

# Learning model Reskilling Lab

A blueprint of the European Reskilling Lab

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## About the RESCALE project

The 2020 OECD statistics show that 9% of the 25–64 year-olds with an educational level below upper secondary school are unemployed. Besides, lots of in-transition workers, unemployed and inactive adults are not joining adult education. In addition, the EU argues that the green transition and digital transformation is likely to unevenly affect sectors. Therefore, the RESCALE project will develop an innovative approach to up- and reskill skills of in-transition workers, unemployed or inactive adults for new tasks and new jobs in particular from declining sectors into the green and digital economy.

By developing an innovative infrastructure called the 'Reskilling Lab', the labor market position and level of proficiency of transversal, basic, digital and green skills of these vulnerable adults will be improved. First, a comparative analysis will be realized to compare the educational and labor market infrastructures throughout Europe focussing on up- and reskilling skills. As a result an assessment tool for identifying skills among these adults and an innovative European 'Reskilling Labs'

model will be developed, existing of a blueprint for the European 'Reskilling Lab', a model for enhanced career guidance, counselling and mentoring and innovative training materials and –methods. In cooperation with stakeholders like companies, adult education and training providers and public and private organizations 'Reskilling Labs' in 7 countries for 210 to 350 in-transition workers, unemployed or inactive adults will be realised. These 'Reskilling Labs' will be scientific evaluated. Based on these results a digital European 'Reskilling Labs' manual and roadmap for sustainable implementation for professionals will be developed in addition to a policy-model for policy-makers existing of a prototype of a digital decision support system and a business model in order to stimulate effective strategies to up- and reskill skills of in-transition workers, unemployed or inactive adults.

### Disclaimer

This product has been translated by use of AI. Although everything has been checked thoroughly still some minor imperfections can be noticed. For the official English document see <https://rescale-eu.com/>.

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## Education for adults

Adults participate in a learning programme if they do not experience any barriers to (re)learning and feel that it suits them (De Greef, 2021). They discuss this with someone they trust during a one-on-one conversation. Participants often experience barriers to participating in a learning programme in the first place. For potential participants in the Reskilling Lab, a financial incentive can encourage the participation, as well as the perspective of an improvement in their working situation. At the same time, however, bad school experiences can prevent them from doing so, despite those incentives (Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2015). In addition to this intrinsic factor, external factors such as lack of time, financial constraints or having a job play a greater role and must be overcome (De Greef, 2021).

Women, in particular, may face compounded barriers due to caregiving responsibilities, part-time employment, or previous negative school experiences, often shaped by gendered expectations and systemic inequalities at intersectional level (Collins, 2019). For example, single mothers or women re-entering the labour market may need additional support through flexible scheduling, childcare solutions, and gender-sensitive facilitation. Financial incentives and the possibility of improved employment conditions are important motivators for all participants, but for women and other marginalized groups, these incentives must be accompanied by supportive structures that address gender-specific constraints.

Incorporating a gender mainstreaming perspective into the Reskilling Lab model means ensuring that the different needs, challenges, and aspirations of women and men are considered at every stage of the educational process. It requires an intentional effort to dismantle gender-based barriers to adult learning and to promote equal opportunities for all learners, especially those from structurally disadvantaged groups. Evaluation frameworks should include gender-sensitive indicators, such as:

- Gender distribution of participants
- Completion and drop-out rates by gender
- Post-training employment outcomes disaggregated by gender
- Qualitative feedback on gender-based experiences during training

At the start of an educational programme, including a Reskilling Lab, it is important by each participant to have a good understanding of:

- The socio-demographic background (ethnicity, family, age, education), which are for the Reskilling Lab
  - 20 – 64 years old inhabitants
  - At EQF Level 1 or 2
  - Subgroups are: women, migrants, young adults, elderly workers 55+
- Daily activities (work and spare time)
  - The Reskilling Lab focuses on:
    - Unemployed
    - Inactive adults
    - In-transition workers in companies
- Network of networks in which they participate
- To able and to want to learn (in relation to the duration of the vulnerable position)
- The feeling of a certain sense of urgency to learn

From a gender perspective, each of these subgroups should be analysed not only demographically, but also in terms of their gendered experiences in work and education. This means integrating gender analysis into participant assessments, programme development, and evaluation.

The educational pathways should take this diversity into account. The question is what important elements are concerning the didactics of adult learning, in the target group of the Reskilling Lab.

Elements which always play an important role during adult learning.

## Importance of reskilling

For reskilling is important to satisfy the following demands:

### Job Creation

The transition to a digital/green economy is projected to create millions of new jobs, requiring a skilled workforce to fill these roles.

### Adapting to Change

Many existing industries and occupations will need to adapt to become more digitally/environmentally friendly, requiring reskilling for workers to stay relevant.

### Addressing Skills Gaps

There is a growing recognition that many individuals (especially older women) lack the skills needed to support the digital/green transition, highlighting the need for targeted reskilling programs.

### Promoting a Just Transition

Reskilling initiatives are crucial for ensuring that the transition to a digital/green economy benefits everyone, not just those already in the industry.

## Stakeholders for reskilling

Stakeholders are:

- Providers of education (adult education and VET)
- Local and regional government
- Companies
- Trade Unions
- NGO's
- Social security Offices and Employment Centres

Collaborative public private (CPP) initiatives are often called alliances, partnerships, or networks, but they generally refer to voluntary collaborations.

We cooperate with companies in order to get a better access to a skilled workforce. Besides, we are focusing on 'vulnerable groups' so that they gain the needed skills and are able to take part in a transition to increase their social inclusion and labour market position. Furthermore, we cooperate with educational institutions so that they can stay relevant and they will have tools to have a faster answer on the fast changes in the labour market and society as well.

The overarching aim is 'adapting to change on all levels (public and private partners) and a contribution to employability' besides promoting a 'just transition' on macro level.

Stakeholders such as educational providers, employers, tra-

de unions, and NGO's must embed gender mainstreaming in their policies and practices by collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data, designing outreach strategies that specifically target underrepresented gender groups, offering mentoring programmes for women and gender-diverse individuals, ensuring that social protection measures (e.g. childcare, parental leave) are compatible with participation in reskilling initiatives.

## Importance of basic skills in the Reskilling Lab for vulnerable adults

In particular, with the term basic skills, we refer to literacy, numeracy, digital skills and green skills. Green skills are about sustainability. That means thinking about the limits of our planet and taking care of people, animals, and nature. Sustainability skills help people to live by sustainable values, understand how systems work, and act for a healthy, fair, and sustainable future.

Reskilling empowers individuals to contribute to the fight against climate change and to improve personal and social development (digital) and so to deliver both social and economic value to the "region", as well as improving the lives of residents and finally to create a more sustainable world.

These 'Reskilling Labs' emphasize the importance of closing the gap between the present skills of the workforce and the future skills needed. Beyond this, it looks at organizations' significant role in developing a skilled and innovative workforce.

The Reskilling Labs need to take the diversity of the target into account and has to focussed on reskilling and the basic skills, which are mentioned before. The question is what important elements are concerning the didactics of adult learning, in the target group of the Reskilling Lab. Elements which always play an important role during adult learning.

## Successful elements of adult education for basic skills in the Reskilling Lab

Research into successful adult learning shows that a flexible, tailor-made approach based on a variety of four didactic principles, namely instruction, engagement, learning strategies and reflection, leads to successful learning outcomes. In addition, it is important to offer a variety of learning methods, including person-centred, experience-based and practice-oriented learning. The coach fulfils the role of expert, mentor and career counsellor (see Figure 1); also, in this framework the coaching figure is very important: they should be intensive personal guidance that take into account any limitations. A good learning environment is also crucial. It involves a combination of practice and theory.

By integrating gender mainstreaming into the entire Reskilling Lab model, the programme not only improves individual outcomes but contributes to systemic equality in the labour market and society at large.



Figure 1: Successful elements of adult didactics (English main figure of RESCALE)

## Importance of tailor-made approach

Learning in homogeneous groups seems to be less effective, especially for ‘weak learners’, but a flexible learning environment for heterogeneous groups is promising (Guldemond, 1994; Marzano et al., 2001). For learning pathways for basic skills for adults, the aim is to achieve divergent differentiation, whereby each participant can work towards the learning objectives in their own way (De Greef, 2018). It is much less important that all participants achieve the minimum objectives set, as is the case with convergent differentiation (Van der Vegt et al., 2019).

## Didactical principles Adult Education

The educational model uses four didactic principles: instruction, engagement, learning strategies and reflection. These principles can be applied flexibly and appropriately to the participant.

### Instruction

It is important to adapt the instruction given to the participant to the goals and the way in which the participant learns. Table 1 shows an overview of the possible instructions and their characteristics.

**Table 1: Overview of instruction types and their characteristics**

Instruction type	Characteristic
Oral instruction	The teacher explains step by step
Visual instruction	With images, pictograms, diagrams or video
Written instruction	Short sentences, clear structure, possibly bullet points
Modelling (demonstrating)	The teacher demonstrates first
Step-by-step practice	First practise together, then independently
Interactive instruction	Think together, ask questions, discuss choices
Digital instruction	Explanation via apps, video, animation or interactive steps
Or a combination: Say it, show it, let them do it and let them repeat it	

### Involvement

Teaching skills requires intensive involvement on the part of the teacher, but it is important that the participant also takes initiative and that the locus of control shifts from the teacher to the participant. This is important for the participant’s motivation and self-confidence. Research shows that self-directed learning can then be promoted (Bonset & Rijlaarsdam, 2004). The teacher’s control is transferred to shared control with the participant, after which the participant gains complete control over the learning process. The teacher first guides the learning process, then takes



a step back and provides examples, then only options, then suggestions, and finally criteria, and then only advice to the participant.

### Learning strategy

Using different learning strategies ensures successful learning outcomes (McDonough, 2011) and promotes self-direction (Kostons et al., 2014). According to Kostons et al. (2014), these are referred to as cognitive learning strategies, such as relating (breaking down into parts) and structuring (organising, bringing together and schematising). Metacognitive learning strategies can also be used (Van der Vegt, 2022). Participants are then supported in:

- Setting goals
- Making realistic plans
- Seeking help during learning
- Evaluating the learning process with fellow participants or on an individual level

### Reflection

A differentiated, process-oriented reflection, in which there is time for positive learning experiences, effort is rewarded and there is sufficient interaction with others, increases learning success. A model for promoting reflection among adults is Mezirow's transformational learning (1997). The model seems to work well for adults (Taylor, 2000). The adult participant's own (practical) experiences are central, and reflection creates new experiences that allow the participant to adjust his or her daily practice. The

following steps are taken (Mezirow, 1997):

1. Disorienting dilemma: what did not go as I wanted it to?
2. Self-study: what does that have to do with me and my actions?
3. Critical examination of assumptions: what are my pet subjects and what could be different?
4. Recognition of what others are going through in the same process: how do others do that?
5. Exploring options: what could I do differently?
6. Formulating an action plan: how am I going to put this into practice?
7. Reintegration into life: how do I ensure that this approach becomes part of my life?

Research results from Ruland and Ahern (2007) confirm this model, demonstrating that reflection is a learning process that is initiated by the individual but applied in interaction with others. According to Kinkhorst (2010), reflection must also be in line with the motivations, meaningful experiences and cognitive abilities of the participant. By means of objective assessment criteria appropriate to the starting level, it is possible to engage in conversation with the participant who has practised sub-skills based on new knowledge. This is a form of differentiated reflection, in which attention can also be paid to rewarding effort (Buisman, 2017; O'Neill & Thomson, 2013).

It is important that positive experiences are also central, because

se previous negative learning experiences can lead to a lack of confidence in one's own learning abilities (Vermeersch & Vandembroucke, 2010).

## Ways of learning

The educational model attaches importance to offering a variety of learning methods. These include person-centred, experience-based and practice-based learning.

### Person-centred learning

Person-centred learning focuses on the participant as an individual and promotes learning success by tailoring the learning process to his or her needs, abilities and life situation. When the learning environment is tailored to the individual needs of the participants, what they learn is also applied in practice (Droogmans et al., 2016). Research shows that the use of the participatory method (which focuses on the needs and context of the participants) produces positive results (Arbarini, et al. 2018). Research also shows that participants are more motivated to complete a task if it is related to personal themes such as human relationships, gender and minority-specific life challenges and personal growth (Cooke, 2006).

### Experiential learning

Experiential learning is possible if there are sufficient opportunities for practice and authentic learning materials and activities are used. Participants indicate that the content must be related

to their own practice (De Greef & Bohnenn, 2011). The learning activities must also be experiential. Research shows that co-operative learning, Team Based Learning, the Flipped Classroom and Total Physical Response in particular can promote learning success (Considine et al., 2014; Gökmen, 2009; Låg & Sæle, 2019; Michaelsen & Sweet, 2011; Moghaddam & Heidari, 2018; Obitube et al., 2020; Van Alten et al; 2019; Zulpan, 2018).

### Practice-oriented learning

According to research, focusing on the participant's practice appears to be an important condition for success in adult education. This means that there must be sufficient opportunities to apply what has been learned in practice, i.e. that there are sufficient transfer opportunities (De Greef et al., 2012). In addition, learning success is promoted when the participant's immediate environment is also involved in the learning process (De Greef et al., 2015; De Greef et al., 2019).

## Qualified teacher as expert, mentor and career counsellor

The teacher fulfils the role of expert, mentor and career counsellor. The flexible, tailor-made approach is successful thanks to a qualified teacher who balances the roles of expert and mentor (De Greef & Bohnenn, 2011). If the teacher is qualified, the participants' learning progress is greater (Vorhaus et al., 2011). In addition to generic teaching skills, teachers must have subject-specific didactic knowledge and skills. However, subject-specific knowledge and specific pedagogical experi-

se are also important in order to be able to teach basic skills in different ways (Coben, et al, 2007). This enables the teacher to respond to the diversity of the participants and guarantee a flexible learning approach.

In addition, the teacher must provide the participant with clear information (about the learning process) during the guidance and encourage the participant during the learning process (Cocquyt et al., 2019). In doing so, the teacher compliments the participant and offers support during the learning process, possibly with additional support from a volunteer (De Greef et al., 2015; De Greef et al., 2019). Connectionist teaching is important here, whereby a strong connection is made between the various (content-related) components of the basic skills and the world outside the classroom (Coben et al., 2003). Teachers can take the following actions (Carpentieri et al., 2009):

- Provide coherent explanations
- Give participants time to understand the concepts independently
- Offer participants numerous learning opportunities
- Understand the learning process and give participants feedback
- Give participants the opportunity to express themselves

Within the Reskilling Lab, it is also important to pay attention to the participant's career. The teacher, as a career coach, plays an active and practical role in helping participants make the transition from school to work.

The exact role depends on the path that the individual participant is following:

- Has a choice already been made regarding a specific work situation, or does that still need to be done, and does the participant need to become more familiar with the field through work experience placements, for example?
- Is there a network that can be used, or does it still need to be built up?
- What kind of learning pathway is the participant following, are they already working, is it an internship or voluntary work?
- Has the participant already drawn up a CV, do they need help writing a cover letter?
- What guidance is needed during the first days of work during the transition, preparation or a visit, or is it necessary to be available as a source of information?

This role of the teacher is also important during the first days of work. However, the exact details of the role are flexible and depend on what the individual participant needs in order to find the right place in the labour market.

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## Colophon

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