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 Folkuniversitetet

SpLenDEd

Report on the functionality and relevance of the Common Assessment Framework for Splended project



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Introduction

This document is a finalization of the second intellectual output (IO2) of the project Splended. One of the tasks of this intellectual output is the development of a report compiling and analysing focus groups results provided by partners, specifying the criteria for assessing adult education effectiveness (in terms of outreach, inclusion, support to achieve learning results and equity) on learners with SpLDs. Another task is to optimize the Common Assessment Framework accordingly.

Therefore, the report includes:

- focus group results from the partnership regarding accuracy and functionality on Common Evaluation Framework
- aspects for improvement of the Common Evaluation Framework
- valuable points for using the Common Evaluation Framework

The focus group participants were:

- representatives of adult educator providers
- other relevant stakeholders (education experts, representatives of relevant associations or NGOs)

Report on the functionality and relevance of Assessment Framework for Splended project

During the work with IO2 the partnership has elaborated a focus group with at least 5 participants in each partner country (EL, SI, SE, DE, HR). The aim of the focus group was to test the functionality and relevance of Assessment Framework for Splended project (O2-T1). The Common Assessment Framework is addressed to adult learning providers to assess the effectiveness of their education provision on learners with SpLDs facing the risk of exclusion. The Framework is designed for the evaluation of providers' effectiveness on learners with SpLDs, either by the providers themselves (self-assessment) or by third parties, such as associations of adult education and lifelong learning as well as relevant associations and NGOs.

Folkuniversitetet was responsible for the focus group coordination. All partners were engaged in focus group process, following the Common Assessment Framework provided by Folkuniversitetet, and provided input and focus group results to the task leader. The partners performed the task in accordance to main criteria of the Common Assessment Framework developed initially by Folkuniversitetet in the methodology such as the numbers of participants involved in the focus group in per partner's country. Below we present the summary of the key results from focus groups.

Focus group results

General overview

The overall scope of each focus group was to test the functionality and relevance of Common Assessment Framework for Splended project.

Partners focused on receiving information regarding education effectiveness for learners with SpLDs, getting feedback regarding strong and weak aspects of the education provision, acquiring experience of self-reflection wither regards to education effectiveness of own institution and receiving guidance on how to improve certain criteria of effectiveness.

According to the Assessment Framework the key factors affecting education for learners with SpLDs were:

	Criteria	Indicators
1.	Testing and early identification of SpLDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Multidimensional assessment of learners needs- Possibility for AEP to direct the learners to the testing/diagnostic center- Capacity for AEP to test learners and find SpLDs within their institution- Opportunity to adapt the approach of testing within the institution or center
2.	Recognising strengths and potential of SpLDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Tools used to motivate learners- Increasing self-confidence of learners- Instruments for recognising and updating of existing skills- Acknowledging learner's success and potential- Accepting diversity
3.	Ensuring post-educational progress of the learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Preventing drop out- Tools to monitor post educational employability, inclusion in society, further learning (assessment questionnaires, follow up)- Development of independence of learners and ability to cope with difficulties on their own after the education
4.	Awareness about institution and reaching out the learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Level of awareness and connection with all relevant organisations working with learners- Channels for promoting of AEP- Reaching out disadvantaged groups, immigrants, vulnerable individuals
5.	Constant upskilling of adult educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mobility, EU projects for teachers- Continuous education
6.	Communication and recognition of needs of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ability to communicate with learners- Prioritisation of learners- Understanding the needs of learners
7.	Methods and forms of implementation of education for SpLDs learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inclusive learning environment- Use of evidence-based learning methods for successful education- Focus on the project- based learning/innovative learning

8.	Systematic quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of satisfaction of SpLDs learners with education - Instruments for systematic QA exists and are used constantly - Monitoring for innovativeness
9.	Provision of necessary adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility for learning premises for learners with physical needs - Affordability of the program for the learners - Technical support - Individual learners' approach which is adapted either in individual or group classes. - Cooperation with target group organisations and support from local authorities
10.	Updated and adjusted curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The open dialogues and flexibility in curriculum development - Multidisciplinary curriculum including development of soft skills - Adapted evaluation procedures (exams) for learners with SpLDs - Curriculum can be adjusted according to possibilities and interests of the learners

Valuable points for using the Common Evaluation Framework

The interviewees noted that the framework is sustainable and useful tool, it can be used by many organizations and is a good source to get self-assessment of the quality of AEP in term of working with SpLDs. In addition, the framework covers all relevant aspects when delivering education for learners with special needs and without. It easy to use. It is a good self-reflection tool for trainers and reminds about important aspects of teaching for specific groups and will be really useful for organizations providing adult education and on-the-job-training.

Focus groups participants agree on the usefulness of SpLenDEd Assessment Framework. However, their opinions are not specific enough to warrant any changes to the tool. This seems to be reflection of the current situation where there is no systematic approach to working with adult participants with SpLDs and where individual members of staff rely on their own competences and resourcefulness when providing guidance and educational services to adults with SpLDs.

For example, one participant showed more sensitivity to the subject because of her personal situation – having a child with learning difficulties due to complications at birth and having positive experience with therapies the child has received by now and their efficiency. However, such financial, legal and educational support is not available for adults born too early to benefit from it.

In partner countries Assessment Framework such as this could provide a milestone in how adult education providers respond to the issue od including adult participants with SpLDs in the educational programmes.

Also, participants stated that the main useful points of the Framework are:

- the possibility of self-reflection regarding the effectivity of adult education that particular institution offers
- specific guidelines that suggest how to improve adult education's effectivity criteria
- the fact that it is adapted for the self-evaluation of the effectiveness of adult education provision

- stimulates continuous improvement and development of the institution
- the institution can see exactly which areas can be improved and how and in which areas are the providers already good at
- developing a habit of thinking about their work and constantly trying to improve their work
- self-assessment generates instant results and provides us with the immediate insight into the condition of education with regard to learners with SPLDs
- sustainable and beneficial, because it can be used directly, without involving the third parties

Notes:

- Some participants noted that the content of the questions at the Assessment Framework were addressing only the organizations providing adult education and not the educators per se. They pointed out that despite the reference of adult educators as target group, no adult educator can use the tool in order to update his/ her methods and skills in the provision of education to learners with SPLDs.
- One important point from interviewees was related to the nature of the Assessment Framework. They noted that it is an excellent single use tool for providers in order to check the current state in relation to the effectiveness to provision of education to SPLDs however there are no relevant tips or recommendations or an individual assessment that would guide the provider on how to improve different fields to score higher in the future.
- GDPR provisions and forms are not explicitly mentioned in the format.

Main aspects for improvement of the Framework

Suggestions:

- to add some open questions where practical examples could be inserted or describe individual cases.
- to use the Framework for a period of time in a national context to get a concrete insight into which improvements are needed if any regarding either the content or form.
- to provide more detailed instructions about the interpretation of the results.
- to reduce the question to two per indicator because the tool was considered too lengthy
- to include theoretical elaboration on adult's specific learning difficulties
- to create a digital tool of the Framework as well as the Word document