) that hosts all of the educational materials of the project in modular, bite-sized units, designed according to the users' specific learning needs.

Through these implementation actions, the project partners gathered qualitative feedback which has been analysed and used as the basis for the commissioning of the (RE)BUILD policy paper. This policy paper presents the lessons learned during our implementation actions, explains the potential of investing in career management initiatives aimed at marginalised adults in Europe, and makes a series of policy and practice recommendations targeted at the decision-makers at national and Europe level to further strengthen the range of career management and lifelong learning supports available to low-skilled adults in Europe.

Setting the scene, why (RE)BUILD?

Policy Context

In today's world regardless of an initial career choice, individuals can no longer depend on a job for life. In fact, they cannot even be sure that the area that they have chosen to work in at the beginning of their career will still exist when they retire. To enable individuals to function in this fluid environment they need to develop skills, behaviours and attributes which will support them to become effective employees and confident career managers.

The importance of adult learning is reflected in the EU-level target that at least 60 % of all adults should be participating in training every year by 2030. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP's skills forecast for employment by 2030 reinforces the trend that the future of work will be knowledge intensive. Jobs that traditionally require a low level of qualification will require increasingly complex tasks, requiring the domain of several literacies, including digital and a wide range of basic skills. Furthermore, the current economic scenario is forcing low-skilled or unemployed workers to reconsider their career project. This is where career management skills and lifelong learning are interrelated and emerge as two extremely useful fields for understanding what is expected of citizens in a learning society.

Set against this context, the objective of the New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030 is to increase and improve the provision, promotion, and take-up of formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities for all, setting new targets to be achieved:

- at least 47% of adults aged 25-64 should participate in learning by 2025, and
- at least 60% of adults should participate in learning by 2030.

In order to do so, the Agenda outlines a vision of how adult learning should develop in Europe by 2030 in five main priority areas: 1.) Governance: with the strengthening of a partnership between governments, regional and local authorities, education and training providers, companies, social partners, public employment, and social services as well as civil society. This cooperation should aim to meet the needs of adult learners and employers, including the funding of adult learning initiatives; 2.) Supply and take-up of lifelong learning



opportunities that should focus on making adult learning more tailor-made and based on the individual's needs; 3.) Accessibility and flexibility of time, place, resources, forms of organisation and implementation, as well as a variety of approaches and measures to increase participation, inclusion, and motivation for learning because to fit in with their life and work responsibilities, flexibility is essential to increase the number of adults in learning; 4.) Quality, equity, inclusion, and success in adult learning. Adult learning is important for fostering gender equality and solidarity between different age groups, cultures, and people from different backgrounds; in this context, national governments should consider implementing incentives to eliminate any barrier that people from disadvantaged groups encounter; and 5.) the green and digital transitions call for every individual to develop new and necessary green and digital skills to work and live in a digital environment and to adapt to the ever-changing labour market.



What (RE)BUILD set out to achieve

Project outcomes and outputs

The concepts of career management and lifelong learning merge as two extremely useful fields for understanding what is expected of citizens in a learning society - that is, a society in which people, throughout their lives and from a quality basic training, are continually involved in educational actions in which they seek to deepen, update, or renew the structures acquired during initial education, with a view to their application, both within and outside the work contexts. The current economic scenario presents low-skilled or unemployed workers with an opportunity to reconsider their career pathways. This is where career management skills and lifelong learning are interrelated and in this cross-section that the idea for the (RE)BUILD Project was borne.

Within the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN, 2007-2015) a working group bringing together representatives from education and labour ministries developed a common competence-based definition for career management skills:

“Career Management Skills refer to a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise, and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions. They are therefore of value to the individual in terms of constructing and implementing a life project in which work [...] occupies a central place.”

Related knowledge, skills and competences concern three areas:

- personal management (e.g., self-knowledge of one’s capacities and interests, social skills etc. and applying this to career planning and other life situations);
- learning management (e.g., understanding the relationship between self and learning opportunities, the requirements of learning pathways and links to the labour market, and applying this to career planning and other life situations);
- career management (sourcing, evaluating, analysing information about occupations, sectors, labour market opportunities, relating this information to one’s self-



knowledge and learning acquisitions and applying this to career planning and other life situations).

Based on the assumption that career development is a lifelong experience, the (RE)BUILD project partners created innovative learning experiences that promote practical intelligence for adults to deal with their personal expectations and acquire personal flexibility for decision-making and exploration of career opportunities whilst also helping VET professionals and adult educators to better intervene in career guidance and management programmes with low-skilled and marginalised adults.

The (RE)BUILD Project delivered the following educational outputs:

1. IO1: A user-friendly and tailor-made Career Management Toolkit of Resources for low-skilled and marginalised adults, which aims to promote knowledge, skills and practices that enable them to strategically address the labour market needs and trends, while developing flexibility, self-knowledge, decision making, and the exploration of career self-management strategies
2. IO2: A tailor-made In-Service Training Programme on Career Guidance that presents the educational resources developed in the project; provides a better understanding on the process of adult learning; fosters a better understanding of the mutations in the labour market and latest trends on career guidance; and finally presents innovative educational strategies to work in career counselling with marginalised adults.
3. IO3: A fully accessible E-learning platform (<https://learn-to-re-build.eu/onlineLearning/>) that enables access to all educational materials of (RE)BUILD in modular training units. All materials are available as Open Educational Resources that can be easily and independently used according to the learner and trainers' needs.

Through the (RE)BUILD project adults were able to:

1. Access and effectively use the full range of career management products and resources at a time and place that suit their needs



2. Identify opportunities to develop their learning goals and employability skills
3. Understand how the labour market works: how to find a job; to appreciate how and why industries and individual jobs within them are changing; and what sort of skills they need to enable them to develop and progress
4. Identify how they can develop within the workplace
5. Be better able to take career decisions, to manage change and uncertainty by forward planning and to make confident choices for themselves

Through our implementation actions, we evaluated the outcome and impact of the (RE)BUILD resources developed, and whilst the effectiveness of the tools and resources were validated by our target groups and stakeholders, the project partners also sought to investigate how the needs of both target groups could be further addressed and elicited feedback from key stakeholders in each partner country to inform the practice and policy recommendations set out below. In total, 12 common recommendations were formulated by the project partners in all six EU countries and relevant at European level.



Practice recommendations:

1. In order to confidently access and use the (RE)BUILD resources, career advisors have an important role to play in helping young people and adults to understand and develop the skills (including digital skills) required to successfully navigate the resources.
2. Motivation is a key driver within adults and must be present if they are to identify opportunities to develop their learning goals and employability skills.
3. Understanding the needs of the target group is really important and ensuring that this knowledge informs the development of the resources was a key learning of the project partners. We formed local working groups of relevant stakeholders and they reviewed and contributed to the project over the past 26 months. Their insights and knowledge were invaluable and ensured that we created practical resource that were ready to be used and applied in both personal and professional settings.
4. People need to be supported in order to be able to make confident choices for themselves in relation to their personal and professional lives. This does not happen automatically when working with low-skills adults and therefore supports needs to be built-in to career guidance and employability services.
5. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have undoubtedly impacted employees, jobseekers, the labour market itself and accelerated changes in how we live, learn, and work. There are however opportunities to capitalise upon given the enforcement changes to workplace practices. Employers, employees, and jobseekers have demonstrated creativity, adaptability and resilience, key skills and strengths that can be brought forward in the post-pandemic labour market.
6. People need support and services to update their knowledge, skills, and competences to fill the gap between their education and training and the demands of a rapidly changing labour market. The ethos and philosophy of lifelong learning can bridge the



skills gap, but more needs to be done to encourage and promote the importance on lifelong learning and its benefits for personal and professional growth.

7. In this context, the (RE)BUILD Project Partners recognises that new approaches are still required to facilitate the participation of adults in lifelong learning. (RE)BUILD contributed; but there is more to be done in terms of skills development, inclusive education and learning, motivation and access and use of technology to minimise barriers to participation.



Policy recommendations

1. The New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030 continues to point out the utmost importance of adult learning, now more than ever, due to the challenges brought by the Covid-19 crisis.
2. There is a need to emphasise the relevance of basic skills for all and of continuously acquiring knowledge, skills, and competences at all levels, in formal, non-formal and informal learning that is because individuals that take part in lifelong learning are better equipped to adapt to new circumstances, develop skills they need for jobs and enhance their employment prospects.
3. Lifelong learning also contributes to increased involvement in society, and it supports personal and social development, the health and wellbeing of the people while taking into consideration the individual's needs and aspirations.
4. Many measures proposed at European level did not offer a holistic lifelong learning approach, as they often strongly focused on vocational skills development and/or basic skills. While these areas are very important, adults and young people cannot be left behind. A broad and holistic approach towards adult learning needs to be strengthened, giving equal importance to all sectors and all forms of learning - formal, non-formal and informal learning.
5. Accessibility and flexibility of time, place, resources, and implementation, as well as a variety of measures to increase participation, inclusion, and motivation for learning needs within education must remain a policy focus. This is particularly true for programmes such as Erasmus+ where educational innovation is encouraged to promote social inclusion.



Conclusion

At local and regional level, the (RE)BUILD project team reinforced and enhanced the network of contacts between target-groups and stakeholders in order to increase the educational offer in terms of the reintegration of marginalised and low-skilled adults in the labour market. We achieved this through increasing the quality of the educational offer available in the field of adult education at a local level in each partner country and promoted a set of local, regional, and national best practices of adult education and career guidance that will hopefully contribute to the long-term know-how and knowledge of professionals working in the fields of adult education, employability services, and career guidance and management supports, so that they can intervene more effectively with marginalised adults.

The recommendations contained within this policy paper have been informed through the development, implementation, and validation of tailor-made educational resources that were piloted and tested in 6 EU Member States, which has contributed to an enhanced understanding of the main obstacles and motivations of adults to reengage in education. It is our hope that we have demonstrated that socio-educational actions can have positive impact in societies nowadays and that in redefining their career pathways, adults now have access to resources that better inform their choices regarding professional opportunities and the current labour market trends so that they are more self-aware and confident in their own skills and abilities to navigate the labour market landscape more successfully.


All of the resources and outputs of the (RE)BUILD Project can be accessed and found at:

www.re-build-project.eu.



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