ALTER
ALTERNATIVE SAFETY NETS

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symplexis

Transnational Report │ Output 1, Task 1.2

O1: Development of capacity building methodology for educators of alternative education institutions for adults

Task 1.2: Study of the existing level of digital skills & competences of adults attending alternative educational institutions

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Partners

Executive Summary

The **ALTER project's Transnational Report** (Output 1, Task 1.2) aims to consolidate the results from the primary and secondary research carried out in five partner countries **(Turkey, Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain)** about the existing web-based professional profiling methodologies & practices, as well as the existing level of digital skills & competences of adults attending alternative educational institutions. More specifically, It summarizes the **desk research** and **stakeholder's interviews (50 in total)** on how digital and social media are used for job search at transnational level and, in addition, discusses the key findings reached through organized focus groups and online surveys with a) **educators of adults (58 in total)**, expressing opinions about their level of digital skills and b) **adults having dropped out of school** and attending alternative educational institutions **(96 in total)**. The final chapter includes conclusions and recommendations at EU level, to be linked with the capacity building methodology for the educators of alternative education institutions for adults (O1).

As the results reveal, in all participating countries, as it happens worldwide, the internet and mobile Internet usage is **increasing rapidly**, also affecting the job research and recruiting processes. The most important **channels for job seekers** are **job websites/career portals**, followed by web search (e.g. via Google). However personal contacts/recommendations remain the first option to search for a job, especially among low-qualified people.

Social media are becoming increasingly important but their full potential still remains to be discovered. All interviewees attending alternative educational institutions acknowledged the key role that social networks can play in the search for a job, and on average, a percentage of **45%-60%** stated to have used them for such a reason.

The vast majority of available job vacancies in all project's countries, is published on companies' websites and/or on online career portals, as well as on the employer's/company's social media or even, sometimes, on relevant online groups. Most companies, especially the large ones, seem to receive applications via **e-mail** and/or **online forms**, while the age group **18-44** is most active in applying for a job online.

Recruiting via social media – **"social recruiting", "social media recruiting"** or **"social hiring"** – is becoming increasingly important, growing engagement and making both applicants and employers more "transparent". The most popular social networks used for posting job ads and job search are **LinkedIn** and **Facebook**, followed by **Twitter** and also **XING** (in Austria and Bulgaria).

The trainers interviewed in all participating countries were fond of the idea of the ALTER project, acknowledging the fact that there is a great need among the **final target group (low-qualified adults in search of a job)** as well as the **trainers** themselves, regarding further education on Information and communication technologies and how social media can facilitate access to the labour market.

As the research has shown, in all participating countries, most of the adults who have dropped out of school early and now try to improve their digital skills in order to search for a job, have a very **low level of digital knowledge (or even a total lack)**, especially if they are aged 45 and over.

For a beginning, it is of crucial importance for adults in search of a job to become **motivated** to start searching online, as well, taking advantage of the social media for professional reasons. The training courses that will be provided in the context of ALTER should not only focus on purely technical skills, but should also provide **empathy and understanding** on the part of the trainers for their course participants, as they are often discouraged by long-term unemployment and have a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, which must first be rebuilt.

What has become evident through the primary research, is that there is a **great diversity** among final beneficiaries, making it difficult to develop customized trainings that will meet all requirements. The capacity building methodology should therefore be **flexible** enough to be adaptable to **at least two digital-skills levels** (limited/basic and medium/advanced).

Taking into consideration all the relevant answers given by stakeholders, trainers and the adults in search for a job, it is proposed that specific skills, such as the following, could be taught in both levels: Critical thinking & decision making, browsing, searching & filtering data and information, using of Office tools (word processing, spreadsheets, databases and presentations) and how to be aware of the copyright (music, film, pictures, texts, software) & the right to the protection of personal data.

On the other hand, skills such as: interacting through digital technologies, using a wide range of communication tools (e-mail, chat, SMS, instant messaging, blogs, micro-blogs, social networks), creating & managing content with collaboration tools (e.g. electronic calendars, project management systems, online proofing, online spreadsheets) and producing complex digital content in different formats (e.g. text, tables, images, video), could be only for the more "advanced" ones.

An additional **training in CV writing, online interviews** and **time management** would be very useful. People searching for a job should become familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of creating and managing an account/profile in social media (especially **LinkedIn** and **Facebook** or **XING** in countries that is popular). The function of **specific groups** that offer newsfeeds on job ads would be of great importance as well. In addition, they should be prepared for the fact that all their "social profiles" could be checked at any time during their recruitment process and therefore keep their accounts up-to-date and pay high attention to the photos, information and posts they upload and reveal in public.

A proposed **capacity building methodology**, should take into consideration the following: how it will enable **active participation** of both trainers and final beneficiaries, how it will encourage **critical thinking** through interesting relevant material, how it will meet the various needs of different students, offering **rounded explanations** of the subject's content, enabling **constructive feedback** and creating **mentoring skills** for the trainers, aiming to facilitate adults, especially those in alternative education, to make the optimal use of social media, getting into the labour market.