REPORT FROM THE PILOT EXECUTION OF BLENDED LEARNING TRAINING

Project
Old Guys Say Yes to Community

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This document represent an evaluation report from the blended learning course that was developed in the context of *Old Guys Say Yes to Community* (Erasmus+) project. This blended learning course was intended for representatives of local communities, civil society, educators and all others who are interested in the topic of elderly and older men.

1.1 Background

Online learning course is designed and offered in a Moodle LMS platform on the project domain (learn.oldguys.si), but the whole Moodle package is available as a free download on the Old Guys OER portal (https://oer.oldguys.si/). Online learning course is free to use and is licenced with Creative Commons license CC BY-NC, that allows others to redistribute, edit and build upon the content, but not commercially (the original authors must be credited).

The aim of this online course is to introduce community workers' and NGO stakeholders' strategies for how to improve the participation of older men (aged 60 years or more) in the local community and how to encourage older men's socialisation, informal learning and inclusion in organisations which are not primarily meant for education and learning in the third and fourth life stages.

Therefore, this course suggests how to develop bottom-up strategies for community activities targeting older men, and direction for networking community organisations. Besides this, it tries to raise public awareness of the social isolation of men aged 60 years or more; build the capacity of national and local institutions/organisations to address (self)marginalisation and poor health of older men, through social innovations and alternative approaches fostering community learning, doing and socialising; disseminate research findings through diverse educational programmes and public discussions (with all generations, with NGO representatives and other stakeholders in civic society, adult education and policies) to better cope with the demanding issue of social isolation.

Erasmus+

1.2 Blended Learning Course Characteristics

Structure of the course is two-fold and it takes the form of blended learning:

- Online learning takes place in Moodle classroom that includes 4 themes/modules to train participants in the core knowledge and is 4 weeks long. Each module consists of introductory reading materials and presentation of good practices that were collected internationally.
- The face-to-face part of the training takes place as the workshop at the beginning and after the completion of the online course. Special attention is needed for the second workshop where participants are invited to evaluate training course and reflect on their community strategies.

Online course consists of four modules that introduce participants to the topic of older men's learning and with a focus on concepts, particularly relevant in contexts their well-being and social participation. Each module corresponds to one week with a workload for participants of approximately 5 hours per week. Online course, therefore, will have a total workload of 20 hours for the participants. These hours consider not just reading the information contained in the modules and watching the videos, but also the complementary readings, carrying out the assessment activities and participating in the forums.

1.2.1 Course Syllabus

Course content is structured into four themes.

Theme 1: Pluralisation of transitions to retirement and ageing

In this module, participants become acquainted with the characteristics of the transition from retirement to employment. These have changed in the European Union in the last few decades, as the higher retirement age, working age is longer, and pensions are reduced, which no longer provide decent living.

Erasmus+

Theme 2: Absent bodies and invisible lives

Several studies have confirmed the low inclusion rate of men aged 60 or over in organized learning programs and other leisure activities, and this is linked to the quality of life of men who are worse than they might be. In the modern debate about ageing, men often describe in the third and fourth stages of life through "absent bodies" and "invisible lives" (Fleming, 1999). Consequently, concepts such as ageing, social sex and handicapping can be interpreted and understood by studying the body in old age.

Theme 3: Re-defining masculinity and gender capital

Increasingly, research shows that manhood is not easy to define, since gender-based practices change due to the influence of historical as well as social, political and economic structures. In addition, hegemonic masculinities are often based on stereotypes and structures that influence how men behave and how they think, and what they attach to the meaning of "being a man". In this chapter we will learn some stereotypes about men and find that manhood is becoming more inclusive, egalitarian, non-traditional, and active today.

Theme 4: Community-based learning, action, and spaces

In this chapter you will learn about the importance of community education and informal learning. Although researchers often focus more on formal rather than non-formal learning, the learning environment can with informal learning offer essential information, and in this case, people are involved in community activities.

Erasmus+

2. METHODOLOGY

The online course evaluation was carried out in two steps. In the first step, we conducted an online survey of participants at the end of the online training session. In addition, we conducted a group interview at the final workshop about the content and implementation of the program itself. At the last workshop we also presented the results of an online survey.

2.1 Participants

The evaluation was carried out in all three partner countries: Slovenia (April, 2019), Estonia (June, 2019), Poland (September, 2019). In Portugal, the evaluation will be carried out after the training has been completed (November 2019).

2.2 Data Collection

We collected the data in two ways: through an online survey that was included in the Moodle online classroom and through a group interview conducted at the final training workshop in Ljubljana (Slovenia).

3. RESULTS

The main results of the evaluation are presented below. Due to the small number of country-by-country responses, we present them together.

First, we asked them how they would rate the individual elements of the online classroom. In this case, we were primarily interested in the user experience of the online classroom, e.g. whether the materials were interactive enough, the user interface simple enough, etc.

The results of our survey show that, on average, participants were satisfied with the online classroom user experience. Participants answered on a five-point Likert scale, with a score of 1 indicating "I completely disagree" and a score of 5 "I completely agree" (questionnaire is in the appendix).

Erasmus+

The highest scores were given to page load speed, navigation comprehensibility, and linguistic relevance of the published materials. They also believed that the online classroom was done professionally.

TABLE 1:

Evaluate the following features of the course:

Items	N	M	SD
I miss more interactivity (R)	28	3	1,04
Information, content and instructions are given in an interesting and attractive way	28	3,9	0,98
Texts are written appropriately, without typing errors	28	4,1	0,9
At each step, I understand what I need to click in order to get to the desired content	27	4,1	1,07
There is not enough multimedia (video, sound, animations) (R)	28	2,5	1,23
I have the impression that the page is made professionally	28	4	0,74
I like the classrooms design	28	3,9	0,77
The page is loaded quickly	28	4,4	0,88

Note: 1 = I completely disagree; 5 = I completely agree; R = Reversed

Although all items were rated highly, we can say that respondents mostly missed more multimedia content (e.g. video or audio) and interactive learning materials. These are definitely aspects of the online classroom and downloadable materials that should be improved in the future.

In a group interview at the closing workshop, participants also highlighted similar aspects of the online classroom. Above all, they wanted as much multimedia content as possible to present to them in an attractive way the issues they were addressing.

Erasmus+

The following table presents a content evaluation of the training, i.e.: whether the participants saw the content as interesting, useful or valuable. Their answers are presented in Table 2. Even from this point of view, it can be said that the participants were very satisfied with the training they attended. They were most satisfied with the content and supporting materials. They also appreciated the amount of knowledge they gained in this course. All the assessments were high, but one could say that depending on the topic discussed, participants would like a bit more practical information and activities that would improve their practice.

TABLE 2:

The following statements are related to the online course itself...

Items	N	M	SD
Overall, this is an excellent online course	28	3,9	0,86
As part of the course, I optimally developed my knowledge about older men	28	4	0,92
I was interested in the content of the course before the course itself even began	28	4,1	0,97
This online course required more effort than other similar courses (R)	27	2,8	1,22
E-materials for each topic are well organized	27	4	0,9
The contents of each topic are interesting	27	4,1	0,96
The course was supported by well-arranged materials and relevant study literature	27	4,1	0,89
The course gave enough emphasis on practice	27	3,9	0,86
I learned a lot in the online course	27	4	0,9

Note: 1 = I completely disagree; 5 = I completely agree; R = Reversed

At the end of the workshop the answers from the survey were confirmed. Participants emphasized that the online course is well designed, but that it is important to enrich it with more practical and country-specific examples in the future.

Erasmus+

In the next question, we asked the participants if they were missing something in the online course, whether they found some content redundant. Their answers are summarized in Table 3.

As we can see from the average values of the grades, the respondents mostly want more interactive materials and activities.

TABLE 3:

What could be added or removed from the online course?

Items	N	M	SD
Topics dealing with the lives of older men	26	3,5	0,86
Examples from abroad	26	3,3	0,72
Examples from my country	26	3,9	0,91
Activities for the participants	27	3,5	0,8
Quizzes for examination	27	3,4	0,97
Multimedia content (video, audio)	26	3,3	0,8
Articles and research	26	3	0,92
Interactive lessons	27	3,6	0,84
Other: _____	5	2,8	1,48

Note: 1 = Much less; 5 = Much more

We were also curious if they noticed anything else that we did not include in the table items. Respondents answered "Other" by entering various statements, e.g. that the discussion in the forum is very useful for sharing different experiences and practices between participants; to include more multimedia content, etc. They also pointed out some of the technical errors that occurred when translating the online course into partner languages. The opportunity to share experiences and share good practices was also highlighted in the "live discussion" at the workshop in Ljubljana. Participants felt that sharing these practices could confirm that they were doing well and would strengthen their confidence in working with this target group.

Erasmus+

4. KEY CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude with the realization that, according to most of the participants, the online course was well prepared. Both the survey and the group interview indicated the satisfaction of the participants – in terms of the technical and the content of the course preparation. The evaluation showed that participants in all three countries where the pilot was implemented missed / recommended mainly three things: (1) more practical examples to reflect the situation in each country, i.e. as much material as possible related to the country of origin of the participant; (2) greater interactivity in terms of the preparation of new multimedia materials, videos, etc.; (3) greater opportunity for participant activity – sharing experiences, discussion among participants, etc.

We agree with these findings and take them as challenges that the authors of the materials in the online course will have to face in the future implementation and updates of the online classroom.

5. REFERENCES

Eurostat (2017). Adult participation in learning by gender (%), available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&lang

Fleming, A. A. (1999). Older men in contemporary discourses on ageing: Absent bodies and invisible lives. *Nursing Inquiry*, *6*(1), 3–8.

Golding, B. Mark, R., & Foley, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Men learning through life*. Leicester: NIACE.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1994). *Evaluating training programs: The four levels*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Jelenc Krašovec, S., & Radovan, M. (Eds.) (2014). *Older men learning in the community: European snapshots*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts.

McGivney, V. (1999). *Informal learning in the community. A trigger for change and development*. Leicester: NIACE.

Erasmus+

6. APPENDICES

6.1 Course Evaluation Survey

Q1 - Please, select a country of your online course

○ **Poland**

○ **Estonia**

○ **Portugal**

○ **Slovenia**

Q2 - On the scale below, please evaluate the following features of the course "Promotion of the involvement of older men":

	I completely disagree	I disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I completely agree
I miss more interactivity.	○	○	○	○	○
Information, content and instructions are given in an interesting and attractive way.	○	○	○	○	○
Texts are written appropriately, without typing errors.	○	○	○	○	○
At each step, I understand what I need to click in order to get to the desired content.	○	○	○	○	○
There is not enough multimedia (video, sound, animations).	○	○	○	○	○
I have the impression that the page is made professionally.	○	○	○	○	○
I like the classrooms design.	○	○	○	○	○
The page is loaded quickly.	○	○	○	○	○

Erasmus+

Q3 - The following statements are related to the online course itself.

	I completely disagree	I disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I completely agree
Overall, this is an excellent online course.	○	○	○	○	○
As part of the course, I optimally developed my knowledge about older men.	○	○	○	○	○
I was interested in the content of the course before the course itself even began.	○	○	○	○	○
This online course required more effort than other similar courses.	○	○	○	○	○
E-materials for each topic are well organized.	○	○	○	○	○
The contents of each topic are interesting.	○	○	○	○	○
The course was supported by well-arranged materials and relevant study literature.	○	○	○	○	○
The course gave enough emphasis on practice.	○	○	○	○	○
I learned a lot in the online course.	○	○	○	○	○

Q4 - What did you miss / think in the online course in the future?

	Much less	Somewhat less	No changes required	Somewhat more	Much more
Topics dealing with the lives of older men	○	○	○	○	○
Examples from abroad	○	○	○	○	○
Examples from my country	○	○	○	○	○
Activities fort the participants	○	○	○	○	○
Quizzes for examination	○	○	○	○	○
Multimedia content (video, audio)	○	○	○	○	○
Articles and research	○	○	○	○	○
Interactive lessons	○	○	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○	○	○

Erasmus+

Q5 - What else could be added or removed from the online course?

Q6 - You have reached the end of the survey. Would you like to tell us something else?