ONE
Networks for Quality Adult Learning

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

1

Project ONE – External Evaluation

1ST REPORT 31 May 2023[i]

External Evaluation Data Sheet

Project Acronym	ONE
Project Title	Opening adult education Networks to European cooperation
Project	621467-EPP-1-2020-1-IT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN
External Evaluation timeline	01/11/2022 - 31/12/2023 (14 months)
External Evaluation ID	CECOA, PT
Date/Version	31 MAY 2023

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AE	Adult Education
AL	Adult Learners
ALE	Adult Learning
EPRM	European Peer Review Methodology
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
F2F	Face To Face
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC	Theory of Change
TPM	Transnational Project Meeting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project **ONE - Opening adult education Networks to European cooperation** (621467-EPP-1-2020-1-IT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN) aims to reinforce the quality of Adult Education (AE), contributing for social inclusion in Europe, reinforcing capacity building in existing networks in Italy, Portugal and Slovakia, through four (4) themes, such as (i) Guidance services; (ii) Reaching out and active engagement of adults in both education and validation processes; (iii) Validation of non-formal and informal learning and (iv) Soft and basic skills for inclusion and active citizenship. The project uses the European Peer Review Methodology (EPRM) and is a multi-stakeholder partnership, involving organizations and public authorities from the three (3) project countries.

The **external evaluation of Project ONE** is developed within the **Impact Assessment strategy** defined in the project proposal, that combines internal and external evaluation. Regarding the external evaluation, it aims to assess "proposed initiatives' impact to avoid any risk of self-referentiality and be sure to come up with results relevant to other regional and national networks operating in the field of AE [Adult Education]"[ii]. Bearing that in mind, the **objectives of the external evaluation** are the following:

- o Identifying new opportunities emerging from the project activities
- o Addressing potential project challenges

The external evaluation will focus on project capacity building activities (WK4).

To develop the external evaluation, the **evaluation design** is based on a two-step approach evaluation process, that focus on the following tools:

- (i) The Logic model of *Theory of Change* (ToC);
- (ii) The six (6) evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)/Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), namely relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

The key findings are summarized as following: (i) need to integrate "network" as an extra theme that the field brought in all national settings for AE; (ii) better definition of terms such as stakeholders and target-groups to understand the AE landscape and implementation of activities in the field; (iii) in spite of not being a direct target-group of the project, Adult Learners (AL) were engaged with success during WK4 (i.e. study circles); (iv) need to improve awareness regarding the project sustainability, namely answering if the benefits will last and considering that there are already AE networks in place.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The external evaluation purpose is to identify any risk of subjectivity that can impact the implementation, progress and sustainability of the project, as well as highlighting transferable knowledge to other regional and/or national networks in the AE field in Europe. To do that, we used collaborative tools, calling for a participatory approach by all partners of ONE project.

Concerning the evaluation questions, two (2) dimensions are considered: ToC and DAC criteria. The crosses-references between ToC questions and DAC criteria are proposed by CECOA to underline the complementarities between the two-step approach evaluation process design.

The ToC model is developed addressing six (6) questions[iii], namely:

ToC Questions	DAC Criteria
Who are you seeking to influence or benefit (stakeholders and target population)?	**Relevance**
What benefits are you seeking to achieve (results)?	**Coherence**
When will you achieve them (time)?	**Efficiency**
How will you and others make this happen (activities, strategies, resources, etc.)?	**Effectiveness**
Where and under what circumstances will you do your work (context)?	**Impact**
Why do you believe your theory will bear out (assumptions)?	**Sustainability**

Table 1: ToC questions matching DAC criteria

The DAC criteria are translated into questions that should be addressed when evaluating the activities, outputs, outcomes and impact expected, looking at the challenges within the six areas, as following:

DAC Criteria Vs ToC	Question[iv]	Challenges
Relevance ToC - Who	**Is the intervention/project doing the right things?** "The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design respond to beneficiaries' [affected people] global, country and partner/institution needs, policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change".	National and international stakeholders with multiple and potentially competing priorities and/or needs; does the intervention have clear objectives and how they were determined; does the intervention has a clear logical model and/or explicit design rationale; if the context changed, was the intervention adapted.
Coherence ToC - What	**How well does the intervention fit?** "The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution."	Prior assessment of policy documents, data and participants; restricted access to data because of data protection legislation and/or organisational policies; avoiding getting into a 'very broad scope'; limitations regarding the quality of assessment of each context/country.
Effectiveness ToC - How	**Is the intervention achieving its objectives?** "The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups."	Lack of disaggregated data that can inform the project; having non-measurable objectives; can the results be attributed to the intervention.
Efficiency ToC - When	**How well are resources being used?** "The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way."	Getting proper comparisons; cross references of methods and tools to measure efficiency; lack of expertise and data; and shift in priorities related with risk and timelines.
Impact ToC - Where	**What difference does the intervention make?** "The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects."	A clear notion of impact for stakeholders and users; what was intended and how it would be achieved; at what degree the intervention will have impact; availability of data; unexpected or unintended effects.
Sustainability ToC - Why	**Will the benefits last?** "The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue".	Determine if the intervention has not achieved the results expected (see effectiveness), positive unintended benefits or made contributions to impact; when to do evaluation and to inform what; identifying stakeholders and factors that can sustain the benefits over time.

Table 1: DAC criteria – questions and challenges

BACKGROUND

The **external evaluation will focus on capacity building activities (WK4),** which will be developed from November 2022 to December 2023. The activities are based on the Study Circles Methodology and will include the following piloting activities:

(i)   Training opportunities for management and teaching staff of AE providers on guidance and VNFIL;
(ii)   Experimentation of outreach activities;
(iii)   Revision of the basic skills/soft skills training offer;
(iv)   Adoption mechanisms for the ILAs.

- Implementation, participants and evidence

WP4 - ONE CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGY	Number of participants/evidence
4.1 - Elaboration of the common capacity building strategy	Document elaborated WP4 – Del. 4.4.1.: "Capacity Building Strategy" by FORMA.Azione (Italy)
4.2 - Study circles at country level	3 study circles (each country) involving a total of 30 participants: 20 representatives of AL providers (diverse type of provision and organization, internal and external to the networks), 6 adult learners and 4 other stakeholders (in WP4 – Del. 4.4.1.: "Capacity Building Strategy")
4.3 - Agreement on the protocol for the piloting	3 Networks (each country)
4.4 - Piloting of the capacity building actions	Immediate target-groups in piloting activities: - Adult education managers, teachers and trainers belonging to national networks: from 50 to 70 per country (total of 200) - Policy makers in adult learning/stakeholders: from 15 to 20 per country (total of 50) Indirect target groups: - Learners in adult education: 15.000 in total - Stakeholders: at least 20 AE providers, 5 policy makers, 3 organisations in VET and 3 organizations promoting active citizenship and social inclusion in each country will join the Peer Review (Data from the detailed description of the project, p. 74)

Table 2: Description of WP4 – ONE project

- Timeline for the development and implementation of WK4

PROJECT TIMETABLE

Project activity	2021												2022												2023											
MONTHS	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24	M25	M26	M27	M28	M29	M30	M31	M32	M33	M34	M35	M36
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
WP4 - ONE CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGY																	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
4.1 - Elaboration of the common capacity building strategy																	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	✓													
4.2 - Study circles at country level																					▓	▓	▓	✓												
4.3 - Agreement on the protocol for the piloting																					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓											
4.4 - Piloting of the capacity building actions																									▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓

Figure 1: WK4 timeline – ONE project

- In the WK4, the intervention evaluation is related with the expect results as described in the project proposal, as following:

Description and envisaged results	The activities planned in this WP, to be implemented under the coordination of WP2 – FORMA.Azione are the crucial ones of the whole project, representing the specificity of the proposal together with the adoption of the European Peer Review methodology. Moving from the preparatory work done under WP3, the activities foreseen in the WP are expected to contribute to the project overall objective by: • Improving the cooperation within the networks and cross country in order to progress their performances at international level and specifically in the 4 themes identified, leading to high-quality adult education provision; • Supporting networks in building their action plan for improvement, taking advantage of the exchange at transnational level and of the practices from other contexts; • Piloting the designed action plans in IT, SK, PT, as improvement plans [REVIEW PHASE] following the results of the mutual Peer reviews. Expected results: • Better coordination and result-oriented approach by the AE providers and professionals who are part of the networks; • Strengthened cooperation with relevant stakeholders at country and EU level; • Tested and validated strategies to improve the quality of AE provision with particular reference to the 4 themes under investigation; • Information and data collected in different countries and type of networks ready to inform the **review phase – which is usually the weakest part of the quality assurance process but the one really able to initiate continuous improvement**; • Improved capacity of the National Networks in representing providers' needs and representativeness, including for advocating at national and European level and supporting AE providers improvements and culture of quality.

Figure 2: WK4 – expected results of the project proposal (p. 95)

EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The evaluation design in underpinned by the **European Peer Review methodology,** that guides **ONE project,** based on a **two-step approach evaluation process,** comprised of two main tools that translated the methods used:

(i) The **logic model of ToC**, "a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context" (see figure below[v]). With the ToC it is possible mapping out "what has been described as the 'missing middle' between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved"[vi]. Furthermore, ToC "identifies indicators of success and specifies the details of who is expected to change and how much. This is the basis for developing the methodologies to measure the indicators"[vii]. In the end, ToC as a visualization tool identify the success and obstacles of the previous activities (WP3), articulating "all the assumptions, justification, and contextual conditions you believe affect your likelihood of success, lessons about how these changes, expand, or prove correct will be evident"[viii].
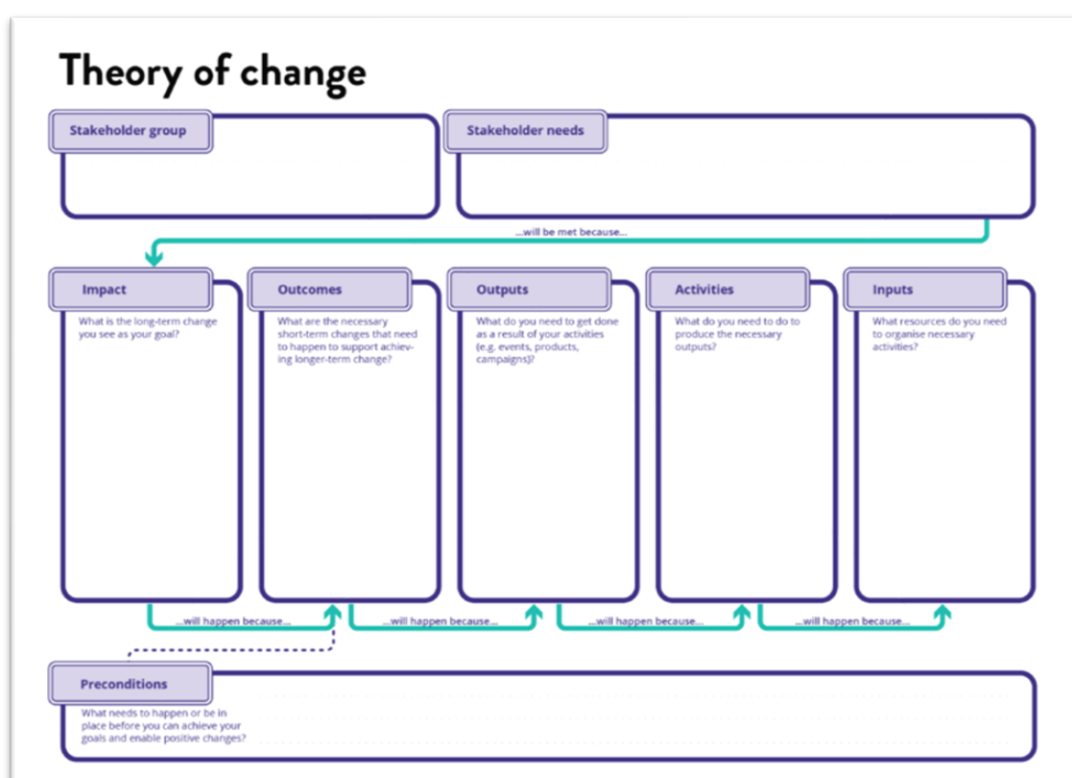

Figure 3: ToC diagram @ Stories for Impact

(ii) Applying the **key-evaluation questions that six (6) evaluation criteria** (see figure below) of the DAC/OECD recommends, along with critical reflection regarding the challenges of each criteria. The DAC criteria are used in monitoring and evaluation processes in European and international development projects, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations (UN). The DAC evaluation criteria support "consistent, high-quality evaluation"[ix]. The six criteria "provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of an intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project or activity)"[x].

Figure 4: The six (6) DAC/OECD criteria @OECD iLibrary

Concerning the **limitations** of the tools, is highlighted that the development of a ToC needs time and engagement from all partners of the project, as well as ability to identify clearly at what stage are the project in. Considering that time is a constrains that characterizes most of the times the project development and that ONE project brings three (3) European countries together, the time and space limitations needed to be evaluated and adapted from one ToC to the next. In addition, the location was both online and F2F (face to face) to understand which **strategy** would be the best to bring all partners together to reflect critically on the project.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Two ToC were applied during the 2023 TPM (Transnational Project Meeting), using online and F2F environments to allow a critical assessment. Regarding the ToC online, it was done in **January** 16; the F2F, in **Abril** 27, in Maia (Portugal). The two ToC were done involving all project partners. Another ToC is schedule to be done in October, near the end of the project, followed by a second external evaluation report.

FINDINGS

In the first ToC an example was given (see below) to illustrate a ToC; in the second ToC, no example was used.
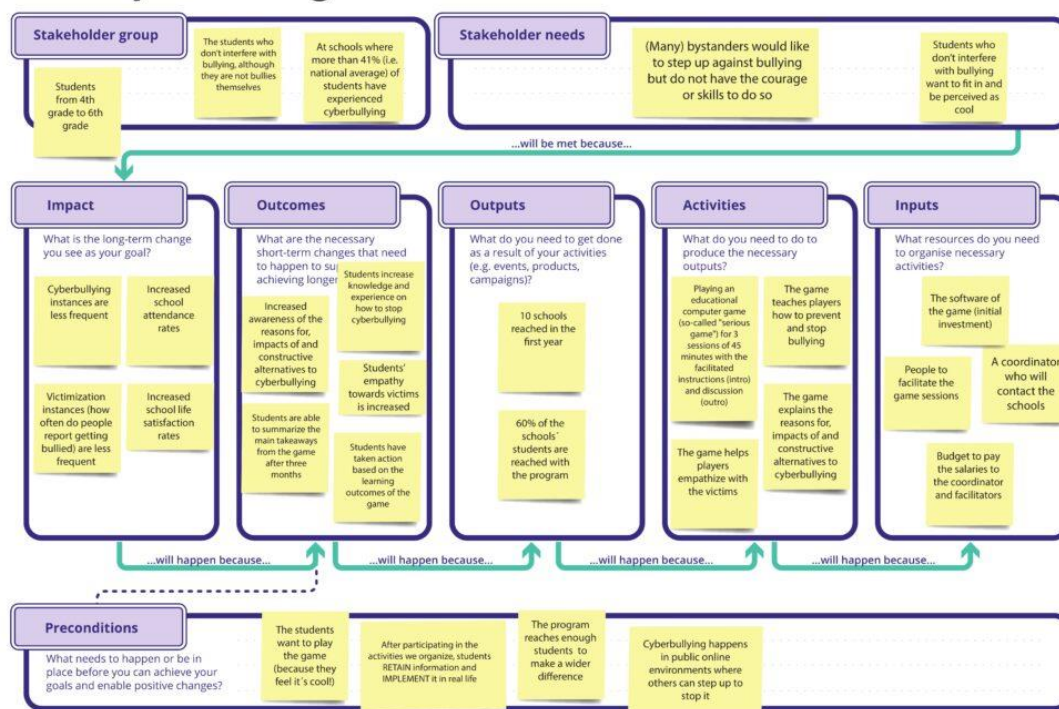

Figure 5: ToC developed by storiesforimpact.com[xi]

- **What the online Toc brings about ONE project?**

To have a better performance and engagement the ToC steps were adapted, calling for identifying and debating the practical issues such as inputs, activities and so on, to get to the step "impact", closing with reflecting on the preconditions. Considering that it was the first-time partners meet online to develop a ToC, that partners have different levels of awareness regarding this tool, the strategic option for having a productive session online was to ask for a collective brainstorming and CECOA would write down

the conclusions, that were later shared with the partners for reflection and preparation for the second F2F ToC.

The online ToC resulted in the following:

Stakeholder group (Who is our key stakeholder group? Describe as much as possible – age, gender, profession, education, etc)	Stakeholder needs (Identify the needs related to our key stakeholders group)
Start here – step 1 AE and learning providers, teachers and trainers and other staff (indirect target – AL – issue?) Country level different realities IT (formal education + NET public AE centres); SK (Equal to IT, national NETWORK, different = formal and non-formal) and PT	**Step 2** Share practices about AE, everyday work, reaching (4 themes), network, quality, more structured plan of networking + IT: public school for AL, highway to policies to access financing (receive and share in the definition of policies), access the policy level; SK, policy making and influence

Impact (What is the long-term change you see as your goal?)	Outcomes (What are the necessary short-term changes that need to happen to support achieving long-term change?)	Outputs (What do you need to get done as a result of your activities (e.g., events, products, campaigns)?	Activities (What do you need to do to produce the necessary outputs?)	Inputs (What resources do you need to organize necessary activities?)
Step 7 Make the network stronger (more organizations, more secure, more closer sharing, cooperation, good neighboured) + autonomous network Acquiring competences to adapt or change peer review method to other areas/progress and improve	**Step 6** Trying to create empathy between + involvement of policy level (inform and feedback, regular basis) – structure and opportunities + demonstrate how the cooperation and network works and which is the value, raise awareness of cooperation and network (concrete tools to replicate, ex. peer review) – depending on each one budget + advantage of experts in each network, add competences (learning together) + the whole process of peer review (4 phases) + strategy national	**Step 5** IT: national action plan, 3 network different (different activities according to the needs) + selecting activities until November 2023 (mid-January 2024) + delay Covid, October SK PT summer, 1st phase, September	**Step 4** WK4 – training activities, training of trainers basic skills and communications, policy learning activities, peer reviews activities, workshops and master class, study circles Capacity building: Mapping and piloting	**Step 3** Trainers. Budget to rent rooms, platform like zoom, materials (deliverables), softwares (visual) – desire, not a reality (we have zoom and trainers) + budget in the project. PT: hired IT: internal have, hire some part. SK: internal staff, external speakers trainers (budget)

	(for each country) – tool Period of peer review will allow to increase the network (lobbying – policy level) – down to top + Indirect target – AL, if AE ask peer review more			

Preconditions (What needs to happen or be in place before you can achieve your goals and enable positive changes?)
Step 8 People are eager to share, to know other colleagues know, to be sure + AE needs proper network (they want and they need) Guidance needs tools – study circles Barriers: management of the network providers (motivated, changes in org. Need head of the org. bottom-up approach) – willing to change, because they can have other problems and priorities + change of the legal context, political / government changes + small providers (reluctant) + difficult to reach policy makers

- **What the F2F ToC brings about ONE project?**

In the F2F ToC, partners gather in three (3) groups, having elements from different countries in each group, and reflected on the project after four (4) months after the 1st ToC. The steps to develop the second ToC were followed according to the standard procedure, going from stakeholders group needs to impact. The other steps were not addressed due to time constrains. Below are the photos of the three (3) ToC produced.
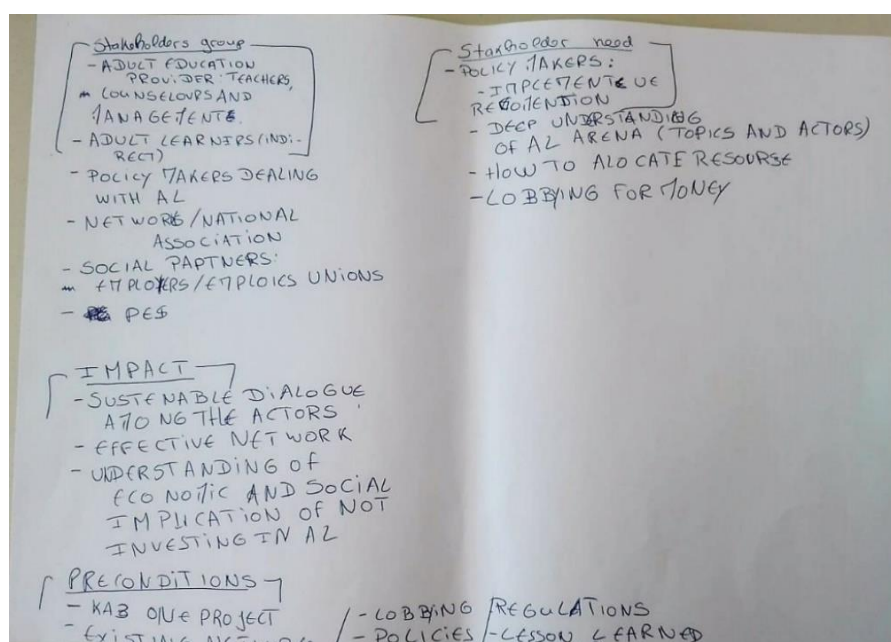

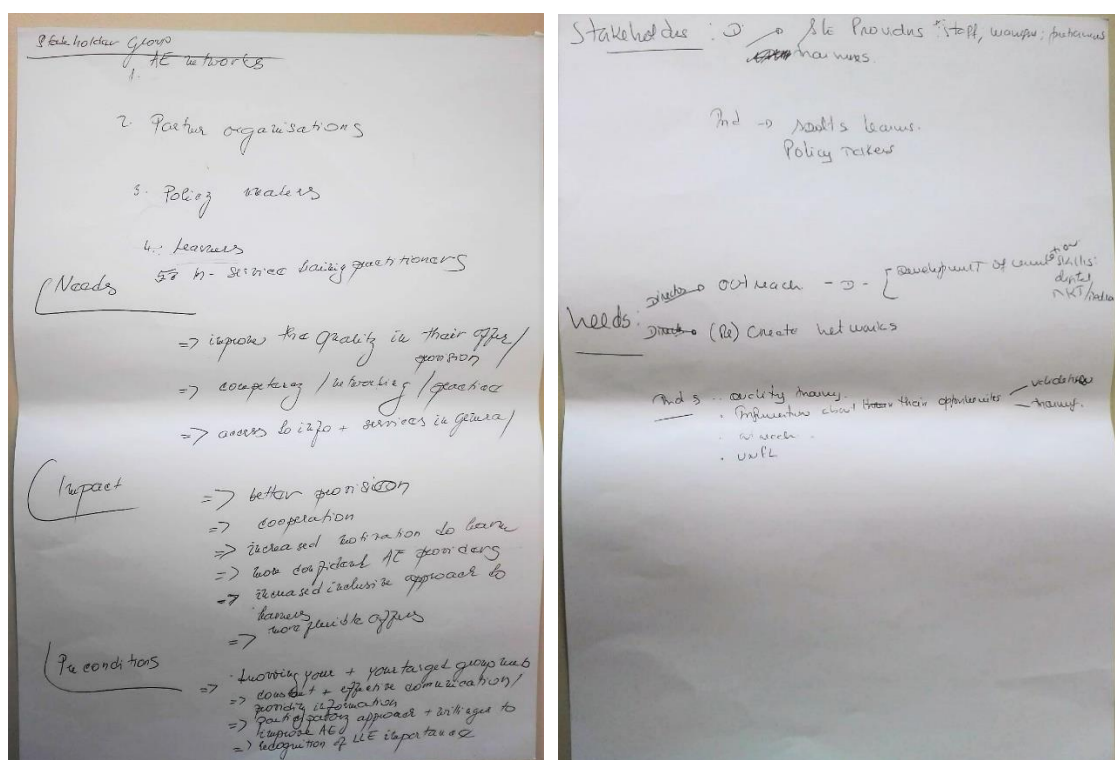*Figure 6: F2F ToC – ONE project* (group 1)

Figure 7: F2F ToC – ONE project (group 2 and 3)

CONCLUSIONS

- The need to clearly define the differences between stakeholders and target-groups.
- The Adult Learners (AL), indirect target of the project, needs a specific definition on how to be engaged in the project in each country.
- "Network" came out as another theme of the project to join the four already existing (i.e., guidance services; reaching out; validation; and soft skills).
- Need to have a more structure plan for networking.
- It is more productive when each country works on one ToC, because AE landscape is very different from one country to the other.
- The validation of formal and non-formal learning is different from each country not allowing to develop a transnational European network at this stage, but the project could inform the preparation of such a network.
- Need to collect more qualitative data regarding EU policies and AE networks already existing in the three (3) countries.
- Developing competences near the target-groups and stakeholders to implement Peer Review Methodology in the AE area in all countries of the project.
- Constrains identified are related to stakeholders needs and the issue of lobbing for financing.
- Study circles used as tools to guide the improvement of already existing AE networks at national level.

The study circles are central for the development of WK4, being the timeline of the three (3) study circles compared below, to understand how the capacity building strategy was developed by each partner in each country and level of engagement reached:

Country	Study Circle	Date	Nº participants	Milestones WK4
Italy				
	Practitioners	6/12/2022	**110 practitioners**, mainly teachers working in CPIAs in different Italian regions	
	Stakeholders	7/12/ 2022	**7 representatives** from several public organizations and/or public authorities	
	Learners	19/12/2022	**33 learners** engaged in the study circle activity, most attending learning paths for obtaining a lower secondary school degree, all with migrant backgrounds	
Portugal				
	Practitioners	29/11/2022	**17 trainers** (trainers, teachers, different levels of experience in ALE and different connection and proximity with the ONE Project as some were peers)	
	Stakeholders and experts	02/12/2022	**7 participants** (4 stakeholders and 3 peers which work closely with APEFA)	**30 participants** = **20 representatives of ALE providers** (diverse type of provision and organization, internal and external to the networks) + **6 adult learners** + **4 other stakeholders**
	Learners	18/11/2022	**18 adult learners** (adults with low qualifications, some used to work together for a few years and some new to the group)	
Slovakia				
	Not described	8/11/2022	**18 participants** (not described)	
	Stakeholders and experts	9/11/2022	**9 participants** (Representative of the Ministry of Education, State institute of Vocational Education and Training (SIOV), AIVD SR members (NGOs, private institutions), university representatives, regional government representative, cultural institutions representative and adult learners. Some of the participants were Peers and some were from Peer Reviewed institutions)	
	Stakeholders and experts	12/01/2023	**6 participants in person, 10 online participants** (Representative of Ministry of Education, State institute of Vocational Education and Training, AIVD SR members (NGOs, private institutions), university representatives. Some of the participants were Peers and some were from Peer Reviewed institutions)	

Table 3: WK4 – National description of the Study Circles

RECOMMENDATIONS

Partners awareness regarding each ToC question and DAC criteria from ONE project partners is summarized below, in a rising scale of one (1) to five (5), being five (5) the complete achievement of the tasks.
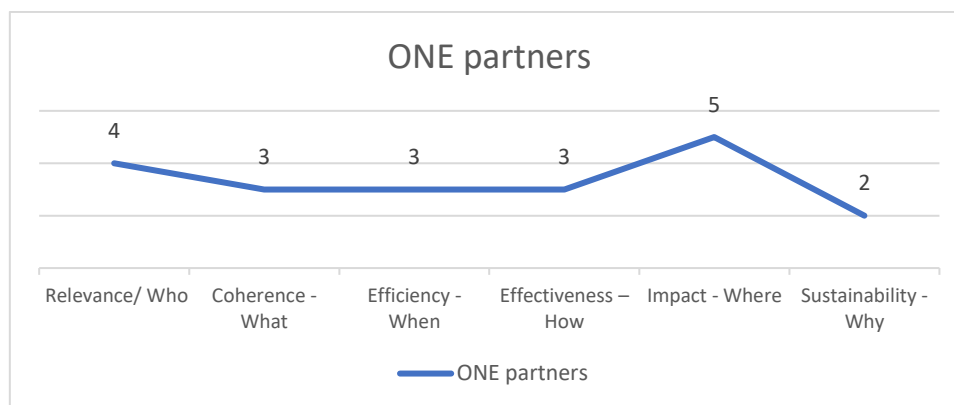

Figure 8: Overview of ToC questions and DAC criteria – ONE project

Italy provides a more sustainable engagement with AE actors regarding existing AE networks, indicating that could provide a role model for a network plan, one of the key issues that the ToC/DAC criteria revealed. Conversely, Slovakia could provide a more general overview regarding stakeholders engagement and needs. Portugal would be able to reinforce a general overview regarding the needs of AL and provide a draft strategy to how to engage them in AE. The next ToC will be developed by each country, if possible, bringing together partners and stakeholders to debate internal constrains and identify strengths that can inform AE ability to network efficiently at European level.

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[i] Image source: https://www.pexels.com/pt-br/foto/ovo-marrom-3640669/

[ii] According to the project proposal p. 53.

[iii] Based on in https://innovationforsocialchange.org/en/a-tool-to-develop-your-theory-of-change

[iv] Table based on https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/543e84ed-en/1/3/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/543e84ed-en&_csp_=535d2f2a848b7727d35502d7f36e4885&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book#

[v] Examples at https://storiesforimpact.com/toolbox/theory-of-change/

[vi] In https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/how-does-theory-of-change-work/when-to-use/

[vii] Ibid.

[viii] Ibid. To clarify ToC in practice see the following examples: https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/NCCS_BuildingCommunitySchools.pdf and https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/Superwomen_Example.pdf).

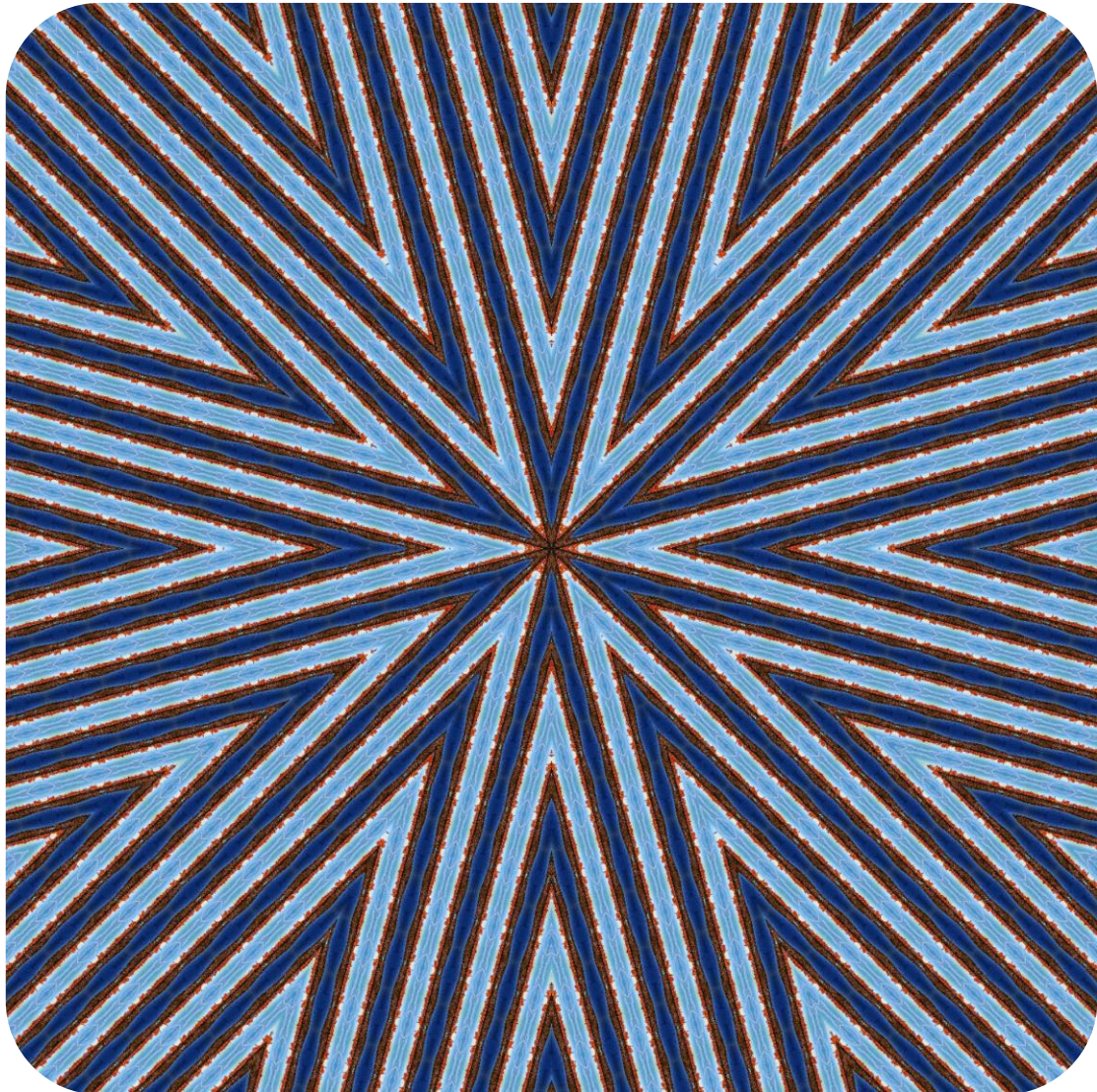[ix] In OECD (2021), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, OECD Publishing, Paris, ttps://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en, p. 10.

[x] Ibid.

[xi] In https://storiesforimpact.com/toolbox/theory-of-change/

Project ONE – External Evaluation

FINAL REPORT

External Evaluation Data Sheet

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LIST OF FIGURES

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AE	Adult Education
AL	Adult Learners
ALE	Adult Learning and Education
CoP	Community of Practice
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EPRM	European Peer Review Methodology
F2F	Face To Face
FG	Focus Group
ILA	Individual Learning Account
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QA	Quality Assurance
ToC	Theory of Change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project **ONE - Opening adult education Networks to European cooperation** (621467-EPP-1-2020-1-IT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN) aims to reinforce the quality of Adult Education (AE), contributing for social inclusion in Europe, reinforcing capacity building in existing networks in Italy, Portugal and Slovakia. The project uses the European Peer Review Methodology (EPRM) and is a multi-stakeholder partnership, involving organisations and public authorities from the three (3) project countries. Project ONE is organised around four (4) themes, as following:
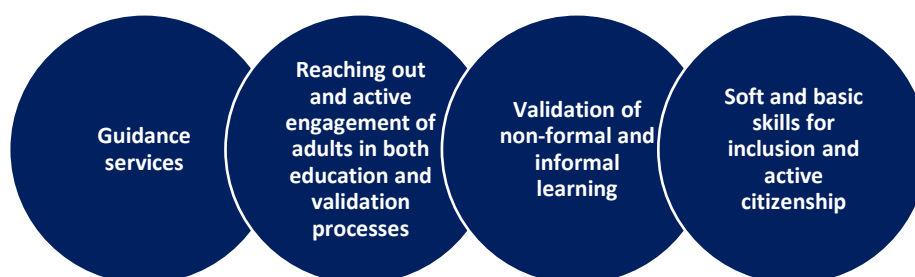
Figure 1: The ONE four (4) themes on Adult Education for social inclusion

The **external evaluation of Project ONE** is developed within the Impact Assessment strategy defined in the project proposal, that combines internal and external evaluation.

The **objectives** of the external evaluation are (i) to **identify new opportunities** emerging from the project activities; and (ii) addressing **potential project challenges**.

The **key findings** of the final external evaluation report are summarised as following:

(i)   Portuguese partners and the ONE 'double approach' to European Peer Review Methodology (EPRM) and adult education (AE)
(ii)   Italian partners and the 'private public alliance' for effective change in AE
(iii)   Slovakian partners and the ONE 'chain of change'
(iv)   ONE consortium proposal for creating a Community of Practice (CoP) for AE
(v)   Draft/proposal of a peer review pool of AE in Portugal
(vi)   Proposal for creating a model to register QA institutes for individual learning account (ILA) in Slovakia
(vii)   Draft/design of governance or an organisational model for cooperation among private and public bodies in the AE area to manage complex projects with new ideas such as the implementation of the EPRM in AE in Italy
(viii) Effective communication with accessible language for AE learners and changing the code of ethics to include QA (Quality Assurance)
(ix)   Merging projects, creating synergies in AE national landscape

Altogether, ONE consortium created a change on how to decode the system, providing a new glance to the AE landscape in Europe.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

OVERVIEW

Project ONE is a transnational European project, co-funded by Erasmus+/ Key Action 3, aiming at reinforcing the quality of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) provision, alongside with social inclusion in Europe. To achieve that, ONE will provide capacity building support to existing national networks of ALE providers in Italy, Portugal and Slovakia, bringing together the following organisations:
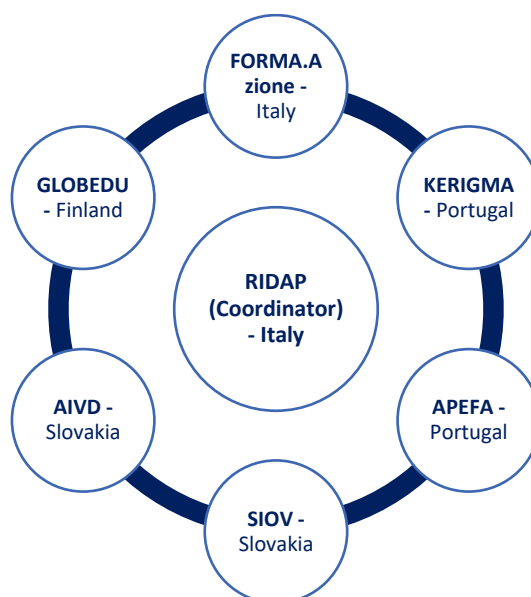
Figure 2: ONE consortium partners per country

ONE consortium has also ten (10) associated partners described by typology:

- o   NGOs (i.e., Belgium and Finland)
- o   Public authorities, trade union and AE network (i.e., Italy)
- o   Public national institution (i.e., Slovakia)
- o   VET providers and technological institutes (i.e., Portugal)

Indeed, ONE consortium implemented the project with the cooperation at country level of national public authorities, based upon the European Peer Review Methodology (EPRM), underpinned by four (4) themes, as following:

- (i)   guidance
- (ii)   information, outreach and active engagement of adults in education and validation processes
- (iii)   validation of non-formal and informal learning
- (iv)   development of soft and basic skills for inclusion and active citizenship

The main project activities are:

- ✓ Implementation and development of Mutual Peer Reviews process/sessions targeting ALE providers and related stakeholders, followed by impact evaluation
- ✓ Development and piloting of a Capacity Building Strategy, followed as well by impact evaluation
- ✓ Empowerment of providers and learners of adult learning promoting awareness on social inclusion, economic growth and community development

ONE immediate target groups are adult education (AE) managers, teachers and trainers belonging to National networks. It is expected to have the involvement of at least 150 AE professionals per country, in training, peer review, mutual learning, piloting activities, reflecting the variety and fragmentation of the national education systems.

Other target groups are decision makers and organisations working with low qualified AEL.

- ❖ ONE assumption related with AE is described below as following:

"*extreme* ***fragmentation of the adult education system in Europe*** *and the* ***systemic need to build and share common working methods, cooperation practices and tools, communication channels****, starting from the providers belonging to the National networks involved in ONE*"[i].

SCOPE OF EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The **external evaluation of Project ONE** is developed and implemented by CECOA within the **Impact Assessment strategy** defined in the project proposal, that combines internal and external evaluation. Regarding the external evaluation, it aims to assess "proposed initiatives' impact to avoid any risk of self-referentiality and be sure to come up with results relevant to other regional and national networks operating in the field of AE"[ii]. With that in mind, the **objectives of the external evaluation** are the one's described below:

- o Identifying new opportunities emerging from the project activities
- o Addressing potential project challenges

In the proposal, ONE Consortium had already identified potential challenges such as:

- ✓ **Lack of access** to quality learning and validation opportunities for low-skilled adults

✓ **Fragmentation of adult education systems** and the linked lack of cooperation through and within national networks

The **external evaluation focus on capacity building activities (WK4),** which are being developed from November 2022 to December 2023. The activities were based on the Study Circles Methodology and included the following piloting activities:

(i)   Training opportunities for management and teaching staff of AE providers on guidance and VNFIL
(ii)   Experimentation of outreach activities
(iii) Revision of the basic skills/soft skills training offer
(iv)   Adoption mechanisms for the Individual Learning Account (ILA)

METHODOLOGY

PURPOSE

The **external evaluation** purpose is to identify any risk of subjectivity that can impact the **implementation, progress and sustainability** of the project, as well as highlight **transferable knowledge** to other regional and/or national networks in the AE field in Europe. To do that, we used collaborative tools, calling for a participatory approach by all partners of ONE project.

METHODS

To develop the external evaluation, the **evaluation design** is based on a two-step approach evaluation process, that focus on the following tools:

(i)   The Logic model of *Theory of Change* (ToC)

(ii)   The six (6) evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), namely relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability

As explained in the intermediary external evaluation report[iii], the ToC model is developed addressing six (6) questions[iv] crossed with Development Assistance Committee (DAC)/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to namely:

ToC Questions	DAC Criteria
Who are you seeking to influence or benefit (stakeholders and target population)?	**Relevance**
What benefits are you seeking to achieve (results)?	**Coherence**
When will you achieve them (time)?	**Efficiency**
How will you and others make this happen (activities, strategies, resources, etc.)?	**Effectiveness**
Where and under what circumstances will you do your work (context)?	**Impact**
Why do you believe your theory will bear out (assumptions)?	**Sustainability**

Table 1: ToC questions matching DAC criteria

TIMELINE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION STRATEGY

CECOA developed and implemented three (3) moments of evaluation towards reflection on the progress and achievements of ONE project, as described below:
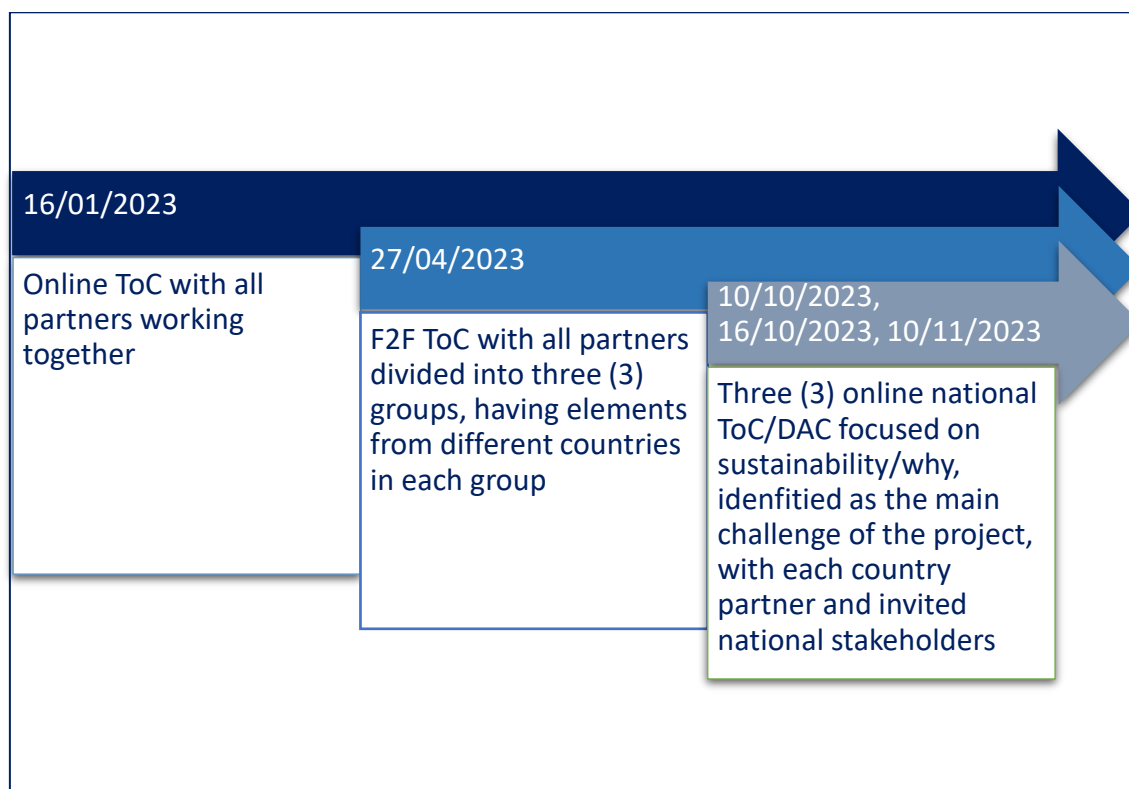
16/01/2023

Online ToC with all partners working together

27/04/2023

F2F ToC with all partners divided into three (3) groups, having elements from different countries in each group

10/10/2023, 16/10/2023, 10/11/2023

Three (3) online national ToC/DAC focused on sustainability/why, idenfitied as the main challenge of the project, with each country partner and invited national stakeholders

Figure 3: Thee (3) ToC/DAC ONE consortium evaluation/reflections moments lead by CECOA

➕ The **1ˢᵗ ToC/DAC moment** (online) done by all ONE partners together, online, was to:
1. Identify the problem/goal in which the project is trying to intervene
2. Understand and describe what ONE consortium wants to achieve in terms of long term goals
3. Going back to reflect on what ONE consortium wants to achieve, for what and why after writing the proposal and with initial field approach near the target groups and working among national realities
4. Explore and describe ONE assumptions in a general approach
5. Working on what ONE consortium will do to achieve the desired outcomes (i.e., short-term changes necessary to achieve and support long-term changes)

➕ The **2ⁿᵈ ToC/DAC moment** done by groups, F2F, with countries mingled to provided different perspectives on ONE's goal and achievements to evaluate/reflect on progress.

- The **3ʳᵈ ToC/DAC moment** was done country by country, online, to understand the connections established between ONE organisations and public authorities/public bodies. In this final session, ONE partners invited national stakeholders to be able to reflect together.

The three (3) ToC/DAC moments are covered by CECOA, in this external evaluation final report with the creation of a risk analysis matrix by country and a global risk analysis for ONE consortium with data provided by partners and associated partners.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The last ToC/DAC moment of evaluation/reflection was developed over three (3) online meetings in November and December 2023 with each partner, at national level, plus invited stakeholders. The 3rd moment was done in three (3) languages: with the Portuguese partners, the online meeting was conducted in Portuguese; with the Slovak partners in English; and, finally, with the Italian partners was conducted both in Italian and English. All partners brought stakeholders to debate and engage in the discussion on the ONE project changes and future impact on the AE landscape in Europe and at national level.

All three (3) sessions were organised around the **challenge of sustainability**, as described in the CECOA intermediary report of external evaluation, to understand how the ONE consortium was prepared for **middle and long-term changes** and what kind of **strategies ONE partners** have come up with at **national and European level**.

DAC Criteria Vs ToC	Question^v	Challenges
Sustainability **ToC - Why**	**Will the benefits last?** "The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue".	Determine if the intervention has not achieved the results expected (see effectiveness), positive unintended benefits or made contributions to impact; when to do evaluation and to inform what; identifying stakeholders and factors that can sustain the benefits over time.

Figure 4: One of the DAC criteria – question and challenges

To promote the dialogue between partners and stakeholders, CECOA used the evaluation done in the intermediary report, as described in the image below, using a rising scale of one (1) to five (5), being five (5) the complete achievement of the tasks.
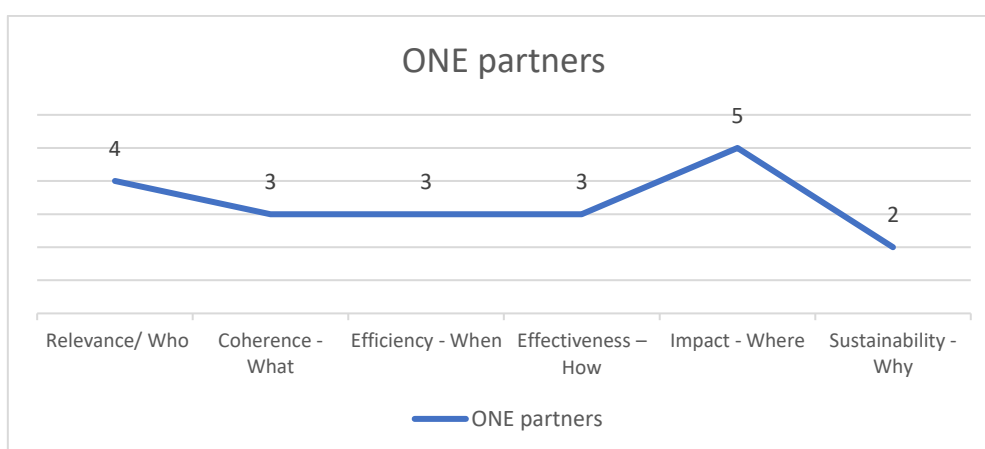

Figure 5: Results of the intermediary external evaluation done – ONE project

FINDINGS – GENERAL OVERVIEW

ONE consortium concluded that a community of practice (CoP) would be the ideal model to have a transnational network in the area of AE. All countries shared the need to have more sources of financing to continue the implementation of the EPRM in AE to achieve a longstanding impact. Italy and Slovakia found it important to underline that European funding would provide empowerment and the possibility to build capacity for AE Quality Assurance systems implemented within the public AE system (i.e., near and with the stakeholders). Portugal underlined the need to have funding to continue the implementation of EPRM in a more structured way at national level to benefit AE. Slovakia highlighted the EPRM as a field of experimentation that can contribute for AE changes. Italy underlined the need ONE's project brought regarding cooperation between private and public bodies using EPRM.
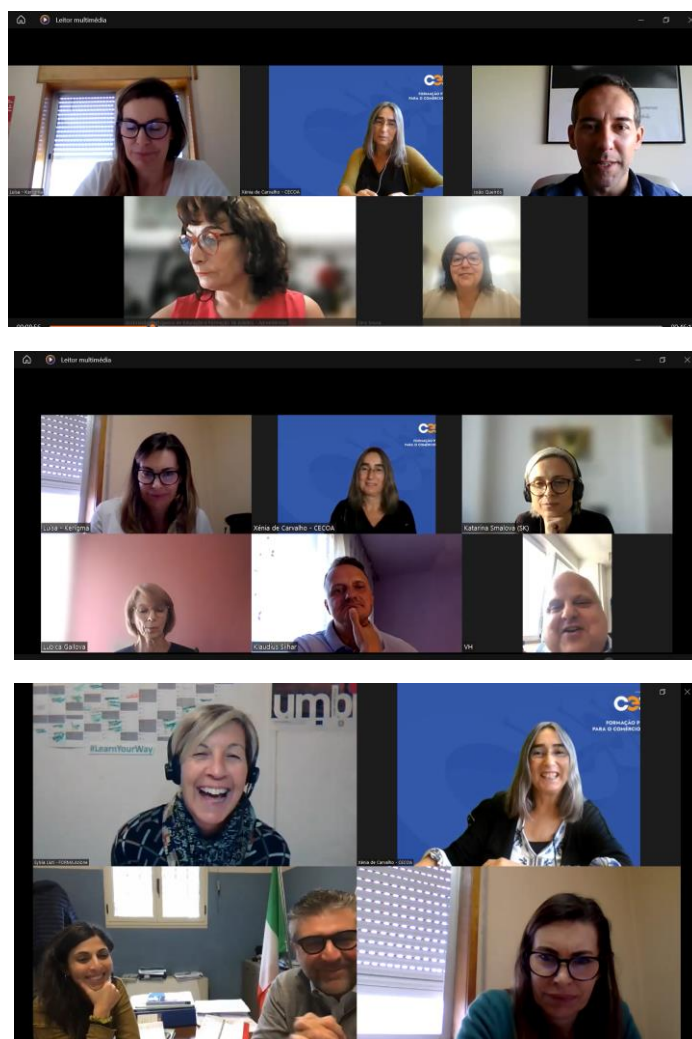

Figure 6: The Portuguese, Slovakian and Italy partners and stakeholders in the 3ʳᵈ ToC/DAC evaluation moment

PORTUGAL

Regarding Portugal, ONE project sustainability was approached in a very straightforward way, describing expected activities after the end of the project, namely in Quality Assurance (QA) area. With that purpose, Portuguese partners will take on board ONE' lessons and foresee the organisation of three (3) activities namely: (i) two (2) webinars, in which quality is the topic in the AE field; (ii) replication of the Peer Review training in terms of applied methodology in the AE field, and (iii) inviting stakeholders, such as Higher Education experts, using the podcast model to share knowledge and practices on the area of AE.

When describing the three (3) activities foreseen after the end of ONE project, Portuguese partners described the agents that are already working in the AE field, being stakeholders the priority and the ones that can really contribute for the long-term sustainability of the philosophy underpinning ONE project (i.e., EPRM). Besides that, the Portuguese partners are expecting to integrate in their national seminar an invited speaker and/or a panel on QA in AE, having the ONE's proposal integrated for a long-term period to promote change towards the implementation of EPRM in the Portuguese AE landscape.

Regarding dissemination, Portugal highlighted the importance of paying special attention to trainers and/or agents that work as mediators and work with the final beneficiaries (i.e., AE learners). The Portuguese partners shared their understanding of the role of dissemination as key for the improvement of AE landscape at national and European level, highlighting that sometimes dissemination activities are not for the AE learners themselves but for the AE trainers, considering as an added value - the agents who intervene in the field. The idea is to build capacity near the trainers and/or mediators concerning dissemination, but also to have the materials accessible to other target groups in the AE area. In doing so, Portugal highlighted the need to have a double approach to sustain the results achieved by the project, that CECOA named as following:

| a bottom-up approach, reaching institutions when sharing the EPRM, focusing in sharing and not evaluation, allowing institutions to network (i.e. key-word of ONE's project) | a top-down approach with policy makers, such as ANQEP, that can promote and disseminate the use of EPRM, a non-formal practice that allows to benefit the main target-group, AEL. |

Figure 7: Portuguese partners and the ONE 'double approach' to EPRM and AE

One conclusion that the Portuguese partners shared is that probably will not be possible to implement immediately the recommendations of the evaluation report made by the peers during the pilot actions, because most of the entities have already their annual activity plan organised. However, the possibility to introduce the use of EPRM in the near future is more than welcome by the main target groups of the project, namely regarding the recommendation about the improvement and more suitable dissemination materials near the institutions that work with AE.

The Portuguese ONE partners described a good practice that came out of the project and is transferable to other national AE European realities: effective communication to mobilise adults for learning and to enrol in VET programs, decoding the dissemination materials with AE learners regarding AE offers. From the Portuguese experience, a toolkit or guidelines for trainers to work with low-skilled adult learners was created, using terms and sentences thar can be decoded by AE population. The guidelines were drawn after developing workshops on basic skills and moments of effective communication with AE learners. Besides that, Portugal did a focus group (FG) with adult learners, giving them voice, to know their perceptions and understanding of what the offer in AE is.

Another conclusion that the Portuguese partners reached was that the EPRM has several tools that need to be adapted to the AE context. Indeed, the team that led the Peer Review process need to have the ability to reproduce, adapt and customise EPRM tools for each institutional/AE context.

Finally, the Portuguese team is already drafting a Peer Review pool for AE based on the ONE consortium recommendation of creation of a CoP. The next step is to define the criteria to integrate the Peer Review pool. The idea behind is to have personal and institutional growth when sharing practices among peers. Furthermore, the AE peer review pool can bring the possibility to train future professionals in the AE sector, bringing awareness for this learning population.

SLOVAKIA

Regarding Slovakia, ONE project highlighted the challenge of making transitions, creating change in validation, outreach, basic skills and networking in AE. Those ideas brought the need for legislative changes at national level, which can be supported by the systematisation made during ONE's project. However, and as highlighted during the

online session, ONE project is about cooperation and network, not focused on legislative changes *per si.* It was highlighted that legislation does not bring new things, but projects are essential to move forward in areas that did not exist before, allowing for experimentation. The Slovakian partners described a possible model, that CECOA named a 'chain of change' regarding legislative obstacles and project activities implementation, as described below.
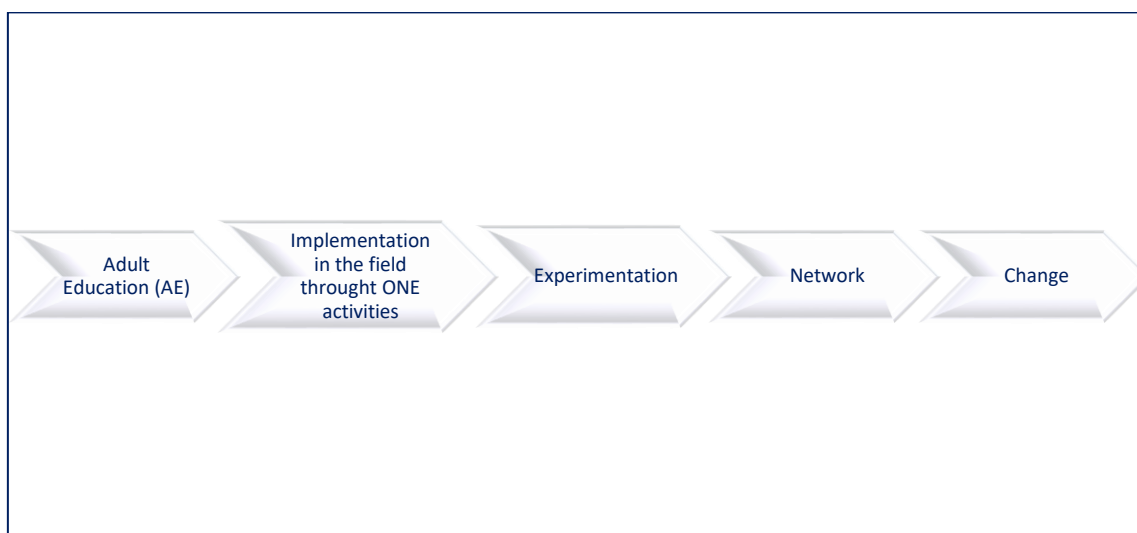
Figure 8: Slovakian partners and the ONE 'chain of change'

With ONE project, the Slovakian partners were able to identity the "missing pieces" and implemented ONE capacity building strategy in areas that need improvement with concrete actions. In Slovakia the "missing piece" is related with validation/recognition of non-formal learning area in AE. There is a national project developed in that area by SIOV, resulting in seminars, trainings, which tried to improve assessment methods.

In Slovakia, when approaching an effective communication learning offer and how to make improvements following the action plan of ONE, resulted in changing the code of ethics, incorporating QA. After January 2024, the 120 members of the network of Slovakian AE institutions agreed to follow rules on how to promote their activities having QA and learning programs guidelines. At the same time, those members will identify them as being or not Peer Review interested members. The next step is to finish the first round of Peer Reviews process/sessions, with ten (10) institutions engaged in EPRM. The follow up will be to work with ten (10) institutions brought from another project within EPRM – merging projects, creating synergies. Those new institutions are brought both by SIOV and the Minister of Education using a bottom-up approach, bringing visibility to the EPRM.

The Slovakian partners mentioned that the AE national landscape, until now, does not have a compulsory QA management system for AE. The partners foresee, next year, to create a model to register QA institutes for individual learning account (ILA) within the scope of a new project, in cooperation with public authorities. The regional cooperation was underlined, mentioning neighbouring countries and similar difficulties within QA and ILA. However, EPRM is well-know at national level and SIOV is already preparing a certification pilot for AE.

In the Slovakian AE landscape, there is no systematic work on basic skills when compared with countries that have traditional financial support for that, that do not need ILA as in Slovakia. Nonetheless, experimenting Peer Review in AE segment is important to assert near policy makers that adult learners exist. Even though Slovakia has experience using EPRM in VET and not in AE, it is possible to use this methodology within AE and ONE project results helped to implement it in this area of education.

One of the strengths of the project was the possibility to inform stakeholders about EPRM in AE at national level. ONE is a "platform" about QA in AE and the possibility of using EPRM to move forward in a systematic way.

Slovakian partners expect to continue with EPRM not only in the four areas of the ONE project, but moving forward, introducing criteria, indicators, among other tools to understand AE landscape at national level. In doing so, Slovakia will use the CoP approach to continue their work on AE within EPRM. Peer Review is a methodology built on already existing practice, having quality as a "grassroot".
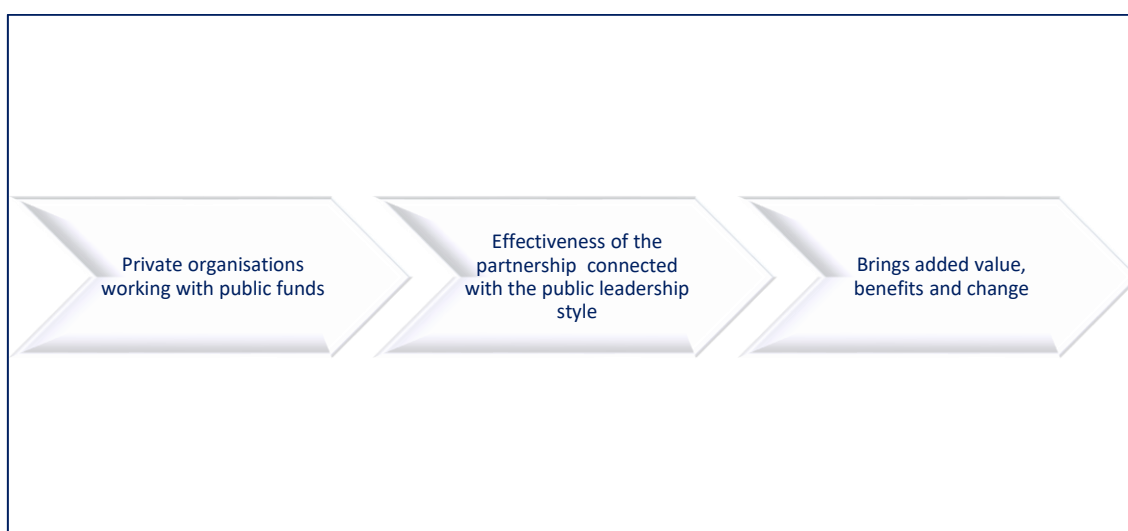
ITALY

In Italy, as in Portugal and Slovakia, AE sector needs EPRM as a key-stone implemented through the capacity building strategy over the four (4) areas of the ONE project. The Italian partners highlighted the area of validation of non-formal and informal learning, that was identified during ONE project, as the major need at national level, as in Slovakia.

Italian partners advanced the idea of having a model for an AE national network that does not exist at the moment. However, to create such a model will go beyond the timeline of ONE project due to the complexity in the field of public bodies and constant

changes in the management line. Regional networks recognise the need to implement EPRM when developing the model for the national AE network. It is foreseen the possibility of moving forward using the EPRM, because it does not exist in the formal AE framework at national level, complementing the national system of evaluation, representing an added value: "how to improve, how to confront with your limits, how to continue, how to change".

The Italian partners highlighted the possibility of implementing through public bodies the EPRM on an experimental level, in the QA area to improve the evaluation national system. However, it was underlined the need to have European funding to implement such experimentation.

Italy underlined the difference between the common daily practice among teachers and organisations involved (i.e., main target groups) and the possibility of using EPRM, which allows them to have a voice and being actively engaged in the process of AE. A project is a moment that allows reflection and critique. The Italian partners shared the model from implementing such approach, due to their experience of working in close cooperation with public authorities, named by CECOA as described below:

Private organisations working with public funds → Effectiveness of the partnership connected with the public leadership style → Brings added value, benefits and change

Figure 9: Italian partners and the 'private public alliance' for effective change in AE

The ONE' Italian partners shared their experience, explaining that public bodies have more constrains when implementing EPRM, because of being a non-formal methodology of evaluation that requires a more flexible and open organisation in the process of experimentation. Furthermore, the involvement of partners with fewer

bureaucratic constraints due to their nature (i.e., private organisations) can bring added value to the system. Furthermore, the public leadership style should be characterised by wanting to achieve concrete results and benefits. It is important to identify, in the beginning, public authorities that follows this kind of leadership model, that works as a supporting partner, to implement new methodologies in education. In addition, the relationship between private and public entities are underpinned by the notion of recognition: transferable skills from one institution to the other and benefit from that. This is tuned with the Peer Review philosophy because it takes into account the different skills and added value the actors can bring, within a common goal, benefiting teachers and increasing competences and awareness on QA.

Italian partners are foreseen in the near future to continue to work on the validation theme, because it is required not only by the European agenda but by the public national laws. Regarding guidance and reaching out, the Italian partners concluded that the most disadvantage are not fully aware of the provision that exists for them in AE, such as in Portugal. The need in the future is to provide a better support in accessing the system. Indeed, in Italy, lacking in guidance is the weak point of the education, training and labour market path.

From the ONE project, the Italian partners have already established good connexion and cooperation among them, underlining the strong relationship that one of the partners have with the EQAVET National Reference Point, that focus on QA in VET. Nonetheless, it is foreseen a better exploration of supporting learners in accessing the labour market. The Italian partners have already started a draft/design of governance or an organisational model for cooperation among private and public bodies in the AE area to manage complex projects with new ideas such as the implementation of the EPRM in AE.

In the near future, it is expected that the public bodies involved in Italy would be present in activities already develop within the private partner's scope. Also, there is the possibility to go further in finding funding near the EQAVET programmes and/or Erasmus policy experimentation that can include both the Ministry of Education and private organisations.

NATIONAL AND GLOBAL RISK ANALYSIS MATRIX

In Italy, Slovakia and Portugal the AE landscape faces similar challenges within a fragmented landscape. Policy makers and adult learners need to be involved more clearly through the capacity building process developed near the target groups of the ONE project, namely AE managers, teachers and trainers belonging to national networks. Those groups should be empowered in QA using the EPRM and following the strategies to guarantee sustainability of the project results.

The risks identified are described by each theme addressed by the ONE consortium. In the first stage, in the pre-mitigation phase, the risk level was described with all partners involved. After the three (3) ToC/DAC moments with all partners, the mitigation strategies became clearer and are described as the national strategies and/or models developed to overcame challenges and find a common ground that could lead to national and transnational networks of AE in Europe, contributing for the sustainability of ONE project. The mitigation strategies contributed as well for change and inclusion of EPRM in AE national frameworks within QA.

PRE-MITIGATION		MITIGATIONS / WARNINGS / REMEDIES	POST-MITIGATION	
RISK	RISK LEVEL		RISK LEVEL	ACCEPTABLE TO PROCEED?
Guidance services	MEDIUM	Italian partners and the 'private public alliance' for effective change in AE	LOW	YES
Reaching out and active engagement of adults in both education and validation processes	MEDIUM	Portuguese partners and the ONE 'double approach' to EPRM and AE	LOW	YES
Validation of non-formal and informal learning	HIGH	Slovakian partners and the ONE 'chain of change'	MEDIUM	YES
Soft and basic skills for inclusion and active citizenship	MEDIUM	Combination all three models developed by the ONE Consortium at national levels (i.e. 'private public alliance', 'double approach' and 'chain of change')	LOW	YES

Figure 10: National and global risk analyse of the ONE project

RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen capacity building in existing AE networks in Italy, Portugal and Slovakia, each partner of the ONE project brought their own experience of ONE activities implementation. When evaluating over one (1) year in three (3) different moments of the implementation of the project, using the ToC/DAC approach, it was possible to identify and describe three (3) interconnected models for sustainability and empowerment of EPRM on QA in this sector (see figure below).
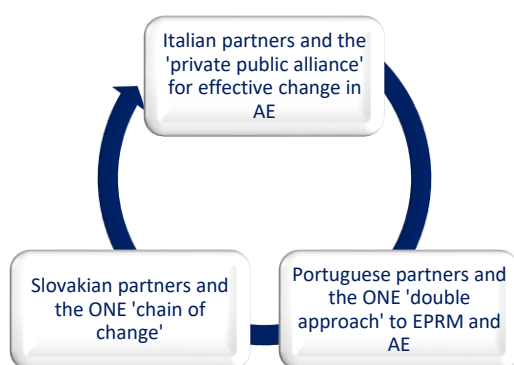

Figure 11: The ONE models for sustainability in AE within EPRM on QA in Europe

- The Portuguese model provides possibilities to deal with the issue of dissemination, looking to trainers and/or agents that work as mediators and work with the final beneficiaries (i.e., AE learners). Dissemination is key for the improvement of AE landscape at national and European level. For that, the use of a 'double approach' model is encouraged and could bring positive effects and benefits in the AE landscape.
- The Slovakian model brings a proposal that allows to identify the way to deal with legislative obstacles and implementation of new ideas and projects through a 'chain of change'. Indeed, within project activities it was possible to develop experimentation in the field and provide evidence in new areas, such as AE.
- The Italian model brings cooperation between private and public bodies through identification of a public leadership that is supported by a policy of recognition. In this context, transferable skills from one institution to the other are mutually recognised and can benefit both private and public bodies through the 'private public alliance' in AE underpinned by the philosophy of EPRM on QA.

In a nutshell: to improve AE networks in Europe the three (3) ONE approaches can provide change in the long-term future.

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[i] According to project proposal p. 36.

[ii] Ibid, p. 53.

[iii] See "Project ONE – External Evaluation: 1ST REPORT 31 May 2023", CECOA.

[iv] Based on in https://innovationforsocialchange.org/en/a-tool-to-develop-your-theory-of-change

[v] Table based on https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/543e84ed-en/1/3/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/543e84ed-en&_csp_=535d2f2a848b7727d35502d7f36e4885&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book#