

**ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
17-18
NOVEMBER 2021**

FLASH REPORT



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS



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AT A GLANCE


BACKGROUND

Every year, the EAEA Annual Conference is held under a different theme, which is also the topic of the Grundtvig Award. The 2021 conference took place online on 17-18 November and focused on **Learning to exercise democracy in a digital world**.


HIGHLIGHTS



135 participants representing **26 countries** and different profiles: umbrella organisations, NGOs, adult education providers, public authorities and more



two-day programme with a mix of **inputs, workshops** and **small-group discussions**



two excellent projects with a focus on digitalisation and democracy awarded the **2021 Grundtvig Award**; the Award Ceremony also celebrated winners from last year

Building democracy in a digital world: a conversation



Why are we predominantly preparing the citizens for a rational world, ignoring that they will also be living in a relational world? Why obliterate thousands of years of evolution of traditional communication, and refuse to strengthen it now with a digital dimension? Why separate and not unite? During his keynote address, **Prof. Antonio Dias de Figueiredo** looked at the myth of separation, at algorithmic injustice and at new generation pedagogies.

Consult the [video](#) of Prof. de Figueiredo's input and his [slides](#).

"IF WE WANT TO DEVELOP TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS, WE SHOULD NOT USE TECHNOLOGY AS A MERE INSTRUMENT BUT INCORPORATE IT INTO EXISTING CULTURAL PRACTICES. IT'S THE CULTURAL PRACTICES THAT TAKE US TO KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS."

- ANTONIO DIAS DE FIGUEIREDO

Digitalisation as an opportunity to democratize knowledge

With the emergence of new and more open approaches to knowledge, has education become more democratic? During a panel discussion, three speakers: **Alek Tarkowski** ([Open Future](#)), **Aleksandra Czetwertynska** ([Centrum Cyfrowe](#)) and **Marion Fields** ([Sivis Study Centre](#)) have exchanged on the importance of peer-learning and learning how to learn.

Consult the [video](#) of the panel discussion facilitated by EAEA President Uwe Gartenschlaeger.

"Peer learning is much more transformative than we think: it is a safe space to learn dialogue skills." - Marion Fields

Context paper presented

In 2020, EAEA set up a working group on digitalisation. **Angeliki Giannakopoulou** ([Dafni Kek](#)), representing the group, shared key conclusions of the context paper that has been drafted. From digital politics to the role of adult education, the paper offers an in-depth look into shifting roles and responsibilities in the face of digital transitions.

Consult the [video](#) of Angeliki's input and her [slides](#).

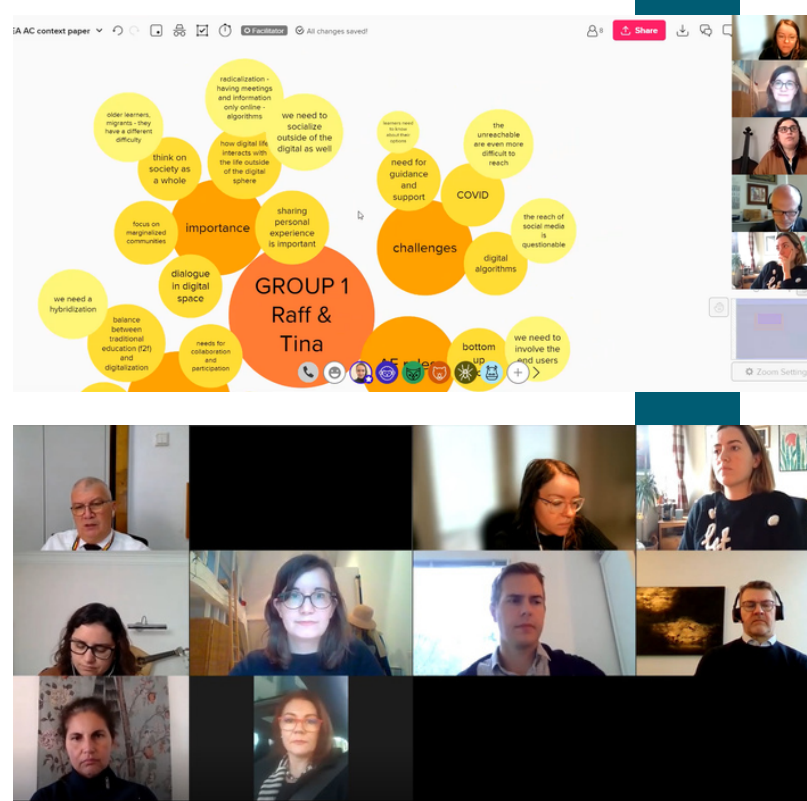
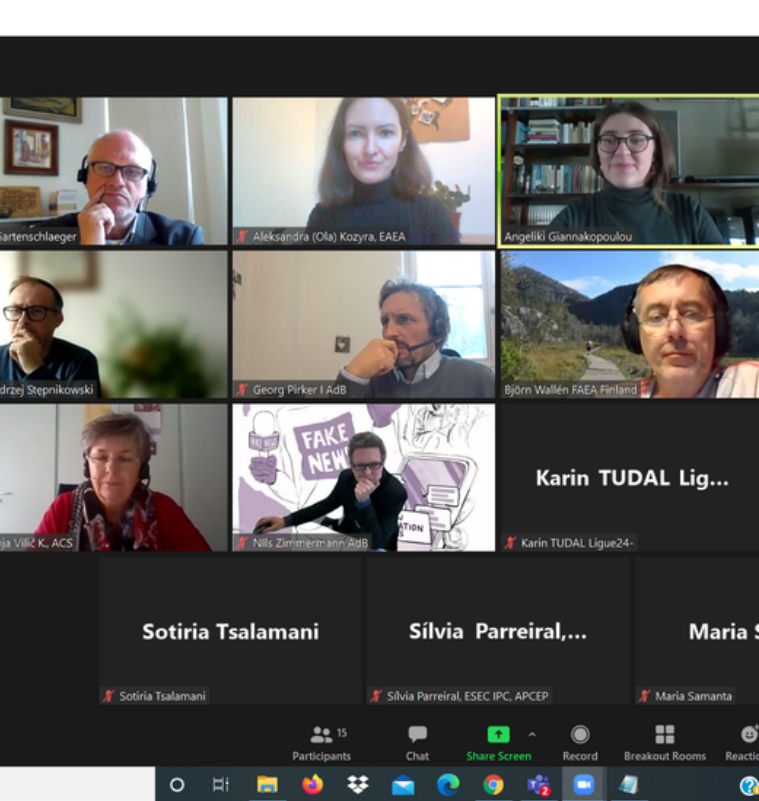
You can consult the [results of the Working Group](#) on the EAEA website.

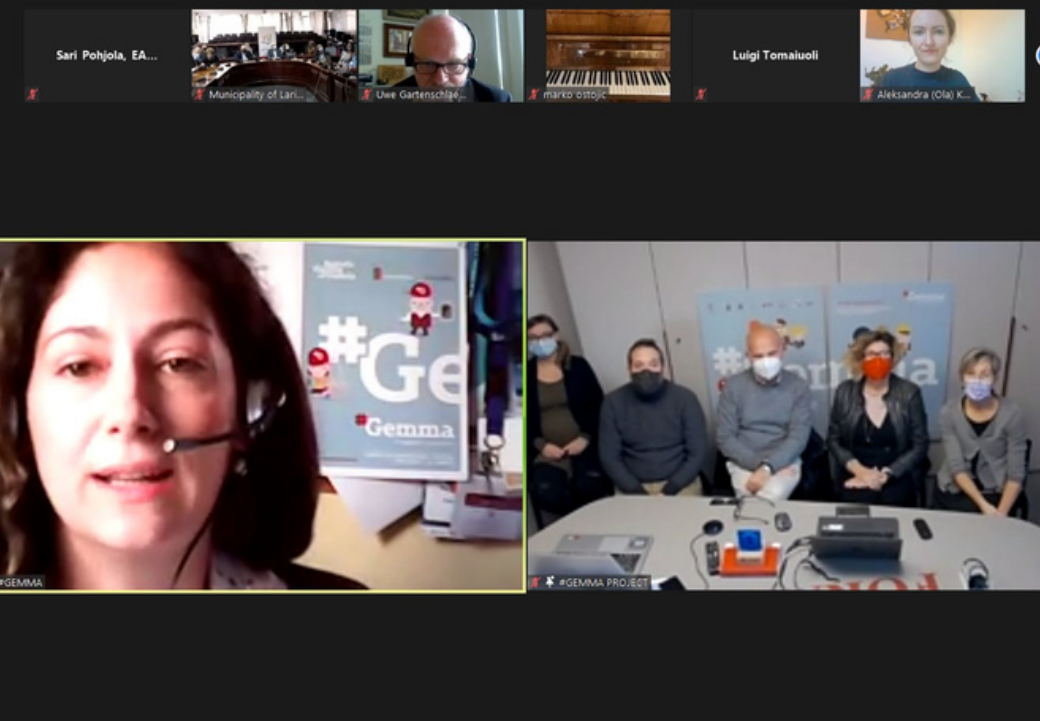


PARALLEL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

What did you find important?

Three parallel discussions allowed us to look at the issues that have emerged in your context. From the need for guidance and support, rural versus urban divide, lack of confidence and fear of the unknown, we discussed the diverse challenges that adults are confronted with, and the role of adult learning organisations. Have a look at our notes on Mural to see the summary of our discussions!





Grundtvig Award Ceremony

While we could not organise a physical ceremony this year, we celebrated the winners from 2020 and 2021 during a virtual event. During the ceremony, we also enjoyed a musical interlude from **Marko Ostojic**.



Grundtvig Award winners

Grundtvig Award 2020, Outreach
and access

Winner: **Citizens' University of Larissa**

Award accepted by **Apostolos Kalogiannis**,
Mayor of Larissa.

Grundtvig Award 2021, Digitalisation and
democracy

Winners:

National / regional / local category: **#GEMMA**
project. Award accepted by **Chiara Palazzetti**
European category: **DIGIT-AL project**. Award
accepted by **Nils-Eyk Zimmermann**.

Watch the [Grundtvig Award Ceremony](#) on the
EAEA Youtube channel.

"THE GRUNDTVIG
AWARD GIVES US THE
STRENGTH TO CONTINUE
OUR ACTIVITIES IN THIS
CURRENT DIFFICULT
ERA!"

- **APOSTOLOS
KALOGIANNIS**

"DIGIT-AL IS A RESULT
OF A TEAM EFFORT FROM
MANY ORGANISATIONS.
DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP
WAS THE STARTING
POINT OF THE PROJECT."

- **NILS-EYK ZIMMERMANN**

"OUR MOTTO IS
'KNOWLEDGE IS
PRECIOUS'. DIGITAL
COMPETENCES ARE A
MATTER OF INCLUSION,
OF NOT LEAVING
ANYONE BEHIND."

- **CHIARA PALAZZETTI**

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

There are many aspects of platform power. We should not just teach digital skills, but take one step back and educate ourselves on what digitalisation and platformisation mean”

— NILS-EYK ZIMMERMANN,
WORKSHOP ON POWER
DYNAMICS

The Internet is a diverse ecosystem, and an increased platformisation in digital infrastructures limits how interactions are organised. At the same time, there are several intersectional aspects of the digital divide, from wealth, education, country, to gender or age, to only name a few. What mechanisms impact accessibility of platforms? These were some of the issues discussed by **Nils-Eyk Zimmermann** in his workshop on



power dynamics in participation and exclusion in virtual spaces. Nils also shared the results of DIGIT-AL, a project that won the EAEA Grundtvig Award in 2021.

Consult the [slides](#) shared by Nils and the [toolbox](#) that resulted from the DIGIT-AL project.

During the workshop on **competences for digital transformation and active citizenship**, participants got to discuss EU 2030 challenges and the most urgent competences that need to be fostered.

According to the participants, a wide range of competences is needed to be a digital citizen, including communication skills, literacy and civic skills. It is also important to look at the wider context, including the persistent gender gap and digital divide across the continent.

Consult the [results of the workshop](#) visualized by Helder, the [slides](#) shared by our speaker Chiara Palazzetti and information about the #GEMMA project: its [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Youtube](#) channels.



Helder Touças, facilitator of the workshop on competences



“Our game is educational because it provides you with information, but not with a mindset.

— Sunčica Pasuljević-Kandić
presenting the game on AI
developed in Serbia

Undeniably, Artificial Intelligence is present in our daily lives, but to which extent are we aware of it? With new developments accelerating fast, even the most informed adults lack the time to reflect on issues like ethics, privacy or trust.

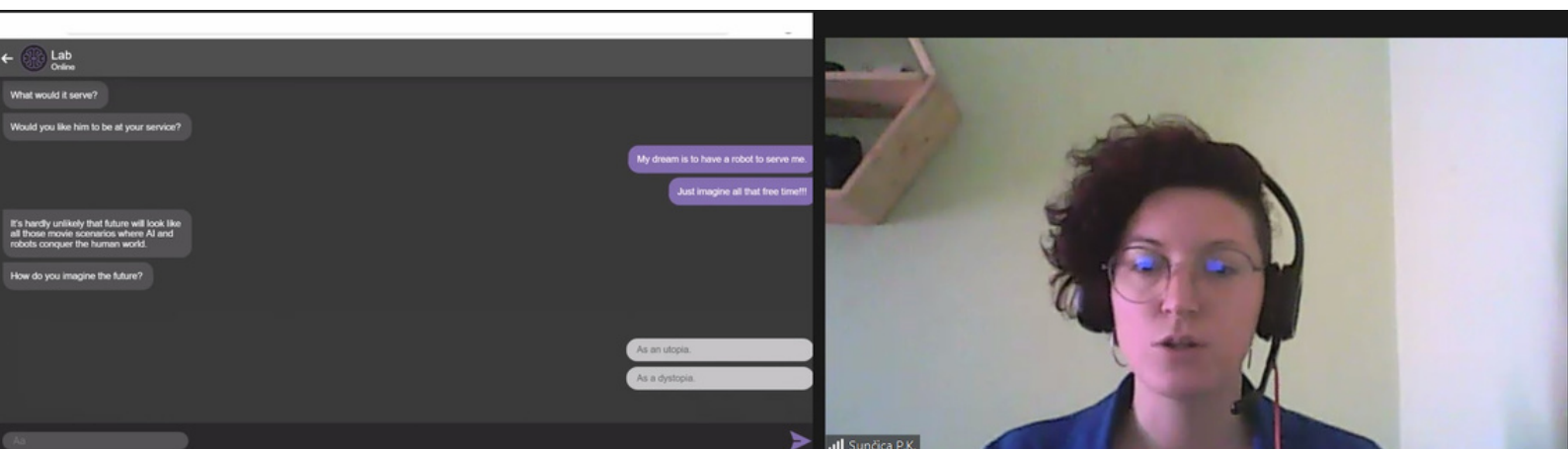
During the workshop **AI in adult learning: the way forward?**, Maja Maksimovic led a conversation with

Suncica Pasuljevic-Kandic about the role of informal learning and game-based learning, taking as an example a pervasive game about AI developed for citizens of Belgrade.

Participants also discussed diverse issues related to AI literacy, including the need for standards and citizens' rights, and the impact of AI on democratic spaces.

To find out more about what happened at the workshop, you can watch the [video](#) of the conversation between Maja and Suncica and explore the [game](#) they presented.

You can also access the **notes taken during the three workshops** on the [event Mural](#).



Human-first digital society: what role for adult education?

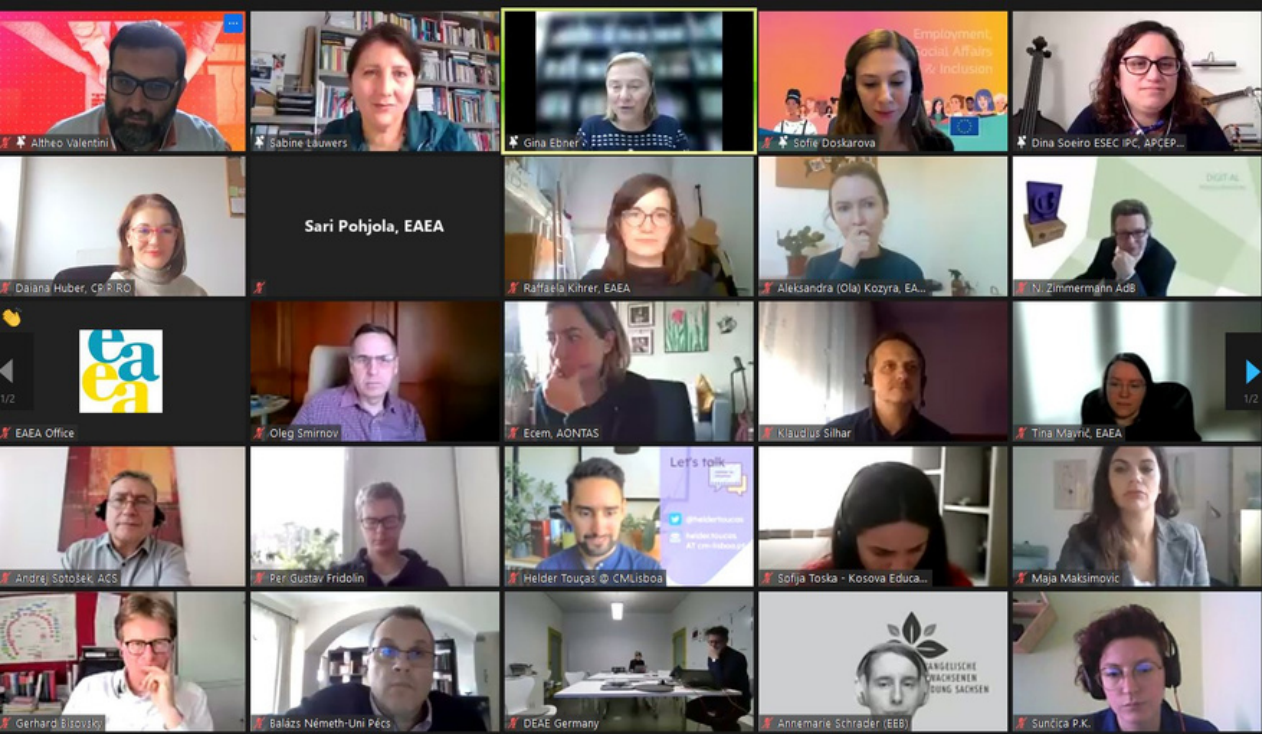


What policy environment is needed to support adult educators and adult learners alike? During the fishbowl discussion, we heard from **Sabine Lauwers**, an adult educator at LBC Volwassenenonderwijs, Belgium; **Altheo Valentini**, Chair of [All Digital](#), and **Sofie Doskarova**, Policy Assistant at DG EMPL, European Commission, as well as some of our event participants. Holistic approaches, life-wide education, and joy of learning are all key in ensuring that the digital transformation puts humans first.

"MY CONCERN IS THE LACK OF SUPPORT FOR ADULT EDUCATION. FOR ME AS A LANGUAGE TEACHER, FOR THE LAST YEAR, IT FELT MORE LIKE BEING AN ICT TEACHER"

**- SABINE LAUWERS,
ADULT EDUCATOR**

Watch the [fishbowl discussion](#) on EAEA Youtube channel and consult the [Manifesto of All Digital](#) shared by Altheo.



CONCLUSIONS

The event was closed by EAEA Secretary-General **Gina Ebner**, and by **Dina Soeiro**, member of the EAEA Executive Board, who shared her key take-aways from the two-day conference and called for a human-first digital society with values at its heart.

"We need to work more together, building democracy in a digital world by improving pedagogy, restoring dialogue, supporting guidance - not just to learners, but to trainers, empowering everyone. We need to create a human-first digital society with values at its heart."

— DINA SOEIRO,
EAEA EXECUTIVE BOARD

We hope to see
you next year!

But before that,
we'd like to
hear from you!
What did you
think about the
event?
Tell us in the
evaluation form!