



# EPALE COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2020

The adult learning community responding to the COVID-19 emergency



European Commission  
Executive Agency  
for the Operational Programme  
Erasmus+

16 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2020 - SOCIAL INCLUSION



## Nele Vanderhulst

BELGIUM #vulnerable groups #citizenship

Since November 2019 Nele has been based at Sociaal, a Resource center for socio-cultural work, as a staff member. She mostly focuses on supporting the citizens' initiatives and leads a couple of projects on policymaking work.

Are there alternatives? That is the question you ask yourself daily as a socio-cultural worker. Or rather: what alternative answers are possible for today's complex social reality? For many organisations and citizens' initiatives these questions are ingrained in their naturally critical DNA. Not a single phase of the Corona crisis in Belgium - from 'Stay at home' to the pressing question 'What comes after Corona?' - escapes the critical eye and even concrete actions of the broad social work sector.

**"And finally, how should we proceed after Corona? 'Business as usual' or are we going to rethink our society fundamentally?"**

The 'stay at home' measure made the wide social work put pen to paper to share their opinions and teaching stories about the impact of the measures on the most vulnerable in our society. A number of anti-poverty, refugee and human rights organisations joined forces for the impressive social media campaign #BeterMorgen (Better Tomorrow). When it became clear that civically but surely there could be an exit strategy, many socio-cultural organisations stirred up the debate. This fueled actions and opinion articles, especially about privacy protection.

And finally, how should we proceed after Corona? 'Business as usual' or are we going to rethink our society fundamentally?

17 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2020 - WORK SKILLS



## Mojca Frankovič

SLOVENIA #literacy #pedagogical frameworks #vulnerable groups



BA in Pedagogy, Mojca is the organizer of adult education at the *Črnomelj Education and Culture Institute* which is the central adult education institution in Bela Krajina that provides counseling in addition to educational and cultural programmes.

The participants in the primary school programme for adults mostly come from the Roma community. Not only due to the cultural peculiarities of the target group (poor knowledge of the Slovenian language, lack of motivation, working habits, lack of prior knowledge), but also due to most common forms of misconduct, teachers working in the departments are faced with many challenges. The quality of work and progress of the participants can only be achieved with a great deal of tolerance, flexibility and innovation. Due to the pandemic, we have been faced with a new challenge. We had to start distance learning, virtually overnight. Participants in the primary school for adults mainly live in poorer socio-economic conditions, do not own computers and mostly do not have access to the internet. Therefore, the greatest challenge for us was the wondering whether any of the participants would even respond and cooperate. In order to establish the conditions for education for everyone, after a good week, we sent educational resources for the first week to the homes of all the participants, and thereby supplemented the possibility of online learning with correspondence education. We contacted them by telephone, via a social network group, checked the progress

of all the participants, and thereby supplemented the possibility of online learning with correspondence education. We contacted them by telephone, via a social network group, checked the progress

**"The greatest challenge for us was the wondering whether any of the participants would even respond and cooperate."**

we were making and provided them with consultations. For those who did not have access to the internet, we sent the educational resources by post on a weekly basis, and provided them with consultations by telephone. Despite the fact that we prefer direct contact with the participants, in the coming school year, distance learning will remain an alternative for all those who prefer this kind of education.

18 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2020 - WORK SKILLS



## Darja Kušar

SLOVENIA #pedagogical frameworks

After studying Philosophy and Theology, Darja worked in the public sector and then she settled at the Adult education Centre Ljubljana in Slovenia, where she has been working for 15 years with various target groups and individuals looking to gain further knowledge for their profession or personal development.

This restriction of movement was a challenge and an opportunity for experiential learning for all. On 15 March 2020, on a Friday, we went home armed with all the supplies and materials that make it possible to work from home.

Throughout the weekend, we were collecting and accumulating information from various sources about the spread of the virus and data in our country and across the world. On Monday, everyone arranged a place at home to work until the measures were lifted.

**"No one can force you to learn except life itself. Life, this time the smallest virus, was the (violent) thing which, without exception, led us all along a path of learning."**

We were saved from getting up early and rushing to work without a quiet breakfast, maybe even traffic pressure at the beginning and the end of the working day and much more. However, we had to reorganize, properly set up our

working times, family, parental, leisure and other obligations. No one can force you to learn except life itself. Life, this time the smallest virus, was the (violent) thing which, without exception, led us all along a path of learning. If we understand learning as a process of changing behaviour based on new information and experience, and not just as a process whereby we obtain information, then by learning we change ourselves, enrich our experience and knowledge, and thus change our personality. We took this opportunity to learn, each in his or her own way to get to know each other all over again, to strengthen our relationships. At each point, we will have to wake up from the virtual world and deal of feelings, numbness and apathy, and start living again. If we have revised this during this period, we just need to remember that feelings always exist in life, within us.

We have endless possibilities for facing challenges, the possibility of finding new paths and creating solutions.

19 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2020 - BASIC SKILLS



## Sonia Fernandes

PORTUGAL #digital transition



Trainer at Centro Mais Qualifica in Fafe (North of Portugal) which is a Vocational Training center providing recognition and skills validation services. Sonia's job is to work in partnership with local partners.

The reality of a trainer in the current situation is far from easy. There are many challenges. Time management is a major issue. I am at home with my children who constantly need my attention. In addition to my work, I had to home school my adolescent son and entertain my youngest. And, of course there is the house work that needs to be done on a daily basis. This does not get me down or impact on my performance, but it does allow me to find the best solutions to face challenges. At the same time my workload has not gone down. Quite the opposite!

I guide my Qualifica group, prepare materials for the school, mark work, participate in meetings, guide and mentor my students from my 2 ATU/ study centre. All online and with two children in the background. There are several fields of action that I must now carry out from home. I have a constant need not being able to give my children my undivided attention because I have to work. I must confess that I am slowly beginning to believe that teleworking, with children at home, is a myth.

**"Time management is a major issue. I am at home with my children who constantly need my attention! At the same time my workload has not gone down."**

20 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2020 - BASIC SKILLS



## Sandra Gonzaga

PORTUGAL #upskilling

Trainer with a special interest in Adult Education, Sandra has a degree in Educational Sciences, and all her background and experience revolved around ALE. She is a project coordinator, trainer, training coordinator. She is now a trainer at a Qualification Center - a Vocational Training Center providing services such as recognition, validation and certification of skills, in a Local Development Association - Beaufonte, AICES - in the Center West of Portugal.

**"This sense of mission was heightened with each contact we made with the adults, who, for a moment, switched their attention from COVID-19 to projects, objectives and strategies."**

COVID-19 arrived and life changed! Professionally it caused radical change, in both time and space - teleworking is our new reality! Admittedly I felt personally any anxiety like everyone I suppose! At the beginning of the pandemic, and the prospect of 'being' withdrawn the threat of Coronavirus. We were apart, 'locked' in our homes. But Adult Education couldn't stop. It had to continue as a weapon in the fight against feelings of fear and anxiety. This sense of mission was heightened with each contact we made with the adults, who, for a moment, switched their attention from COVID-19 to projects, objectives and strategies. We have endless possibilities for facing challenges, the possibility of finding new paths and creating solutions. Not being discouraged, overcoming personal

21 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2020 - BASIC SKILLS



## Saša Kelhar

SLOVENIA #pedagogical frameworks



High school maths teacher who has also been teaching adults for a few years. A few years ago Saša started a project called *matematika*, which seeks to discover how to teach successfully online.

The adverse situation was a unique time, during which I discovered whether my way of teaching maths works or not. I have been working on online math teaching for a while now, for a few years. I discovered that adults who study have to juggle their jobs and families and it is hard for them to go to school in the afternoons. So I recorded maths exercises and explanations and created an internet page where I uploaded everything. It was very helpful for them. They studied when they had the time and they did not need a lot of help with instructions. During the COVID-19 outbreak the adults found it hard to study. A lot of adults postponed their education and chose to help their families instead.

Adult learners also needed a teacher to guide them through their learning, to motivate them and to be on the other side of the computer for questions and encouragement. They needed to feel that they are not alone.

**"During the COVID-19 outbreak the adults found it hard to study. A lot of adults postponed their education and chose to help their families instead."**



37 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2021 | INCLUDES SPECIAL THANKS

## Damir Hauptman

**SLOVENIA**

The past year, Damir started providing non-formal education in the field of culture. His work within the Institute Education Center focuses on various vulnerable groups, especially on immigrants from the nation of the former Yugoslavia living in Slovenia. Damir pays special attention to cultural and educational challenges. The implementation of his educational activities tries to fulfil all of this:

**M**otivating and involving immigrants in Slovenia is less engaged, educated and less professionally represented in the majority society. There are organized anti-racism and solidarity into various civil societies, but their organizational needs and legal approaches are sometimes the biggest obstacles for their development. The older generations find it difficult to leave the management in the young or even. There is a sizable intergenerational gap between the first and second generations of immigrants.

There is also a big gap between their traditional and modern cultural tradition. In the light of this, we perform various activities for better preparation of their needs in educational programs. Based on these, we create a strategy for designing such curricula, with which our participants can more easily identify in fact, the focus on their linguistic and cultural specificities helped us to develop specific educational programs.

The fact is, however, that this happens more easily in practice. There are some topics that our target audience will always be happy to embrace. However, often important issues are essential for generating the cultural tradition, developing the target group and reducing the differences between the majority and minority society. There are issues related to specific organizational skills, project and cultural management, and various digital content. We strengthen knowledge and skills that are extremely important for successfully integrating minority target groups into the majority society. Our activities focus itself with educating immigrants, the people of the former Yugoslavia, who live in the Republic of Slovenia for various historical, cultural, political or economic reasons.

**"The older generations find it difficult to leave the management to the younger ones. There is a sizable intergenerational gap between the first and second generations of immigrants. There is also a big gap between their traditional and modern cultural tradition."**

organizational, leadership or digital skills. We also carry out a lot of culturally relevant activities, in which we successfully address the intergenerational gap and connect traditional and modern culture (design and new arts).

In our work, we use both a classical and a modern task-oriented approach. We use various flexible approaches and creative and innovative content to motivate our participants. We also involve non-formal activities and engage in our activities with various participants, not only those who identify. We choose the dates, location and length of specific workshops very carefully.

38 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2021 | INCLUDES SPECIAL THANKS

## Gülhan Güzel

**TURKEY**

Gülhan started his career after he completed his education in Sakarya (Turkey) in 2003. He worked in the field of education for 16 years. He is a voluntary education advisor in the field of adult literacy education for disadvantaged groups.

**I**s assigned to Sakarya Public Education Center as a voluntary manager in January 2020. I worked in the field of adult education. In particular, the education of illiterate adults. I began adults to get a second literacy.

**"I see that small towns bring great happiness, and I felt happier about working in the field of education of disadvantaged adults. I need to support disadvantaged adults and help them to overcome their obstacles. My biggest goal is to work with the poor of my country. It is an essential challenge of my time."**

He is a pedagogical and educational manager in professional and technical education, a set of experience, including various other development, promoting self-learning and promoting the use of technology in education. Developing capacities for learning and participation to live with the pace of globalization is an essential challenge of our times.

**"Developing capacities for learning and participation to live with the pace of globalization is an essential challenge of our times."**

For example, for developing a technologically advanced environment to evaluate personal and social skills, we have gained a powerful tool. We have received information and determined their needs about the field. Factors contributing to a education learning experience.

He has been working at Sakarya Public Education Center staff member who provides educational services for illiterate adults in his province, at any time, in any place and for free services.

**Gabi Ogulin Počrvina**

**SLOVENIA**

Gabi is a teacher with a Master's degree in Human Resource Management and she has been working at ECE Novo mesto for almost 20 years. She enjoys working with people and helping them in their personal or professional development through counselling, development and education. Gabi has an extensive experience leading national and international projects recognized as good practice examples.

**K**nowledge is becoming a field of development that can create more equal opportunities. Can we talk about justice, equality, and democracy resulting from lifelong learning? Custom-based regulations and financing are essential for the development of an effective lifelong learning system. In the last few years, ECE Novo mesto has been participating in various projects with philosophical, social, behavioral and sustainable development, dance workshops, foreign language and Slovene language education programs to support women in maintaining health and beauty and the beginning was challenging. It took a lot of work to get the participants present.

**"Can we talk about justice, equality, and democracy resulting from lifelong learning?"**

As offering a variety of content, we wanted to contribute to helping the health of life, improving understanding of different generations and offering support, as expanding the participants' social network, and improving their professional health, self-learning and self-fulfillment in the large common problems. Some young unemployed people get a job through counselling and with our recommendation. This was a big to us.

gender potential competencies, the unemployed and job seekers, immigrants, people with special needs or disabilities and Roma families etc. in 2017 I was assigned to manage the large-scale Multigenerational Centre Together project (MTC Together) in Novo mesto. We have been successful, as well as families with children with special needs.

41 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2021 | INCLUDES SPECIAL THANKS

## Mitja Čerško

**SLOVENIA**

Mitja is the co-founder of the Institute Future (IFZ), an international and interdisciplinary research and training center for the development of the future. He is a voluntary education advisor in the field of adult literacy education for disadvantaged groups.

**A**s a pedagogical and educational manager in professional and technical education, a set of experience, including various other development, promoting self-learning and promoting the use of technology in education. Developing capacities for learning and participation to live with the pace of globalization is an essential challenge of our times.

**"Developing capacities for learning and participation to live with the pace of globalization is an essential challenge of our times."**

For example, for developing a technologically advanced environment to evaluate personal and social skills, we have gained a powerful tool. We have received information and determined their needs about the field. Factors contributing to a education learning experience.

**Zane Balode**

**LATVIA**

Zane has been working at Riga Higher for more than 20 years, and has extensive work experience in the field of adult education. She has been working as a teacher and a cooperation partner by working as an instructor at Riga Institute for Adult Learning (RIAL).

**O**n top of this, in the long ago beginning of 2020, all Riga Institute for Adult Learning (RIAL) staff members were asked to participate in a project. The employees would be asked to create an online course, learn and take tests in paper format - all in a physical distance. The situation had been very difficult with everyone - sometimes some people needed to be able to keep the course about, while others needed extra explanation or help.

**"For all our denial and stubbornness, we cannot simply erase the pandemic."**

Then came 12 March 2020. Due to the pandemic declared in the country, in-person training was no longer an option. All of our denial and stubbornness, we cannot simply erase the pandemic. The situation has forced us to learn, change, adapt, think, and create exciting remote learning courses so that employees are not only able to understand

what they have learned but they are also able to put their knowledge into practice when carrying out their direct or indirect responsibilities. It was not an easy task, but it was a great one. As long as you are still learning, you cannot stop!

As for some conditions, not all of the employees' wellbeing has to be taken into account. This was both a challenge and an opportunity to experience colleagues, as well as to learn from them.

Secondly, technical equipment (lighting, sound, software) is essential for the success of the course. We had to find the solution for the instructor and the participants. We created a technical environment that allowed us to work together. We created a technical environment that allowed us to work together. We created a technical environment that allowed us to work together.

42 EPAL COMMUNITY STORYBOOK 2021 | INCLUDES SPECIAL THANKS

## Agata Warywoda

**POLAND**

Agata is a coach and a volunteer. She works at the Regional Public Library at the Centre for Personal Development (Centrum Rozwoju Osobistosci) and at the Adult Education Association. The program and conducts various educational activities, workshops, working groups and courses. Each of the activities Agata undertakes involves guiding participants through:

**M**otivating and involving immigrants in Poland is less engaged, educated and less professionally represented in the majority society. There are organized anti-racism and solidarity into various civil societies, but their organizational needs and legal approaches are sometimes the biggest obstacles for their development. The older generations find it difficult to leave the management in the young or even. There is a sizable intergenerational gap between the first and second generations of immigrants.

There is also a big gap between their traditional and modern cultural tradition. In the light of this, we perform various activities for better preparation of their needs in educational programs. Based on these, we create a strategy for designing such curricula, with which our participants can more easily identify in fact, the focus on their linguistic and cultural specificities helped us to develop specific educational programs.

The fact is, however, that this happens more easily in practice. There are some topics that our target audience will always be happy to embrace. However, often important issues are essential for generating the cultural tradition, developing the target group and reducing the differences between the majority and minority society. There are issues related to specific organizational skills, project and cultural management, and various digital content. We strengthen knowledge and skills that are extremely important for successfully integrating minority target groups into the majority society. Our activities focus itself with educating immigrants, the people of the former Yugoslavia, who live in the Republic of Slovenia for various historical, cultural, political or economic reasons.

**"Many participants came back not only for further training, but also to give me feedback about changes that had taken place in their lives as a result of our meetings."**

organizational, leadership or digital skills. We also carry out a lot of culturally relevant activities, in which we successfully address the intergenerational gap and connect traditional and modern culture (design and new arts).

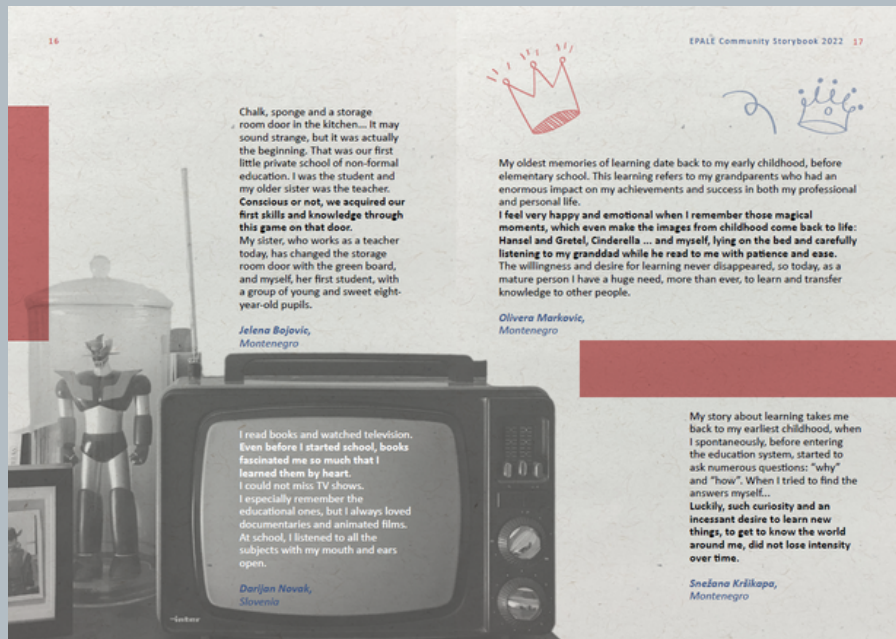
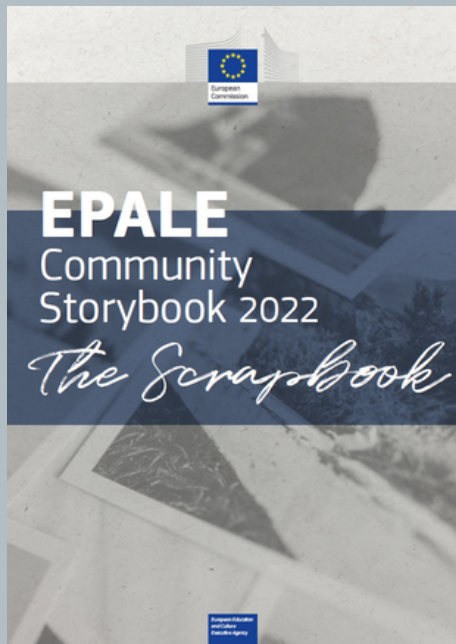
In our work, we use both a classical and a modern task-oriented approach. We use various flexible approaches and creative and innovative content to motivate our participants. We also involve non-formal activities and engage in our activities with various participants, not only those who identify. We choose the dates, location and length of specific workshops very carefully.

**Ana Kaučič**

**SLOVENIA**

Ana is a teacher of English and History. She has successfully worked in the adult education field for the past five years at Epalobes (Novi Grad).

**A**s an English teacher, education organizer, counsellor, and project coordinator I have learned about the demands and needs of adults when acquiring new knowledge. Through my experience of learning on the job, I feel that I have internalized the term "lifelong learning". In 2021, we hosted two partner organizations for job shadowing. They have most of their employees who are actively learning English. They learned how we work with them, the programs we offer and how we finance them. The members of our project partner Centrum Kvalitativnega Učenja in Razvoja (CEKUR) from Novo mesto visited us through their project. Since the beginning of the project, we have been working in the center of the educational impact! The members of the group were interviewed at the university of First Age (UFA), the programs and activities for our older participants offered by the UFA, and activities for this specific group of learners in our town.



Chalk, sponge and a storage room door in the kitchen... It may sound strange, but it was actually the beginning. That was our first little private school of non-formal education. I was the student and my older sister was the teacher. **Conscious or not, we acquired our first skills and knowledge through this game on that door.** My sister, who works as a teacher today, has changed the storage room door with the green board, and myself, her first student, with a group of young and sweet eight-year-old pupils.

*Jelena Bojovic,  
Montenegro*

I read books and watched television. Even before I started school, books fascinated me so much that I learned them by heart. I could not miss TV shows. I especially remember the educational ones, but I always loved documentaries and animated films. At school, I listened to all the subjects with my mouth and ears open.

*Darjan Novak,  
Slovenia*



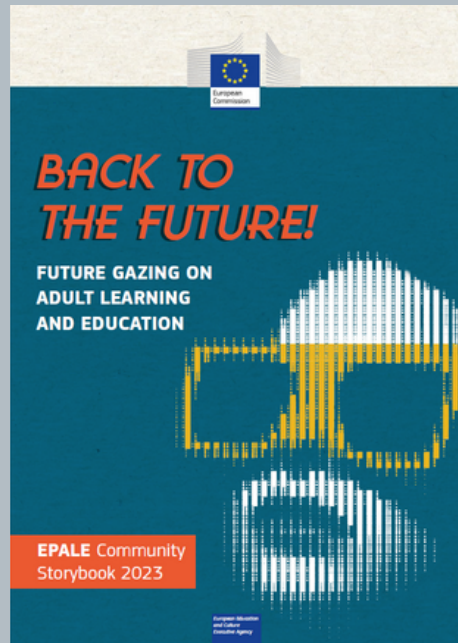
My oldest memories of learning date back to my early childhood, before elementary school. This learning refers to my grandparents who had an enormous impact on my achievements and success in both my professional and personal life. **I feel very happy and emotional when I remember those magical moments, which even make the images from childhood come back to life: Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella ... and myself, lying on the bed and carefully listening to my granddad while he read to me with patience and ease.** The willingness and desire for learning never disappeared, so today, as a mature person I have a huge need, more than ever, to learn and transfer knowledge to other people.

*Olivera Markovic,  
Montenegro*

My story about learning takes me back to my earliest childhood, when I spontaneously, before entering the education system, started to ask numerous questions: "why" and "how". When I tried to find the answers myself... **Luckily, such curiosity and an incessant desire to learn new things, to get to know the world around me, did not lose intensity over time.**

*Snežana Krlićka,  
Montenegro*

**Zbornik skupnosti EALE 2022**



## 79 Looking Ahead

EPAL Community Storybook 2023 - 79

Recently, I had a nice chat with ChatGPT. Acknowledging its potential seemed a smart thing to do. Irresistibly, the development of ICT is moving forward, and I am anxious to see where it goes. However, without fear that it will extinguish our role, I would like to call for a parallel development which at first sight, may seem to go backwards in time. **As a strong believer in the eternal presence and importance of human wisdom, I envision people interacting in communities established geographically or thematically.** These individuals exchange, experiment, create knowledge (in its finest, all-encompassing sense), and act – not only to react to but to co-create challenges of the future. So called 'reflect, learn & act-tasks' or communities should be based on the meaning-making of learning, equal inter-generational and intercultural representation, flexibility as well as values, mutual respect, and trust. By wisely using and constantly enriching our wisdom, humanity could and should become invincible.

**Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik**  
Slovenia

In the future, the most effective solution would be blended learning, which combines both online and face-to-face instruction in the right proportions. **To truly challenge oneself, it is necessary to step out of the comfort zone.** While online learning can provide a solid theoretical foundation and initial practical exposure, it all takes place in a comfortable environment. For growth and the consolidation of learning, it's important to step out of that environment and put oneself to the test in different situations.

**Hurd Hansalu, Martin Jõesaar and Remo Ojaste**  
Estonia

**I believe that adult learning is less about teaching and more about helping,** navigating and forming the lives of people who found themselves in the whirl of change and the unexpected.

**Veronika Pizano**  
Slovakia



**Zbornik skupnosti EALE 2023**