

# DEAL

## Digital Entrepreneurship for Adult Learners

### POSITION PAPER

Official Deliverable of Intellectual Output 4

[www.projectdeal.eu](http://www.projectdeal.eu)

With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

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## Introduction

The goal of a position paper is to marshal cogent and meaningful reasons which convince readers that the opinions presented are valid and of practical use. A guiding principle underpinning the activities of the partners in the DEAL project is equality and this is reflected in every facet of the project from concept to production. Contextually DEAL is a good fit with the key EU policy priorities of Digital Competence and Social Inclusion, while also addressing the crucial objective of Innovation.

In order to better frame the scale and scope of this transnational initiative it is essential to provide for few coordinates that are indicative of the policy context within the field of Adults' digitalization combined with entrepreneurship & development of sense of initiative.

The very first milestone can be traced back in 2006, with the publication on the official journal of the European Union by EU Council and EU parliament of a detailed series of recommendations addressed to both Member States and EU Commission for the mainstreaming, promotion and valorization at national and EU level of so defined Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (henceforth, LLL).

The original framework (updated in May 2018<sup>1</sup> by initiative of the Council of the European Union) was intended to better orientate Member States' local policy makers in:

- Identifying key competences<sup>2</sup> that empower citizens with new skills, knowledge and attitude, and that in turn contribute to new employment opportunities and the cultural, economic and democratic development of EU societies as a whole.
- Providing for further references on how to support the development of such key competences for lifelong learning for all STHKs in the field of AE and LLL – including civil society, private sector's representative, public employment services, and civil society at large.
- Sustaining the large scale valorization and exploitation of a "EU lifelong learning perspective", that certainly takes into consideration the diverse features of EU societies while still maintaining a sort of common denominator that is recognizable by professional and policy makers involved in the field.

The key competences for LLL are identified as follows:

1. Communication in the mother tongue
2. Communication in foreign languages
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Learning to learn
6. Social and civic competences
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and expression

<sup>1</sup> Official update of: RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)

<sup>2</sup> Where "Competence" is a combination of •KNOWLEDGE, facts and figures, concepts, ideas and theories which are already established and support the understanding of a certain area or subject. •SKILL, the ability and capacity to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results. •ATTITUDES, the disposition and mind-sets to act or react to ideas, persons or situations

With no surprise, among the 8 it is possible to identify at place no. 4 and 7 the two competence specifically addressed and valorized by the project. A pretty straightforward definition of the twos is provided by the very same framework:

- Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals, not only in their everyday lives at home and in society, but also in the workplace in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity. This should include awareness of ethical values and promote good governance.

As relevant to mention is also the fact that, throughout the years each of this competence has been associated to a related capacity building framework, specifically designed to sustain professionals in the field of education and training to foster pedagogical programme tuned and tailored on the given competence.

In the specific context of Digital Competences, we have DigComp: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (latest version available is DigComp 2.2, published in 2022), and for Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship, we have EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, published by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in 2016<sup>3</sup>.

The structure of these framework is “onion inspired”, meaning that we start from macro-areas of interest (i.e., Training Areas) and from there a list of competences, or as in the case of EntreComp even sub-competences, associated to each of the training areas and with related learning outcome(s). From a methodological perspective, training areas represent the key coordinates of targets' learning experience: the homerun without which there could not be essential and fundamental understanding of the underlying competence.

Both frameworks have been embedded by DEAL partners in design, preparation, development and delivery of the training curricula prepared in conjunction to the implementation of Intellectual Output 3: this was to assure coherence, consistence and compliance to EU-level references that find application to any initiative related to education and training. Plus, this alignment was also welcomed by partners as it streamlined and ease for participating organisation the identification at mapping level of clear and well-recognizable skills-gap and needs assessment assuming as benchmark parameter the aforementioned training areas.

<sup>3</sup> For a concise and comprehensive introduction to both framework, please consult Annex 1 & 2.

With that said, the basic objective is to enable low skilled adults to achieve economic empowerment. It does this by equipping them with a suite of cohesive modules which are both innovative and empirically based and conveyed on a free Open Education Resource (OER), designed for easy navigability and containing not just the modules, but also thematic ancillary tools such as a Glossary, Case Studies and with interactive Multiple Choice questions appended at the end of each module.

The OER and the tools<sup>4</sup> are designed to draw in the user by means of an attractive layout, a theoretical foundation and a customized praxis derived from andragogy/heutagogy best practice. The OER will remain available for a minimum of two years after completion of the project (till 2024)

This DEAL Position Paper provides inputs for evidence-based policymaking inputs and triggers in the field of Adult Education, Digital Competences for Low Skilled Adults, Social Inclusion and Self-Employability with a focus on Positive Ageing. As such this Position Paper is the policy guideline that informs stakeholders on the dynamics of low skilled adults and their engagement with digital entrepreneurship, using the experience and outcomes of the project as evidence to inform policy and practice.

DEAL presents a multidimensional methodology with a holistic, curated palette of offerings practical knowledge and relevant educational tools – to enhance the socio-economic empowerment of low skilled adults. It is the authors' intention that this Position Paper will encourage the sustainability of DEAL and we look forward to its rollout and deployment in multifarious future settings.

## The DEAL project

The context and or background to the DEAL Project is the deficit in entrepreneurship digital skills identified by the EU Commission, the associated unemployment statistics (see below) and the opportunity presented by digitalization, especially in the area of developing self-employment - entrepreneurship opportunities in particular for the older, rural female worker.

DEAL supports especially vulnerable target groups who are preparing for the unavoidable impact of digitalization. External global drivers of change such as rapidly changing technologies, globalization, climate change and urbanization have significant impacts on enterprises nationally and at a European level.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

A key objective in the Testing and Validation phase involves the recruitment of a targeted 150 participants from low income, older rural and female cohorts. The aim is to offer these participants a specially designed education and training programme to provide them with identified knowledge, skills and competence to develop the necessary self-confidence to take advantage of digitalization for the purpose of developing self-employment entrepreneurship opportunities.

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<sup>4</sup> Available for free and in open access format via: [www.projectdeal.eu](http://www.projectdeal.eu)

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### WORK BREAKDOWN STRUCTURE

#### Intellectual Output 1

Developing a user-friendly Open Educational Resource Platform for the purpose of hosting our Education and Training Programme and Associated Resources for the benefit of the Target Group. Available at: <https://www.projectdeal.eu/>

#### Intellectual Output 2

Mapping Dynamics and Trends of the Silver Economy and Active Ageing for the purpose of ensuring, through the production of a comparative Country Map, using a common methodology, of the existing and emerging dynamics and trends of the silver economy and active ageing, so as to ensure that the currency, relevance and practicality of the proposed education and training programme responds to the actual and not some perceived needs of the Target Group. Mapping results are available at <https://www.projectdeal.eu/mapping.php>

#### Intellectual Output 3

Training and Resources Toolkit for the purpose of imparting relevant Knowledge, Skills and Competence to the Target Group. A total of 52 courses and 52 training fiches are available in all languages (13 per language) with explanatory videos, more than 900 users have used DEAL Training, 48 case studies are available in all languages (12 per language), 202 glossary entries have been included in all languages with more than 40000 unique visits collected so far.

#### Intellectual Output 4

Producing the DEAL Operational Manual and Position Paper that you are currently reading to enable other Organisations and Users to understand, operationalise and benefit from the Projects outcomes and outputs into the foreseeable future. Both documents are available at: <https://www.projectdeal.eu/op-manual.php>

#### KEY PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACT, in brief...

- Successful delivery on time and as originally described
- Full compliance with the Funding Agency's requirements
- A cohort of trained individuals, drawn from the target group who have the knowledge, skills and competence, as well as the self-confidence to develop self-employment opportunities through entrepreneurship.
- A relevant education and training programme (in the area of Digital Entrepreneurship and Self Employment Opportunities) and associated Resources freely available to all
- Operational Manual and Position Paper making the results and outcomes of the project truly transparent and available for further exploitation
- A reduction in the number of EU Citizens who do not have digital skills
- An increase in the number of EU Citizens self-employed through their own efforts as a result of having benefited from the education and training programme originated by the DEAL Project
- Specific groups such as women, rural dwellers and older people will gain particular benefits from DEAL as the project supports these cohorts to address the very specific challenges they face.

## Our Key Messages

The seven partners from five countries have delivered the DEAL training in diverse operational settings represented by the multidisciplinary and complementary partnership: formal and non-formal learning environments, vocational education and training, entrepreneurial settings, Adult Education facilities, urban and rural areas. While the methodology was uniform, in deploying the training during the Testing and Validation phase, no constraints were placed on partners who were free to choose the most convenient time, schedule, format and duration of the teaching and learning activities. Each partner collected the feedback and insights of both learners and tutors/facilitators through a template feedback that was developed as part of the Validation Plan. In a fine-tuning process, feedback from users/learners and tutors then informed the final version of the Training and Resources Toolkit as well as providing inputs to IO4 (Operational Manual & Position Paper) for the guidelines to mainstream and promote the take-up of the DEAL training.

### INNOVATION

DEAL is the first practical and operational training resource aimed at upskilling low skilled adults to enhance their entrepreneurial aspirations through ICT and Digital Education. Currently there are no Open Educational Resources with this focus and DEAL fills an operational gap with innovative training tools and resources. Another significant innovation lies in the fact that DEAL is extremely practical, hands-on and operational, providing from the very beginning operational solutions that are not merely informative but developmental and educational.

### IMPACT

Intellectual Output 3 (the training toolkit) is both internal and external. Internally, partners are equipped with a new and innovative training programme including ancillary resources to better serve their constituencies, associated entities and learners. Externally, the impact is on the target groups that were involved in the validation phase. They were the first to benefit from the tailored and high-quality, relevant and user friendly, training content. Their reporting from the Testing and Validation phase guarantees Quality Assurance and critically, this ensures that ultimate end users can meaningfully engage with the OER without scaffolding i.e. tutor/facilitator interaction and support.

### TRANSFERABILITY

Intellectual Output 3 has considerable potential for transferability. This is thanks to its multilingual content and the fact that it will be available, through the dedicated OER platform, without restrictions (OPEN ACCESS) and at no cost. Relevant to mention is also the fact that:

1. project's resources and deliverables are available in multilanguage version, this is to ease the dissemination and validation of the project even among non-proficient ENG speakers (as it might be in the case of low-skilled adults)
2. Even though the project is specifically tailored on seniors, there is wide margin for replicability and transferability within other domains of education and training targeted to different cohorts (see the case for NEETs, fresh graduates and young aspiring entrepreneurs in general). Of course this will most definitely require fine-tuning actions that takes into consideration the education and cultural background of participants

## Conclusions

The DEAL Position Paper provides inputs for evidence-based policymaking in the fields of AE, Digital Competence for Low Skilled Adults, Social Inclusion, Self-Actualization and Self-Employability. It is the policy guideline that informs policymakers and stakeholders on the intersectional dynamics of low skilled Adults and digital entrepreneurship, translating the experiential learning, results and outcomes of the project to inform policy and practice. The Position Paper establishes the clear operational and policy nexus between the project and public policy agenda setting.

The DEAL project is highly innovative as it produces impact at a systemic level in the linked domains of AE and Digital Entrepreneurship while mainstreaming it outside the partnership and after project completion. The Position Paper strengthens the relevance of digital empowerment for low skilled Adults' self-employability and entrepreneurship by enabling this strategic policy priority to become an operational and policy item for discussion and debate. Its impact will be both to empower and equip stakeholders and policymakers to better plan and deliver capacity building initiatives as well as shape policies that are informed by project results. The Position Paper supports impact amplification and visibility of the project and sustains DEAL's results and outcomes beyond Erasmus+ co-financing.

Crucially the Position Paper is intended to be instrumental in promoting the transferability and adaptability of project results to other actors (in both education and training and policy). This will be achieved by making Project results available in 4 languages (English, Icelandic, Italian and Spanish), all with OPEN ACCESS and FREE versions.

Finally, the Position Paper elevates DEAL to a plateau of implementation, not only from a learning perspective, but also at policy and practice levels. It seeks to act as a catalyst for the promotion of policy dialogue, by delineating a convergence between Adult Education/Training and digital empowerment. It demonstrates that in its trajectory DEAL offers a curated response to the key EC policy priorities of citizen engagement, an economy that works for all and the preparing of people for the digital age.

Last but not least, targets that wish to embed the DEAL's experience as a whole into their domains are most definitely recommended to valorize and mainstream the initiative carried out by partners as an into-practice by product of the Erasmus+ Programme. Our experience in implementation of the project, and the informal consultation that we had with STKHs and groups of interests, confirmed a general lack of awareness on concrete education and training opportunities of EU-origin. Partners from the domain of practice (i.e., other grass-root organizations, small cooperative established and operating at local level) were seldom somehow familiar with the concept of "EU funding" and centralized European Programme, but not so much in relation to objectives and structure of the E+ programme specifically.

In our view, this represented a clear domain of policy intervention (i.e., mainstreaming and valorizing the access opportunity to centralized programmes and international collaborations) so as to greatly enhance practices, know-how and expertise from professional and providers applied at local and regional level.

## Annex 1 – DigComp: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens

### Training areas and related competences

Training area	Competences
<b>1. Information and data literacy</b>	1.1 Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content 1.2 Evaluating data, information and digital content 1.3 Managing data, information and digital content
<b>2. Communication and collaboration</b>	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies 2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 2.6 Managing digital identity
<b>3. Digital content creation</b>	3.1 Developing digital content 3.2 Integrating and re-elaborating digital content 3.3 Copyright and licenses 3.4 Programming
<b>4. Safety</b>	4.1 Protecting devices 4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy 4.3 Protecting health and well-being 4.4 Protecting the environment
<b>5. Problem Solving</b>	5.1 Solving technical problems 5.2 Identifying needs and technological responses 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies 5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps

The progression and performance of learners is assessed based on an 8-layer model proposed by the framework as key reference to identify key learning outcomes and expected impacts:

### Generic progression model

Proficiency level	Complexity of tasks	Autonomy	Cognitive domain
<b>Level 1</b>	Simple task	With guidance	<i>Remembering</i>
<b>Level 2</b>	Simple Task	Autonomy and with guidance where needed	<i>Remembering</i>
<b>Level 3</b>	Well-defined and routine tasks, straightforward problems	On my own	<i>Understanding</i>
<b>Level 4</b>	Tasks, and well-defined and non-routine problems	Independent and according to my needs	<i>Understanding</i>
<b>Level 5</b>	Different tasks and problems	Guiding others	<i>Applying</i>
<b>Level 6</b>	Most appropriate tasks	Able to adapt to others in a complex context	<i>Evaluating</i>
<b>Level 7</b>	Resolve complex problems with limited solutions	Integrate to contribute to the professional practice and to guide others	<i>Creating</i>
<b>Level 8</b>	Resolve complex problems with many interacting factors	Propose new ideas and processes to the field	<i>Creating</i>

## Annex 2 – EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework

Competence (ideas & Opportunities)	Hint	Description
<b>1.1 Spotting opportunities</b>	<i>Use your imagination and abilities to identify opportunities for creating value</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and seize opportunities to create value by exploring the social, cultural and economic landscape</li> <li>Identify needs and challenges that need to be met</li> <li>Establish new connections and bring together scattered elements of the landscape to create opportunities to create value</li> </ul>
<b>1.2 Creativity</b>	<i>Develop creative and purposeful ideas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop several ideas and opportunities to create value including better solutions to existing and new challenges</li> <li>Explore and experiment with innovative approaches</li> <li>Combine knowledge and resources to achieve valuable effects</li> </ul>
<b>1.3 Vision</b>	<i>Work towards your vision of the future</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imagine the future</li> <li>Develop a vision to turn ideas into action</li> <li>Visualise future scenarios to help guide effort and action</li> </ul>
<b>1.4 Valuing Idea</b>	<i>Make the most of ideas and opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judge what value is in social, cultural and economic terms</li> <li>Recognise the potential an idea has for creating value and identify suitable ways of making the most out of it</li> </ul>
<b>1.5 Ethical and Sustainable thinking</b>	<i>Assess the consequences and impact of ideas, opportunities and actions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the consequences of ideas that bring value and the effect of entrepreneurial action on the target community, the market, society and the environment</li> <li>Reflect on how sustainable long-term social, cultural and economic goals are, and the course of action chosen</li> <li>Act responsibly</li> </ul>

Competence (RESOURCES)	Hint	Description
<b>2.1 Self-awareness and self-efficacy</b>	<i>Believing in yourself and keep developing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect on your needs, aspirations and wants in the short, medium and long term</li> <li>Identify and assess your individual and group strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>Believe in your ability to influence the course of events, despite uncertainty, setbacks and temporary failures</li> </ul>
<b>2.2 Motivation and perseverance</b>	<i>Stay focused and don't give up</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be determined to turn ideas into action and satisfy your need to achieve</li> <li>Be prepared to be patient and keep trying to achieve your long-term individual or group aims</li> <li>Be resilient under pressure, adversity, and temporary failure</li> </ul>
<b>2.3 Mobilising resources</b>	<i>Gather and manage the resources you need</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get and manage the material, non-material and digital resources needed to turn ideas into action</li> <li>Make the most of limited resources</li> <li>Get and manage the competences needed at any stage, including technical, legal, tax and digital competences</li> </ul>
<b>2.4 Financial and Economic literacy</b>	<i>Develop financial and economic know-how</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimate the cost of turning an idea into a value-creating activity</li> <li>Plan, put in place and evaluate financial decisions over time</li> <li>Manage financing to make sure your value-creating activity can last over the long term</li> </ul>
<b>2.5 Mobilising others</b>	<i>Inspire, enthuse and get others on board</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspire and enthuse relevant stakeholders</li> <li>Get the support needed to achieve valuable outcomes</li> <li>Demonstrate effective communication, persuasion, negotiation and leadership</li> </ul>

Competence (INTO ACTION)	Hint	Description
<b>3.1 Taking the initiative</b>	<i>Go for it</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate processes that create value</li> <li>Take up challenges</li> <li>Act and work independently to achieve goals, stick to intentions and carry out planned tasks</li> </ul>
<b>3.2 Planning and Management</b>	<i>Priorities, organize and follow-up</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set long-, medium- and short-term goals</li> <li>Define priorities and action plans</li> <li>Adapt to unforeseen changes</li> </ul>
<b>3.3 Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity &amp; risk</b>	<i>Make decision dealing with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make decisions when the result of that decision is uncertain, when the information available is partial or ambiguous, or when there is a risk of unintended outcomes</li> <li>Within the value-creating process, include structured ways of testing ideas and prototypes from the early stages, to reduce risks of failing</li> <li>Handle fast-moving situations promptly and flexibly</li> </ul>
<b>3.4 Working with others</b>	<i>Team up, collaborate and network</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work together and co-operate with others to develop ideas and turn them into action</li> <li>Network</li> <li>Solve conflicts and face up to competition positively when necessary</li> </ul>
<b>3.5 Learning through experience</b>	<i>Learn by doing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use any initiative for value creation as a learning opportunity</li> <li>Learn with others, including peers and mentors</li> <li>Reflect and learn from both success and failure (your own and other people's)</li> </ul>