



Bildung – A Roadmap

Recommendations and guidelines developed
within the Bildung project



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1 Introduction

This roadmap and recommendations have been developed within the frame of the [Bildung project](#) (Building Inclusive Lifelong learning systems by Developing a European Understanding of Bildung for the Next Generations), to promote social inclusion in adult education systems across Europe. They have been developed to foster a common understanding of the [Bildung concept](#) and its role in advancing social inclusion. It is tailored to adult education organizations, providers, learners, policymakers at various levels, and academia.

The roadmap aims to guide stakeholders in creating inclusive adult education systems throughout Europe. By utilizing this roadmap, you can gain theoretical insights as well as practical recommendations to enhance your practices.

To make the most of not only this but also the other outcomes of the Bildung project, we advise you to not only navigate through the roadmap sections based on your specific role and interests but rather consider referring to other outputs we have developed. Whether you are an adult education organization seeking guidance on initiative ideas (see for our best practice examples), a policymaker looking for guidance (see for the below recommendations), or a learner in search of more concrete information on the Bildung concept (see for our papers 2-5: [Democracy and Bildung](#), [Digitalisation and Bildung](#), [Sustainability and Bildung](#), [Basic Skills and Bildung](#)), or an academic interested in a discussion of the concept itself (see for our paper 1: [What is Bildung?](#)) our outputs will be interesting and insightful for you.

In furthering the discussion about this powerful concept, we must foster a common understanding of more wholesome understanding of Adult Learning and Education and work towards promoting social inclusion in the ALE systems across Europe. By utilizing this roadmap as a shared resource, we can create equitable and inclusive learning environments, ensuring that all individuals have access to lifelong educational opportunities.



2 The Bildung concept

Holding immense social and political significance the Bildung concept did warrant the creation of recommendations and a roadmap. In an era marked by societal challenges and divisive ideologies, the cultivation of Bildung can support citizens to foster critical thinking skills, empathy, and a sense of responsibility towards the greater good.

The Bildung concept has been influential for the central and northern-European educational systems and cultures for centuries now. Generally, the term refers to the holistic development of an individual, encompassing intellectual, emotional, and social growth. It emphasizes the importance of self-reflection, critical thinking, and personal responsibility in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding.

It derives its origins from two prominent traditions: Folkbildning and Enlightenment.

1. Folkbildning, predominantly originating in Scandinavian countries, centres on the notion of popular education and self-improvement for individuals irrespective of their social or economic backgrounds. It emphasizes lifelong learning, community engagement, and democratic participation as indispensable facets of personal and societal development. By facilitating accessible and inclusive educational opportunities, Folkbildning aims to empower individuals and foster a sense of agency within them.
2. Conversely, the Enlightenment, a significant cultural and intellectual movement in 17th and 18th century Europe, accentuates reason, critical thinking, and the pursuit of knowledge as catalysts for societal progress. It values rationality, scientific inquiry, and the dissemination of knowledge to challenge entrenched authority and instigate social and political transformation. The Enlightenment seeks to emancipate individuals from the shackles of ignorance and superstition through education, encouraging them to question conventional beliefs and systems. Both Folkbildning and Enlightenment epitomize the fundamental underpinnings of Bildung, serving to stimulate intellectual curiosity, facilitate personal growth, and engender transformative societal change.

“Bildung is an individual maturing process connecting education, upbringing, knowledge, culture, and personal responsibilities towards humans and our globe.”

Given the various challenges and rapid changes occurring in European societies, we have been forced to reassess the role of education. Against this background, there has already been growing interest in the concept of Bildung, growing beyond its countries of origin, with educators and policymakers have recognized its potential to enrich education and support lifelong learning. This is crucial for equipping individuals with the necessary skills to make informed decisions and take transformative action in a world shaped by climate change, digitalization, and social division.

In this context, the project also utilised the Bildung Rose approach, developed by Lene Rachel Andersen. The Bildung Rose model represents society as consisting of seven domains:

- **Production:** involving the creation of essential goods and infrastructure necessary for physical survival.



- **Technology:** encompassing the invention and utilization of tools, ranging from low-tech to high-tech, enabling novel ways of work, production, and interaction.
- **Aesthetics:** comprising the arts and provides symbolic expression, language, and communication channels for human thoughts and emotions.
- **Power:** referring to political power and the institutions that represent it, shaping societal rules and frameworks.
- **Science:** involving the generation of factual knowledge about the world and includes individuals and institutions dedicated to the pursuit of discovery.
- **Narrative:** encompassing the stories and moral values that define a society's identity, such as religion, political ideology, and historical narratives.
- **Ethics:** forming the guiding principles that govern the functioning and evolution of the other six domains within society.

The Bildung Rose is a simplified framework to understand how society works. It shows that morals guide us in familiar situations, while ethics help us navigate unfamiliar ones caused by new technologies, climate change, and globalization.

To have a balanced and thriving society, we need to understand seven domains: production, technology, aesthetics, power, science, narrative, and ethics. Lifelong education and knowledge transfer are essential as societies become more complex. No domain is more important than the others, but having a basic understanding of all domains and being able to talk about them is crucial. Applying knowledge in the real world, reflecting on it, and engaging in lifelong learning is important for true understanding and personal development.

[Watch our animation explaining the concept of Bildung on Youtube](#)

3 Roadmap & recommendations

This roadmap, including our recommendations, will extend upon the aforementioned as it provides recommendations for embracing the concept of Bildung in education, drawing on research and best practices from the partner countries.



Align ALE policies with Bildung principles:

National and regional ALE policies should be aligned with the **Principles of Bildung**, emphasizing the holistic development of individuals and their engagement in self-directed, reflective, and socially responsible learning. Policies should prioritize the promotion of critical thinking, ethical awareness, and values-based decision-making, as well as foster a culture of dialogue and inclusivity in ALE settings. Policymakers should also recognize



the importance of lifelong learning and provide support for diverse and inclusive ALE opportunities that cater to the needs of diverse learners.



Foster a holistic approach to learning

Bildung emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to learning that goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Educators should promote the development of learners' emotional and social competencies, encouraging self-reflection, empathy, and critical thinking. Learning environments should be designed to support learners' well-being and encourage a sense of belonging and purpose



Encourage self-directed learning

Bildung emphasizes the importance of self-directed learning, with learners taking responsibility for their learning. Educators should promote autonomy and support learners in setting their learning goals and monitoring their progress. They should provide opportunities for learners to engage in self-reflection and critical thinking, encouraging them to challenge their assumptions and biases.





Foster a culture of dialogue

Bildung emphasizes the importance of dialogue and discussion in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Educators should promote a culture of open dialogue, where learners feel comfortable expressing their opinions and engaging in respectful debate. They should provide opportunities for learners to engage in collaborative learning, working together to solve problems and share knowledge



Emphasize the importance of ethics and values

Bildung emphasizes the importance of ethical and moral values in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Educators should promote ethical awareness and encourage learners to consider the social and environmental impact of their actions. They should provide opportunities for learners to engage in discussions about ethical dilemmas and explore the role of values in decision-making.



Embrace lifelong learning

Bildung emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning, with individuals continually seeking to broaden their knowledge and understanding. Educators should promote a love of learning and encourage learners to engage in self-directed learning throughout their lives. They should provide opportunities for learners to engage in formal and informal learning activities, including online courses, reading groups, and community events.



Foster partnerships and collaboration:



Integrating the concept of Bildung in ALE systems requires collaborative efforts among different stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, institutions, and communities. Partnerships should be fostered at national, regional, and local levels to promote synergy and coordination in the implementation of Bildung-based ALE policies and initiatives. Collaboration with civil society organizations, employers, and other relevant stakeholders can also enrich ALE programmes with diverse perspectives and opportunities for the practical application of learning.

Also, further structured mobility programmes to better enable learners, educators, and professionals to experience different educational and cultural contexts, fostering intercultural understanding. Additionally, enhance mechanisms for recognizing and validating learning outcomes acquired through mobility experiences, promoting lifelong learning and supporting individuals in their educational and professional journeys.



Develop and implement Bildung-based curricula and pedagogies:

Curricula and pedagogies in ALE can gain significantly when developed and implemented based on the principles of Bildung. This includes designing curricula that prioritize the development of critical thinking, reflection, and ethical awareness, and fostering pedagogies that promote active engagement, dialogue, and collaborative learning among learners. Pedagogical approaches should also take into account the diverse needs, experiences, and backgrounds of adult learners, and be adaptable to different learning contexts.



Promote inclusive and accessible ALE opportunities:

Integrating the concept of Bildung in ALE systems requires promoting inclusive and accessible learning opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic status, age, gender, ethnicity, or other



characteristics. Policymakers should prioritize strategies to reduce barriers to participation, such as financial constraints, geographical location, and other social and cultural factors. ALE programmes should also be designed to cater to the diverse learning needs and styles of adult learners, providing flexible and learner-centred approaches.

5

Evaluate and monitor Bildung-based ALE programmes:

Evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of Bildung-based ALE programmes is essential for ensuring their quality and impact. Policymakers should establish evaluation frameworks that assess the alignment of ALE programmes with Bildung principles and measure their outcomes in terms of personal growth, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Monitoring mechanisms should be in place to ensure that ALE programmes are continuously adapted to the changing needs and contexts of adult learners.

4 Conclusions

The concept of Bildung offers a holistic approach to learning that promotes personal growth, critical thinking, and social responsibility. By embracing this concept, educators can support learners in developing the competencies and skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world

Integrating the concept of Bildung in national and regional ALE systems and political frameworks can contribute to the promotion of lifelong learning, personal growth, and social responsibility among adult learners. By aligning ALE policies with Bildung principles, fostering partnerships and collaboration, developing and implementing Bildung-based curricula and pedagogies, promoting inclusive and accessible ALE opportunities, and evaluating and monitoring ALE programmes, policymakers can create a supportive environment for adult learners to thrive and contribute to their communities and societies.

4.1 Bildung and democracy

Bildung empowers people to understand and apply democratic rights, intervene, resist, and bring about change. ALE is a crucial pillar for empowering democratic participation, being the longest phase of education in a person's life. Access to education should be a right for all individuals, irrespective of gender, class, race, or socioeconomic background. The community plays a vital role in ALE, fostering links between culture, education, and democratic participation. Initiatives at local and European levels should promote learner-centred and participatory approaches, enhance the role of adult learners in decision-making, and sustain their motivation to engage in democratic processes.

Democratic education should consider individual interests and needs. Educators and learners should collaboratively determine the classroom environment to cater to their preferences. Focusing on democratic education for those excluded from systemic democratic processes is crucial to ensure the right to participation for all. Practising democracy in the classroom involves creating a social contract within the learning setting and recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of democratic education.



4.2 Bildung and digitalisation

Bildung has the potential to strengthen adult education institutions and integrate digital approaches and the Bildung concept into practical work. Key points include reorganizing organizational workflows to effectively use digital tools, providing training and peer learning opportunities for staff to develop digital competences, incorporating digitalization into curriculums with a focus on the Bildung approach, supporting teachers to enhance their digital competences, reorganizing teaching methods to facilitate digital learning, addressing the digital divide among learners through additional courses and support, and teaching individuals to actively engage and retrain algorithms in the digital world dominated by big tech companies promoting bad news.

Practitioners, trainers, trainers of trainers, and learners are advised to respond to learners' needs by incorporating a variety of digital tools in courses and training. It is important to allocate sufficient time for learners to familiarize themselves with these tools gradually, engage in discussions, address digital safety concerns, challenge traditional mindsets and align digitalization with pedagogical concepts, cultural differences, and organizational vision.

Digital transformation is changing our society, including the emergence of digital worlds where people can meet virtually. Very concrete challenges for adult education accompany this.

4.3 Bildung and sustainability

Use the ideas of the Bildung concept to enrich ESD with additional dimensions such as emotional or ethical learning and nurture a sense of responsibility for people and nature beyond national borders, thus including international solidarity and global belonging in all activities. Action-oriented learning based on new thinking like circular economy and access to community-based project work is essential to enable people to shape the necessary transitions.

4.4 Bildung and basic skills

The skills needed by individuals to function and flourish in the current society change constantly. Strengthening the basic skills of adults promotes well-being and builds the basis of a functioning and equal society.

From the perspective of adult education as a human right a holistic interpretation of basic skills is needed. We need flexible models and new spaces for learning basic skills to reach out to different target groups. It is recognized that education is cumulated: individuals with a lot of education tend to participate in more education. Thus reaching out to disadvantaged groups is essential for educational and societal equality.

To stress the emancipatory and functional significance of basic skills, we suggest a holistic understanding of them. For this, we suggest using a wider and more holistic approach to life skills, which is described in Basic Skills & Bildung -publication.