



BEST PRACTICES IN ADULT EDUCATION FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Summary and Analysis

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Introduction to good practice in Just Transition

Geographical scope

Out of the collected best practices, there are approximately 24 initiatives implemented at a local level, 13 conducted at a national level, and 8 with an international focus.

This distribution highlights the critical role of localized efforts aligned with specific needs of diverse communities and disadvantaged groups, while also acknowledging the necessity of national and global coordination to address environmental and socio-economic challenges which are global in their nature.

Sources of Funding

Due to a broad geographical scope of the good practices, it's not surprising that the funding sources are supported by both national and international funds. Some projects draw on national development funding and community climate action funds, while others are supplemented or entirely supported with private investments, and funding from organizations like DVV and EU funds, such as Erasmus+ and regional development funds. Variety of sources reflect the collaborative nature of just transition efforts. Flexible and diverse funding sources have the potential to ensure sustainability of ALE initiatives, enabling long-term and strategic approaches to addressing diverse community needs. Based on the practices collected, financial sustainability is seen as key factor for achieving long-term project goals. As described in one of the practices - multi-annual funding is crucial as it allows to strategically plan education programs in advance.

Duration of the projects

The analysis reveals the presence of shorter-term projects, with a significant portion of initiatives lasting five years or less. Specifically, with the data provided, about thirteen initiatives lasted five years or more, while the rest of the initiatives lasted less than five years.

Target Audiences

The initiatives focus on diverse target audiences, including the general public (\approx ten initiatives), but also many disadvantaged groups (\approx 30 practices), such as women, elderly, adults with low levels of formal qualifications, youth, individuals from deprived areas, people with disabilities, migrants, deaf individuals, and communities in coal mining areas. Besides learners as end target groups, initiatives focus on a range of stakeholders (\approx nine initiatives), such as trainers and education professionals, environmental professionals, civil society, management of ALE institutions, scholars and policy makers.

Goals of the Initiatives

Most of the practices have goals that directly address the role of disadvantaged groups in green transition through ALE. Such are economic empowerment initiatives through green jobs and flexible employment opportunities, empowerment of disadvantaged groups to participate in green transition, strengthening community resilience against environmental changes, and supporting sustainable lifestyles through education.

Others have the aim to educate and support ALE professionals on working with different disadvantaged target groups, or when it comes to the field of just and green transition.

Some ALE initiatives are not directly related to just transition, but focus on diverse ALE fields instead, such as artistic and creative expression, improving digital literacy, or empowering for civic activism. However, green transition elements are included as part of these initiatives, either through topics related to environmental issues, or through practices included within the project that consist of recycling or circular economy practices. For example, *Digital Literacy for Circular Economy* showcases how recycled computers can be used during digital literacy trainings, while topics on circular economy are introduced at the same time.

Finally, some initiatives cannot be specified as ALE initiatives, but they have more broad societal goals – such as changing sustainability narratives, or monitoring ALE policies, where ALE plays a role in achieving these broad goals.

Stakeholders engagement in the process

Effective stakeholder engagement seems to be one of the crucial pillars of success across the initiatives. Many practices emphasize the importance of transdisciplinary participatory approaches that involve diverse traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, including learners, teachers, ALE institutions, environmental organizations, healthcare providers, civil society, researchers, policy makers, artistic communities, local authorities and many others.

Involvement of different stakeholders is highlighted within initiatives focused on disadvantaged groups as one of the key success factors that enhances access and continuation rates, motivation, mitigation of barriers and ensures relevance of ALE programs. In many initiatives, cooperation of stakeholders such as teachers, students, and community members played a pivotal role in shaping programmatic outcomes and fostering supportive learning environments. Engagement of stakeholders and regular meetings and consultations played a role in ensuring relevance of the green transition topics to the local needs of the communities, stimulating regular attendance through holistic approach when it comes to addressing specific needs of participants, contributing therefore to long-term sustainability of the initiatives.

Not only is stakeholder engagement recognized as a success factor in many of the practices, but some of the initiatives directly have the aim of improving stakeholder engagement in just transition. Some examples include:

- International ESD Alliance which implements the *Whole Institutions Approach* focused on holistic introduction of just transition principles within management of ALE institutions, emphasizing the role of different actors in contributing to just transition in ALE organizations.
- Through educational activities, the SUCH network aims to challenge discourses and narratives around environmental sustainability through transdisciplinary stakeholder engagement.
- “Can-do Guide” is focused on providing suggestions on how ALE institutions can cooperate with eco-partners and therefore contribute to inclusion of adults with low literacy levels in green transition.

Stakeholder engagement is fundamental to the success of just transition initiatives. Collaboration with diverse groups facilitates knowledge sharing, policy influence, and the implementation of sustainable practices tailored to local contexts.

Methodology and teaching approaches

When it comes to ALE methodology and teaching approaches, diverse strategies have been implemented in the practices collected.

For systematically disadvantaged groups, the following methodologies and teaching approaches have been identified:

- Community building through innovative methods is implemented to empower participants to see their role in climate change and build collective action towards climate justice. One such example is *Climate Heroes* within ACT initiative that raises awareness on the role everyone plays in climate change through community challenges.
- Creative art methods are used as means to empower participants to reflect upon climate change discourses and to themselves participate in climate change. SUCH Network uses artistic methods as a way to challenge dominant approaches and discourses to environmental sustainability, while *Who is allowed to be called an artist* and *Stand up to climate change* use these methods to empower disadvantaged groups and support them to themselves contribute to green transition.
- Action-learning, practice and demonstrations are used in many initiatives, and are seen as success factors that allow participants to see the relevance of environmentally sustainable practices in their daily lives. Often, these practices don't just use demonstrations as a method, but they also support participants to participate in community actions that, at the same time improve their quality of life, while contributing to green transition. Some of the initiatives implementing this approach are seen in *Wesign*, *ECCO* and *Cycle-Up*.
- Reflection and discussion was an important part across all practices. It is important to note that this was not only present in initiatives focused on awareness raising, but also in initiatives that have the aim of creating green job opportunities, as well as practically oriented initiatives that have the focus to raise skills of participants. One among many examples of this kind is the *Cycle-Up* project, whose focus is on economic empowerment, but the program includes reflections and discussions on the topic of fast fashion.
- Use of nature-based therapeutic recreational activities to improve mental health and social skills was observed as a specific approach used with deaf individuals in *Green Embrace* initiative.

- Outdoor activities and nature conservation are used to support active aging, as is seen in Grey4Green initiative, and also as a method to link together fathers recently migrated and bridge their common experiences and struggles as new immigrants.

When it comes to ALE professional capacity building initiatives, the following methods have been observed:

- Project-approach for multipliers that supports them to create change within their own organizations
- Feminist approaches for educators that enable them to create supportive environments for women
- Coaching education for educators that enables them to continually support participants in making change in their local environments.

Challenges and Outcomes

Among many challenges encountered, some of the most common ones include funding limitations, digital literacy barriers, language disparities, societal resistance to change, regular attendance of adult learners, stereotypes towards the role of women, expertise of educators who need to be educated in working with disadvantaged groups, ALE and sustainability, short duration of programs, and consistent and sustainable engagement of stakeholders.

Within many of these practices, strategies are developed to overcome some of the challenges, providing recommendations for future practices. For example, although it was a challenge to promote environmental issues when more immediate needs of disadvantaged populations are not being met, initiatives outline how basic needs of participants can be met through stakeholder engagement and by connecting environmental issues with participants' lives. Despite the challenges, outcomes were significant, with initiatives reporting enhanced community resilience, empowerment to participate and contribute to environmental sustainability, increased environmental awareness, and economic empowerment through green jobs.

Recommendations and success factors at the micro, meso and macro level

Micro level recommendations (educational courses and curricula):

- Diverse and innovative methodological approaches related to just transition (as described in the designated section of the analysis) have been developed and adapted, both for adults from disadvantaged communities, as well as for education practitioners working within the field of just transition.
- Program design should be based on the needs expressed by the communities, ensuring that green transition content is relevant and implementable in their respective contexts.
- Programs should focus on the participants' quality of life, wellbeing and health, as well as challenging stereotypes they are faced with. These kinds of programs have been shown to empower participants to engage in green transition in various ways – from implementing sustainable practices in daily life, economic empowerment through green jobs, to advocating for change in their local contexts.
- Sustainability can be incorporated into all educational programming and courses, whether they are VET, civic education programs, focused on artistic expression, or other ALE programs. Some examples include use of nature-based therapeutic activities for confidence building and improving mental health, or use of recycling in art related ALE or digital literacy programs.
- Tailored capacity building programs for educators and other professionals working in the field of just transition are needed, as it is difficult to find experts that are capable of working with disadvantaged groups, and are competent in diverse topics related to green transition and ALE. Practical resources, such as toolkits, are seen as important for community workers in the new field such as ALE for just transition.

Meso level recommendations (organizations):

- Main focus is on building partnerships between stakeholders, strengthening regional networks and knowledge-sharing platforms among environmental institutions, educational institutions and other relevant stakeholders.
 - o There are benefits to partnerships with non-traditional partners which bring new insight and perspective, as is seen in the *Perfect Match* and *Energy Superheroes initiatives*.
 - o Participatory approach, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement are crucial to holistically address barriers faced by participants from disadvantaged communities, creating programs aligned with their needs, and enhancing the reach of the programs.
 - o Some successful models have been created, as can be seen throughout the best practices collected. However, dissemination and scaling of successful models and best practices is seen as important in the new field of ALE and just transition, and regional partnerships and networks can support these processes.
- Environmental principles should be incorporated into ALE governance structures, such as through *Whole Institutions Approach*, and institutions should rely on adaptive management strategies to sustain long-term impacts.

While policy-related initiatives are less prevalent in the collection, numerous macro-level recommendations have been derived from practices implemented at the meso and micro levels. These policy-related recommendations are considered crucial for achieving the desired outcomes of initiatives at the organizational level and within ALE courses.

Macro level recommendations (policy level):

- Green transition elements can be incorporated in national ALE strategies, as exemplified by the Cyprus National Lifelong Strategy, where green transition is part of the ALE unemployment strategy, support for ALE educators, and stakeholder cooperation within the field of ALE for green transition.
- **Advocacy topics should focus on:**
 - o Streamlining EU policy frameworks to support social enterprise activities in re-use, repair, and recycling, influencing systemic changes at the EU policy level to promote inclusive and sustainable circular economy practices.
 - o Defining industry-wide standards for the promotion of sustainable practices
 - o Raising awareness of vulnerable group needs
- **Advocacy strategies identified are:**
 - o Public spaces which can be used to raise awareness on the issues of just transition, as is seen in the *Energy Superheroes* initiative where the murals and activities around it inform about the current stage of national development and the issues that still need to be addressed.
 - o Establishing grounds of reference and gathering data showcasing impact can be used for informing advocacy and policy discussions
- **Funding is often a barrier and following suggestions have been made:**
 - o Decentralized funding, where states reassign the management of common resources to local communities, enabling local ownership.
 - o Multi-annual funding is seen as crucial for long-term educational planning.