

**Praline**



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



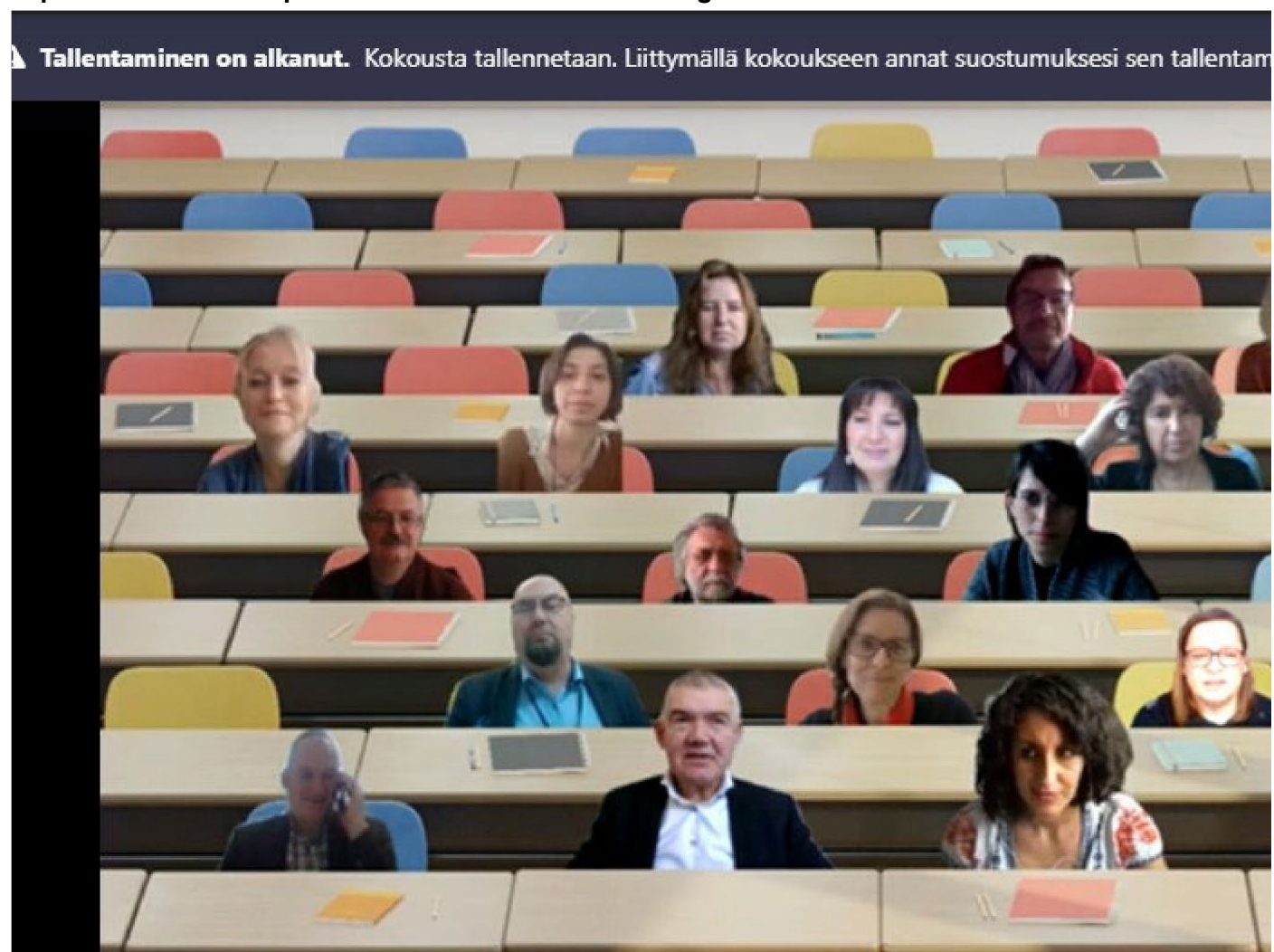
**Overview of the evaluations of the meetings/PLA's of the Praline project.**

### **Kick off meeting online, Part 1**

**16 December 2020**

This was the first time that the full partnership met, although it was unfortunately on line, due to Corona. Partners received an overview of the mainstages of the project, the objectives and a proposal about saring the tasks and responsibilities. There was also a lot of information about other technical details like the payments and the way the administration needs to be done. Partners were eager to start with the project, satisfied with the provided information and regretted of course the limited circumstances due to the pandemic.

### **Impression of the 1st part of the online Kick off meeting**



### **Kick off meeting online, Part 2**

**11 Februari 2021**

It was planned in the project proposal to have the kick off meeting in Spain. Due to the Covid pandemic, we needed to change this in online meetings. As it should have become a very long session to put the planned Spanish session into one online meeting, we decided to cut the Kick-off meeting in two parts. The 1st one about the technical aspects and the 2nd one about the state of Adult learning in Spain. Both introductions about ALE in Spain and the Basque country, which is not the same, were very much appreciated. Interesting was the role of TKNIKA in the Basque country and the positive learning culture. Saku Lehtinen from AMKE provided the program with a contribution outside of Spain with his outline of the Finnish reforms. All together a well succeeded PLA, in spite of the limitations of an online meeting.

### **Online meeting about France, 1st PLA**

**18 May 2021**

The emphasis was on the work of the French partner MFR regarding the sustainability goals. The preparation of the meeting and the information that partners got before the meeting was much appreciated by most partners, although some partners remarked that they were rather late and made it challenging to be well prepared. The explanation of the context of the GP's clearly met the needs of the region and target group, but rather specific for the French situation and not always relevant for all partners. As a weak point was the language issue mentioned. Presentations were held in French and then translated into English, which made an interesting online meeting very challenging. The presentations became too long and as there was not very much variation in the way of presenting, it became a challenge to follow the stories. Partners were convinced that the content and the methodologies are very interesting and innovative and regretted therefore the online setting. Hopefully a meeting on France can be repeated in a face-to-face setting.

### **Valencia, Spain 2<sup>nd</sup> PLA**

**7 and 9 October 2021**

This PLA was our first face-to-face meeting as previous meetings had to be online due to Covid restrictions throughout the partnership countries. This meeting was especially important, then, in terms of getting to know each other. Whilst the core EUproVET member partners all know each other very well, there are some new partners where it was especially important to get to know them. All partners who provided feedback commented on how good it was to finally meet face-to-face! We received a warm welcome from our Spanish and Basque Country hosts. Apart from the busy daytime work programme there was a lovely beachfront meal on the Thursday evening which provided a more relaxed opportunity for everyone to make friends.

Pre-meeting information was sent through in a timely manner to partners, however there was a suggestion that it might be useful, for future meetings, to include some contextual reading materials in advance of the PLA.

During the meeting it was agreed that next PLA would be hosted by the Portuguese partners in Lisbon. Dates were agreed in principle, to be confirmed by e-mail after returning from Valencia.

Covid was continuing to make its presence felt with many partners having to comply with Covid restrictions and rules for their own country and for visiting Spain. The hotel was still operating social distancing and mask wearing, which did impede the process of getting to know everyone and communicating to the group and asking questions.

Most felt that elements of the good practices, presented during the PLA, could be implemented in their own organisation, or shared with members and most felt that they learned something new although not all the good practices were relevant to the main project theme of adult education. For example, there was an interesting case study of how a social charity was supporting traveller communities get their young people engaging in education, but this was not relevant for the theme of adult education.

Learning points from the Valencia PLA were:

- Send some context on the challenges of adult education in the hosting country to all partners prior to the PLA for contextual pre-reading.
- More time for discussion amongst partners needs to be built into the programme.
- There should be an opportunity to meet beneficiaries/adult students. Whilst we understood that Covid restrictions were still in place in Spain when we visited, it would have been good to get out and visit a college/training centre where adults were learning.
- A city tour option by organisers could be provided for those interested. This was the case in Valencia but is recommended for all future PLAs.
- Presentations should be shortened, leaving more time for discussions. A change of place/ rooms (avoid sitting in one place for too long).

### **Lisbon, Portugal 3<sup>rd</sup> PLA**

**14 to 15 March 2022**

Partners received a warm welcome in Lisbon by our Portuguese hosts. A special highlight for all was the traditional Fado evening and this proved to be a good way for partners to get to know each other better.

There was some concern that pre-meeting information was not sent early enough to partners. Most partners are busy in the lead up to travelling to a PLA meeting so it's good to get the information on practical arrangements and the programme at least two weeks in advance.

There was also some confusion, on the first day, with partners asking a lot of clarification questions after the first couple of presentations which could have been avoided if the first presentation had been a presentation of the national context on adult education. Things became clearer again once the partners understood the difference between public and private VET schools. The hosting school had excellent facilities but the number of students they enrolled was very small. This would not be allowed to happen in many partner countries.

During the meeting it was agreed that Dublin would host the next PLA. Dates were agreed in principle, to be confirmed by e-mail after returning from Lisbon.

Covid was still impacting on the project, although most partners were unaware if there were any particular Covid related challenges for hosting the PLA.

Most felt that elements of the good practices, presented during the PLA, could be implemented in their own organisation, or shared with members and most felt that they learned something new – not least unusual approaches to the recruitment of teaching staff!

Learning points from the Lisbon PLA were:

- Send the agenda and general instructions e.g., on getting to the hotel, the PLA venue, practical arrangements, at least two weeks in advance.
- A brief introduction to the education system of the host country is always a good first presentation which sets the context in which the rest of the presentations sit.
- There should be planned a time for reflection after each day in the big group.
- A city tour option by organisers could be provided for those interested.
- Presentations should be shortened, leaving more time for discussions. A change of place/ rooms (avoid sitting in one place for too long).
- It would be good to have some time set aside for bilateral meetings of individual partners-networking.
- It would be good to have a set of conclusions for each PLA.

#### **DUBLIN, IRELAND 4<sup>th</sup> PLA 9** **to 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2022**

On the whole, the evaluations showed that there was good clarification of key project objectives within the Dublin PLA programme, and these were reflected well in the presented good practices. National contexts in which examples of good practice are implemented were clearly presented. Most partners found that there were practices that could be implemented in their own organisation or shared with their members although one partner thought that this might be more challenging for them.

All presenters were keen to share their contact details and details of national strategies and publications that they had been involved in. In particular, the SOLAS and ETBI 2018 [report](#) on good practice recommendations for English language provision and language assessment for low-skilled and unemployed migrants.

The design thinking workshop was good and well-received although it was delivered in an hour instead of half a day and therefore had some partners slightly frustrated.

Most thought that the programme was really well thought out and that the hosting was excellent. At this stage in the project, partners know each other quite well and are having very good discussions. In fact, the balance between presentations of good practice and

group discussions was excellent. There was disappointment that there wasn't an opportunity for a tour of an adult VET centre, but most participants found that they learned more about Ireland's VET and adult education system – and specifically about ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

There was suggestion that a walking tour of the city might have been a good opportunity for both a cultural visit but also to give some context to the work of adult education in Dublin in particular.

In terms of administrative concerns, there was agreement that the next meeting would be held in Estonia with dates confirmed. We also were able to agree that the meeting after that would be held in France (with dates to be agreed later).

Covid continued to be a shadow hanging over the project activities, with the Portuguese partner unable to travel after testing positive for Covid.

By this point in the project most partners are feeling comfortable with each other. This element of 'getting to know partners' has taken a while due to the first few meetings having to take place online due to Covid restrictions across Europe.

Most partners thought that the design thinking workshop was very useful.

Learning points from the Dublin PLA were:

- Continue with an interactive discussion based approach.
- Allow more time for targeted smaller group discussions.
- Where possible, adjust and go with the flow of how things are proceeding with the group. At times it seemed like the speakers or discussions were in full flow and the hosting partner opted to allow them to continue as opposed to interrupting and rigidly sticking with the programme. This flexibility ensured a more engaging PLA.

## **Blog of Marguerite Hogg, AoC on the 4<sup>th</sup> PLA in Dublin**

It felt like a bit of a homecoming travelling to Dublin for our Praline project meeting. My Dad was born and raised in Dublin, a proud Irishman who came to the UK in the 1950s looking for work, for opportunities, for a better life. I had my first pint of Guinness on Irish soil for a while and raised a glass to my Dad, a decade after he left this life.

The theme of our meeting in Ireland was around supporting adults with learning a second language when they come to a new country. In the UK, we call this English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) – and Ireland uses that same terminology. We learned that there are more than 500,000 non-Irish nationals currently resident in the Republic of Ireland, representing over 200 nationalities. For context, Ireland has a population of 5 million. 50 per cent of them are in employment.

Colleges, through Education Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), deliver a wide range of ESOL provision at flexible times with learning hours extended to up to 10 hours a week. They've also recognised that working on an academic year basis (as many colleges and VET centres do) can impact on language learning. As in the UK, Ireland has no national ESOL strategy, and it was felt that there could often be a lack of consistency in approach. In 2018, SOLAS

(the state agency in Ireland for further education and training) and ETBI published a [report](#) on good practice recommendations for English language provision and language assessment for low-skilled and unemployed migrants. This has been welcomed by the sector in Ireland and provided an in-depth look at the characteristics of ESOL learners, at provision and curriculum, assessment and accreditation and staffing.

Praline project partners met in Dublin as the war in Ukraine was into its third month. When we met in May, Ireland had already welcomed 27,300 Ukrainian refugees – 85 per cent of whom were women with children. Ireland has put in place a Temporary Protection Directive which provides equal access to services for Ukrainian refugees. ESOL is, however, oversubscribed in Ireland and it will be interesting to see how they will cope with more arrivals. We all look to other countries to see how they are managing the current influx of Ukrainian refugees on top of all those other asylum seekers and refugees who have been trying to access ESOL (or each country's equivalent second language provision) for many years.

ETBI carried out a survey with their members to assess capacity to deliver ESOL to Ukrainian refugees. This identified the need for an intensive ESOL tutor recruitment drive. This will resonate with many of the project partners. In the UK, we have seen a staffing recruitment crisis in the further education sector, with some teaching posts remaining unfilled for over six months. Now, whilst these may not be ESOL teachers, it's indicative of a wider issue around retaining teaching staff and attracting new teachers into the sector. The ETBI survey also highlighted the need for training to enable staff to support learners exhibiting trauma related behaviours. To this end, ETBI is providing psychological first aid training for tutors.

ESOL is being delivered in hotels as outreach, rather than learners coming into a college campus setting, but this is perhaps indicative of how Ireland is accommodating Ukrainian refugees. In the UK, for example, we have had a system of UK families sponsoring Ukrainian individuals and families which means that they are widely dispersed across the UK in both urban and rural settings. ETBI's survey also identified that it would be important to involve Ukrainian nationals in the provision of educational support, with the development of migrant specific guidance worker posts to help refugees navigate the Irish system.

Structures are being put in place for September when there is an expectation that women are likely to wait until then to access provision, as priority will be given to settling their children into schools and caring for them over the summer holidays.

As I left Dublin for home, I reflected on the challenges of coming to a new country, of acceptance, of accessing support and facing possible discrimination. Not all arrivals are universally welcomed. Irish people also faced discrimination after World War II, as many came across the Irish sea to the UK looking for work. My Dad never did reveal if this was something he encountered, but I hope his welcome was as warm as those that Ukrainian refugees and all asylum seekers and refugees experience in our colleges every single day.

**TALLINN, ESTONIA, 5<sup>th</sup> PLA 6<sup>th</sup>**  
**to 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2022**

The evaluations showed that there was excellent clarification of key project objectives within the Tallinn PLA programme, and these were reflected well in the presented good practices.

The programme was very well organised, allowing a deeper understanding of the Estonian experience related to the objectives of PRALINE, as well as providing an understanding of Estonia after independence in 1991 and how this 'new start' has allowed the country to be innovative and entrepreneurial in its approach to adult and vocational education and all its public services.

For the Estonian PLA we used Padlet which allowed the partners to provide feedback and comments on the good practices in real time.

Many of the partners were impressed by the way the country has digitalised public services. The focus on VET being for all, not segregated into VET for young people and VET for adults was aspirational although many partners wondered how this would work in their own countries. Some, though, recognised that this had many benefits – not least financial – where VET schools didn't have to find different teachers for different groups of adults and of younger learners. There were also benefits to learners of mixed age classes.

Partners felt that they learned a lot about the Estonian system and admired the autonomy that VET schools had. The project group also continued to learn more from each other as partners.

In terms of administrative concerns, there was agreement that the next meeting would be held in La Rochelle in France with dates confirmed.

Learning points from the Tallinn PLA were:

- There should be a restricted number of Good Practices which enables enough time for discussions in smaller groups.
- Show the particularities and strong points of your system.
- Actually visit some of the classes or activities where Good Practices are taking place.
- Have an opportunity to talk about the new changes and adaptations of European policies in each country.
- Use Padlet at every PLA meeting.

## **LA ROCHELLE, FRANCE, 6<sup>th</sup> PLA**

**30<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2023**

The evaluations showed that there was good clarification of key project objectives within the La Rochelle PLA programme, and these were reflected in the presented good practices.

The programme was well organised, allowing a deeper understanding of the MFR as an organisation and how it sits within the overall French education system.

Many of the partners were impressed by the role of 'monitor' – a role that is much more than a teacher. Some could not see how already stretched teachers in our own countries would agree to an expanded job description that would not only include teaching but also pastoral support. The focus on approaches to net zero and sustainability and the role education can play was very well received.

Partners felt that they learned a lot about the French system and also MFR's work. The project group also continued to learn more from each other as partners.

Some time was spent on project partnership activities such as the project website and communications. Some time was also spent introducing the work of EUpVET to the partnership as one of the key project objectives is the expansion of the EUpVET network.

In terms of administrative concerns, there was agreement that the next meeting would be held in Helsinki in Finland. Dates were confirmed and there was a discussion about what partners would like to see on the PLA agenda.

Learning points from the La Rochelle PLA were:

- There was some concern that the meeting room was too small for the size of the group.
- It is important to define clear outputs of each PLA and to get feedback on those outputs.
- Prepare the 'to do' list for each partner and track progress.

## **HELSINKI, FINLAND, 7<sup>th</sup> PLA**

**22 to 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023**

On the whole, the evaluations showed that there was good clarification of key project objectives within the Helsinki PLA programme, and these were reflected well in the presented good practices.

The programme was well organised, allowing a deeper understanding of the Finnish experience related to the objectives of PRALINE, as well as allowing a closer vision of a people and a young country, framed in a sensitive geopolitical context for balances and peace on the continent European and worldwide.

The project partners first used Padlet at the Estonian PLA and the use of it during the Finnish PLA was welcomed by many of the partners and meant that feedback and comments on the good practices could be captured in real time.

Many remarked on the excellence of the Finnish system with all the good practices they shared being extremely interesting and relevant, whilst acknowledging that the context and size of Finland had some impact on the education and training they provide, which might not translate exactly to other partner country contexts.

Partners felt that they learned a lot about the Finnish system but also continued to learn more from each other as partners. The work atmosphere for the meeting was described as 'excellent' by one partner.

In terms of administrative concerns, there was agreement that the next meeting would be held in Croatia with dates confirmed. We also were able to agree the dates of the final conference and meeting in the Netherlands at the end of November.

Learning points from the Helsinki PLA were:



- that each PLA translates the capital accumulated over 3 years of the project. At the end of the project, we will need to focus more on the outputs that we want to value and on the possibility of generating a greater multiplier effect from our joint reflections.
- At each PLA, we hear from experts (from institutions, ministries, training centres, ....) who present schemes, programmes and training initiatives designed for learners. But what about the learners themselves? Giving users a voice, not just to find out whether the training went well, but to find out more about how they learn, what they learn, where they learn, with whom, would be an interesting innovation.
- There should be time for discussions after every presentation.

## **Zagreb, Croatia, 8<sup>th</sup> PLA**

### **2 to 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2023**

On the whole, the evaluations showed that there was good clarification of key project objectives within the Zagreb PLA programme, and these were reflected well in the presented good practices.

There was some renegotiation of the PLA agenda to ensure that there was time for group discussions as well as the good practice presentations.

Partners felt that the presentations and the presenters were very good. Their approaches were explained clearly and concisely. The meeting was well chaired and hosted with everything proceeding on time. Two days is a short time and it would have been beneficial to have had the opportunity to speak one-to-one with more of the presenters. It would also have been nice to hear about some specific case studies, about the voucher system or the success of the professional development of staff involved in lifelong learning.

The Slovenian partner felt that they already knew a little about the Croatian educational system, as a neighbouring country, and it is also easy to compare practise between the two countries.

Partners felt that the group are working well together. It would be interesting to look at further projects once this one ends as the partnership is now well-established.

There was a suggestion that PRALINE members could compile a database of qualifications that are offered in their respective associations with a view to pooling resources in relation to programme design. For example the Heat Pump maintenance course devised by the Public Open University in Samabor is something that every country will need.

In terms of administrative concerns, the final meeting will be held in the Netherlands on 30 November and 1 December. There was consensus that the first day would be a conference style event presenting some of the most effective good practices, the survey report launch along with the policy recommendations that have come out of the project. A small group would start looking at the programme for the conference with a view to sharing it for comment and feedback with the rest of the partners.

As this is the last PLA (ahead of the final meeting and conference in the Netherlands), we asked partners to tell us which were the PLAs that had an impact on them the most. Many partners liked the PLA in Estonia and were really impressed by the digitalisation of society (and education). Some remarked that this was something entirely new to them and others

who know Estonia well were still surprised by what they learnt in Tallinn. The Irish PLA was also praised for not just showing system structures but also how it really works in practice and how to reach the target groups. The Valencia PLA had some interesting good practices and the La Rochelle was praised for the good practice of the role of coach rather than teacher as well as the sustainability angle.

## **Rotterdam, Netherlands**

### **30 November & 1 December 2023**

The final PLA took place in Zadkine VET College in Rotterdam in the Netherlands. It took the form of a one day conference to summarise the findings and learnings captured over the lifespan of the Praline project. The conference was open to more participants than the key project partners. The subsequent day was a chance for the core project partnership to evaluate the conference and wrap up the project, allocating key final tasks to partners.

In terms of evaluating the two days in the Netherlands, participants found the conference sessions mainly to be somewhat or very useful. The initial keynote address by Professor Wieger Bakker from the University of Utrecht, was especially well received as an external perspective on the project findings and recommendations.

The presentation of the project's survey results provided a useful overview of adult education challenges from the viewpoint of VET/adult learning providers, especially how the Covid pandemic impacted on adult learning.

Conference session inputs from Ireland's adult education/VET funding agency SOLAS provided a recap on one of the good practices from the PLA in Ireland, which had made an impression on the project partners at the time of the initial visit. Additionally, the inclusion of a panel discussion with participation from students, employers, policy makers and providers provided a good reflection on the impact of some of the good practices on key stakeholders.

We asked project partners how their knowledge of adult education systems across Europe had developed during the course of the project. Partners were effusive in their feedback saying that each PLA had helped them to develop their knowledge through the valuable sharing of experience practitioners. Many said that it was an important learning point that not only did they learn about the differences in the different adult education systems but that they also were able to see similarities in challenges and barriers to participation. There was agreement that this 'bigger picture' view of other countries' experiences gave the opportunity and insight in order for partner countries to make better decisions and influence policy developments within their own VET and adult education systems.

In terms of personal highlights from participating in the project, partners cited the personal contacts made and the good practices that they now seen that can be used as examples of different ways of working when discussing policy with civil servants in the different countries. There were also positive reactions to the fact that the project has resulted in new EUproVET members, especially since one of the key objectives was about widening networks regarding adult education. Others, in particular, singled out the PLAs in Estonia and Ireland as being particularly inspiring.