Local knowledge centres as development hubs in rural regions, Know-Hub Project, Erasmus+ funded.

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Recommended Citation
Kenny, A. et al. (2020) Local knowledge centres as development hubs in rural regions, Know-Hub Project, Erasmus+ funded.
KNOW HUBs

Local Knowledge Centers as development HUBs in rural regions

young adults
empowerment
motivation
knowledge
society
lifelong learning
opportunities

Meeting point | Mediator | Motor

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

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
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INTRODUCTION

In this project, people in different organisations from seven countries agreed to explore the Knowledge Centres in their country and the concept of Grepperud (2007) using the Three M’s approach to local development. The project will seek to describe the different types and functions of knowledge centres in each country and explore areas of good practice. The project will also organise pilot training sessions to test ideas and concepts with a view to developing tools for sharing. This e-book is the starting point where the current status for Knowledge Centres in each country is presented. The participating organisations are:

VIFIN (Videncenter for Integration) is a knowledge and research centre in the municipality of Vejle, in south Denmark. It works to create, disseminate and mainstream good practice on integration and social development at local, regional, national and international levels.

Nýheimar Knowledge Centre (NKC) is an umbrella organisation for various groups and agencies working in education, research, innovation and culture in Höfn, Iceland. The Board of the centre comprises of members nominated from the twelve different groups and institute in the region. These groups and agencies have extensive interdisciplinary knowledge and experience.

Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI) is a recognised trade union which represents the interests of over 18,000 teachers, lecturers and researchers who work in post-primary education and training sectors in Ireland. TUI members work in further education, higher education, adult education, secondary schools, vocational education, Youthreach and a variety of other specialised centres.

Social Enterprise Knowl (S.E. Knowl) promotes education for lifelong learning in Greece. It is a collective social cooperative enterprise. An innovative, dynamic, participatory, grassroots network, adhering to the principles of social economy and social entrepreneurship, functioning as a catalyst for knowledge capital development and democratisation.

Spektrum Educational Centre Foundation (SEC) is a non-governmental organisation in Romania. Its mission is to promote education for a pro-active, synergistic, successful community via adult education-related services and projects. SEC offers non-formal training for various target groups, including local NGOs, SMEs involving disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community. It caters for over 400 adults as students per year.

Innovation Training Centre (ITC) is a training and consultancy organisation based in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. It offers a wide range of services regarding innovative materials and services (R+D+I approach) to promote innovation in learning, entrepreneurship and support to start ups.

Halsingland Education Association (HEA) is a public authority, non-commercial collaboration between three municipalities in the county of Hälsingland (Bollnäs, Söderhamn, Nordanstig) in Sweden.
PROJECT FOCUS
The Know-Hubs project offers a unique opportunity for the partners to share experience about the operations and functions of knowledge centres, to identify different ways of working, to explore the diverse services provided, consider the different missions and to develop relevant state-of-the-art resources for use. The Know-Hubs project will allow for the transfer of knowledge between both the partners and the organisations of interest. The project will enable both direct and indirect engagement of participants from different sectors and in a range of country settings. This engagement will assist in mapping out; innovations, best practice and useful resources. Additionally, the networking will contribute to the development of support tools and resources.

The partners recognise the need to further strengthen European cooperation and integration. The partners realise that education and training cooperation, provision of high-quality services and equal access to new communities will be central in meeting the challenges that Europe is facing. The partners understand there are emergent and differing needs and demands within each country relating to new communities, such as, work force and unemployment, migration and immigration, urban versus rural development and equality of access to education and funding. The partners acknowledge that complex social problems can best be resolved by all parties working together and by sharing knowledge and evidence to inform decision making. The Know-Hubs project explores the impact of knowledge centres and the contribution they make towards meeting the local needs and demands of rural communities and regions.

The Know-Hubs project will focus on the adult education priority

“Increasing the demand and take up of adult education through effective outreach, guidance and motivation strategies”
The project aim will be to explore a new model of adult education within the local knowledge centres using Greeprud’s three M’s approach; 1; Motor of development of the communities they are placed, 2; Meeting points (virtual and physical) and 3; Mediators of skills. The approach will also use a design thinking technique called, “co-creation” to place adult learners at the centre of a process to gain an understanding of their situation and needs. To facilitate this approach the project will train volunteer mentors to promote the engagement, involvement and participation of marginalised young adults from rural areas (low educational attainment, low skilled, disadvantaged including migrants and refugees) to bridge the gap between knowledge and skills and between the demands of the communities and the individual need of adults for support.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING ADULTS

Educational possibilities and vocational training are more prevalent now than ever, as policymakers are looking for clear responses to the new challenges facing the EU member states, such as; increased immigration, unemployment and the importance of social inclusion. The 2013 OECD report “Skilled for life? Key Findings from the Survey of Adult Skills, OECD” (p.16) stated that there is “a strong positive relationship between participation in adult education and skills proficiency”.

The results of OECD programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies in 2017 clearly demonstrates the need to encourage and empower marginalised adults to improve their proficiency through adult education (AE from here on in) and it requires innovative approaches and community involvement as well as investments to reach out to disadvantaged learners.

Moreover, the 2017 report “Adult education centres as a key to development”, financed by the German federal ministry for economic development, underlined the important role that adult education centres have as supporting social structures and becoming knowledge and innovation hubs within their communities.

The concept of knowledge centres, their form, function and role, is varied between the partners countries. The emergence of knowledge centres has not occurred in a uniform or standardised manner, but rather in diverse forms in different municipal education regions and communities. Some focus on the traditional approach of offering courses, some have expanded to the provision of support services and guidance whilst others have invested in developing infrastructure to accommodate the unique needs of young adults, employers and communities.
THE ROLE OF THE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

This project looks at the need and function of knowledge centres and the supports provided for adult education in the different partners’ countries. Whilst there is a common interest in the knowledge centres, from the start there were discussions about what a knowledge centre really is and is supposed to achieve. Questions included; what types of centres are available and in what sectors, what problems are they supposed to solve, what are their mission and aims and what specific competencies should be developed for the knowledge centres to meet locally and regionally required community and enterprise needs.

Some of the partners engaged in initial work on knowledge centres before the Know-Hubs project application was made. During these discussions it became clear that there were a diverse range and type of knowledge centres and their operations differed. From this exploration the participants became interested in the work of professor Gunnar Grepperud from Norway and his concept of knowledge centres and learning centres and how they contributed to local and regional social and economic development. Grepperud & Roos (2007) discern two phases in the strategy development between municipalities and regions regarding higher education; the orientation crisis and the long-term plans. In one phase, the regional initiatives are often connected to “fire extinguisher” tactics where there are immediate competence problems to solve. Educational institutions engage to resolve the needs and then withdraw when the needs are met. This strategy ensures resources are targeted towards relevant competences in different regions, it will probably continue to be a necessity in some cases.

The other strategy is about placing competence development in a long-term and more integral developmental approach. It is about revitalising different regions and planning for the long-term skills and competency needs and the social and economic requirements of the region.

For some the development of competences is considered crucial for the revitalisation of regions but is not a universal solution. Success is also dependent on other factors, such as access to venture capital and public investment in research and the development of technology. A diverse business sector with a high-tech focus, ethnic and cultural diversity and an attractive living environment also contributes to a high quality of life.

Development happens through continuous interaction between companies, skills environments and the surrounding society. If there is social and interactive learning within a common social context it goes without saying that it requires physical and social proximity. Settlement in a region requires access to workplaces but also the development of the surrounding society. Regional development includes both the development of civil society and businesses.

Higher education cannot be reserved for a small fraction of the population, in our global and complex societies. Providing opportunities to access higher education to up-skill, re-skill and or develop new skills in the different regions is important for many reasons; educational equality, the supply of a highly qualified work force and the development of civil society. Local knowledge centres can play a crucial role in this regard (Grepperud & Roos 2007)
3M: MEETING POINT, MEDIATOR AND MOTOR

One way to look at the role of knowledge centres in society has been developed by Professor Gunnar Grepperud and Professor Terje Thomsen (Grepperud, Thomsen, 2002) in the concept of “3M: Meeting point, Mediator and Motor”. In recent years it has been used to try to capture the most important functions of the centres, and thus assist in creating an index to define what a knowledge centre both is and does.

From the 3M perspective, knowledge centres function as a safe meeting point for young adults and members of the community, they act as a mediator between the needs and demands of the services. Users, including young adults, educators, trainers, employers and social structures, act as a motor to generate innovative approaches and ideas. Other researchers (Hellsten and Roos, 2002) have also embraced these concepts, they are included in the study of knowledge centre activities and documented in the report “IT-supported distance – a player in local development?”

Meeting point: A knowledge centre as a meeting point includes both the physical and the virtual space. In these spaces different meetings take place between the students, their tutors or teachers, counsellors and other resource personnel, including local enterprise and industry participants.

Mediator: The knowledge centre identifies the needs of individuals and the labour market and ensures the continuous skills development of staff. Through collaborations, for example between the municipal association of adult education and the labour market, the knowledge centre works as a mediator in a market of supply and demand of skills and competence.

Motor: The knowledge centre collaborates with libraries, employment services, social insurance agencies and other stakeholders to develop common visions, aims and strategies to contribute to the infrastructure of adult learning. By meeting the needs of the educational requirements and otherwise contribute to the provision of skills in business and society the knowledge centre becomes a major part of the engine for growth in the local and regional development.

When the project partners started thinking about adult education in their own countries, they realised that 3M must be viewed as a vision to work towards, rather than a description of the reality today. And, by looking for good practices in each county, they would start by looking for organisations that combine at least two of the targeted elements.
To consider and define to what extent different recent knowledge centres correspond to the 3M functions, the project partners discussed and agreed on several indicators needed for fulfilling each of the functions. These were:

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<td>Do you have a fixed physical space for meetings and events?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have a virtual space for your teachers and students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have virtual meeting spaces for stakeholders to access?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have ICT equipment available for your users? (i.e: computers, WiFi, video conferencing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do your staff have access to connect virtually to the centre?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you promote meetings among; learners, teachers, counsellors? (internal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you promote meetings with internal staff and employers, members of various associations, libraries, universities, employment agencies? (external)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is networking promoted? (i.e.: events like business breakfasts...etc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you receive specific funding to implement your activities?</td>
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<td>QUESTIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is your centre identifying the local education and training needs of students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your centre identifying the needs of the local labour market?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you promote the continuing professional development of your staff related to the local social and economic needs and demands?</td>
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These indicators may be used to consider the range of services a specific knowledge centre provides and the alignment with its mission and policy objectives compared to others. They can also be used by a knowledge centre during self-assessment and evaluation exercises. The indicators can be used to identify gaps in competencies, skills and facilities available. Also, they are useful indicators for comparative analysis of knowledge centres across several countries.

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<th>QUESTIONS</th>
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<td>Do you promote collaboration with key stakeholders in the region?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have specific activities to match the needs of your learners and the labour market?</td>
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<td>Do you hold internal meetings to evaluate and improve your centre?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have the mandate to collaborate with other organizations within your community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you hold meetings with; employers, education and training, social services, municipalities, libraries and government agencies to identify their needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you provide courses for students based on local and regional needs?</td>
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<td>Do you receive specific funding to implement these activities?</td>
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Do you offer counselling services?                                            |   |   |
Do you offer guidance services?                                               |   |   |
Do you offer courses or services to promote the empowerment of disadvantaged learners? |   |   |
Do you promote traineeships with work experience?                             |   |   |
Do you offer tutoring and guidance to facilitate online learning?             |   |   |
Is there mentoring carried out in your centre?                                |   |   |
Do you receive specific funding to implement these activities?               |   |   |
Denmark

There is a need for knowledge centres in Denmark. Large educational institutions centred in large cities are competing for students. In order to obtain access to the relevant education, young people need to move or make long commutes to school. There are insufficient alternatives for people who live in rural areas, and who are unwilling or unable to move or commute. For various reasons people could not avail of advanced education opportunities such as, family circumstances, starting a family, early school leavers or social problems, or for other reasons they may have difficulties finding their way back to education due to lack of offers awareness or opportunities in the rural areas.

Local knowledge and study centres can provide a solution for those who find it hard to commute as well as those who are taking online courses but lack motivation to study on their own. Local centres provide an accessible environment and much needed support for these individuals.

Knowledge centres are not yet a widespread feature of the Danish educational environment. Slowly things are moving in the right direction. HUSC in Holbæk is a good example of a successful Knowledge centre. However, it takes political will and long-term investment to continue that success. Research in the area is also being conducted at the Vocational School Absalon, and they are providing the academic research that in the future will inform local politicians with the convincing arguments they need to create local knowledge centres in rural areas all over Denmark.

The main challenges for knowledge centres in Denmark are that it is a new way of structuring the educational system. However, the general mindset is not geared towards them just yet. The same problems that are found in other countries, also exist in Denmark, where students leave rural areas to go to big cities to study. Traditionally this was not
an issue in Denmark, since the country is small and transportation is fast, and the IT infrastructure is very well developed, but, lately the rural areas are feeling the consequences of this brain drain to the bigger cities, and so the motivation to see if this trend can be reversed or minimised is an imperative. Since the culture in the educational system has not progressed toward online learning with local study facilities, there needs to be a set of initiatives to make this happen.

At Aarhus University the CUDIM institution has been experimenting with creating an online community for students studying at the institution while remaining in other parts of the country. This is a different approach to the approach taken by the knowledge centre, since it allows students stay home but tries to make them feel part of the institution by providing online activities for them.

Therefore, there are a lot of good initiatives on the way and knowledge centres are sure to play a big role in the future of Danish education.

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ICELAND

A couple of decades ago the Icelandic government jumped on the knowledge creation wagon and made the development of a knowledge society in rural areas one of their goals in rural development. It was believed that increased research activities and an increased number of higher education students would create more jobs for higher educated people, stop out-migration and increase the rural population. This goal can be found in regional development plans from 1999-2011 (Edvardsdóttir, 2016).

The knowledge society in Iceland is somewhat complicated. Mainly, due of the fact that in Iceland there is a difference in the definition between adult education/lifelong learning institutions, on one hand and knowledge centres on the other. These organisations have different agendas and work in different ways. To complicate things even further we have organisations that are a mix of both adult education and knowledge centres. Lifelong learning institutions have in common their aim of offering academic, vocational and recreational courses and study programmes to people in the local community in collaboration with universities and regional parties of interest, such as municipalities, labour organisations and the business community. Those institutions do have a legal framework that they need to follow. Eleven lifelong learning institutions are operating around the country and some of them have offices in several places.

When it comes to Knowledge centres in Iceland there is no legal framework, but these centres are funded partly by the government. In the Parliamentary financial plan 2018-2022, Chapter 21 on education at university level, research institutions at university level are included. Under this category the government/ministry funds eight regional research and knowledge centres. In the financial plan the main purpose of these centres is laid out. The role of the centres is to promote knowledge activities and research in their local communities, and in many cases, they operate in close collaboration with universities and research institutions. Therefore, these centres are all, in some ways, focusing on research and education but are regionally based, focusing on local needs.

As previously mentioned, the knowledge society was supposed to stop migration, increase the population and create jobs for people with higher education. Anna Guðrún’s research showed that this has not (yet) happened, especially
regarding increasing the rural population. Regardless of this the knowledge society has had some positive interaction with rural development in Iceland. It has been easier for the inhabitants to get higher education through distance learning methods and the general level of education has increased. It has also given higher educated people opportunities to work in research and innovation projects since variety within the labour market has increased. The knowledge society has also had an interaction with social and cultural sustainability, specifically on the quality of life and well-being of the rural people. With increasing higher educational standards in rural areas, more and more people have gained knowledge, and this is important. They also have developed local knowledge which can be just as important as scientific knowledge in a community-based approach, and both could be used to benefit the rural communities (Edvardsdóttir, 2016, pp. 237-239). Knowledge centres play their part in the knowledge society. In general, the knowledge centres support the government’s emphasis on creating conditions for university education regardless of residence. Where the centres are most active, they maintain and develop a good working relationship with the local communities, support progressive policy making, create increased equality with urban communities and give inhabitants in rural regions the opportunity to become participants in a “knowledge society”.

For further development of a knowledge society in rural regions it is important to strengthen the centres in their role. One of the main challenges for knowledge centres is to be acknowledged as partners in the knowledge society in the country; meaning that universities and research institutions should look more to the centres and/or institutions and their capabilities to provide education and research based on local knowledge (Edvardsdóttir, 2019). Many good things are happening among the knowledge centres in Iceland. Most centres are working on many different projects, both regional, national and international. It is important for Knowledge centres to be constantly promoting their activities to be able to address and meet the needs of the community. If funding for Knowledge centres is secured on a long-term basis by government, the centres have all the potential to do so.

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IRELAND

Adult education service in Ireland is provided by numerous agencies and providers. There is a multitude of providers and types of courses available. The providers seek to cater for a diverse range of client groups; early school leavers, community, employers, refugees etc. Whilst significant resources are made available for adult education the lack of a unified approach and connectivity between the providers limits the potential. A cohesive strategy is required, to resource the structural connection of providers and enhance coordination, cooperation and the quality assurance mechanism which facilitates mobility through the sector. Including the advancement of innovative practice within the workplace to assist in upskilling and reskilling workers is also required while providing for clear, accessible information and mapping out possible education and learning routes needs to become central. In addition, there is a need for adult education to become more inclusive to the needs of community, society and the economy.

After nearly 10 years of cuts during the austerity period adult centres are struggling to maintain services
and quality, particularly with poorly maintained facilities and equipment, lack of upgrading and modernising equipment. Outdated facilities are making it difficult to provide learners with the essential state-of-the-art equipment required to prepare them for business and industry. Access to facilities in rural areas is very limited and transport routes to regional hubs are inadequate. There is a need in rural areas for centres to have transport facilities provided to enable people to participate in activities. A local link bus service has been established in one area; however, it does not meet the transport needs adequately.

Programmes need to be developed with consideration for the family and caring requirements of learners, this means timetabling programmes to suit user needs including child minding obligations.

Centres need to get their message out to individuals in an accessible way and using mediums that individuals have access to, this includes using social media, local media, posters in local premises including sporting venues communities and other groups. Centres need to consider the specific requirements relating to the diverse range of people and new communities in Ireland in order to encourage and facilitate participation.

There is a need to have a joined-up approach to the provision of services, in many cases there are separate initiatives, services, supports and centres which manage individual schemes for specific purposes. In such circumstances the individual learner is not presented with the full range of opportunities and options. It would be best to have a one stop-shop to provide guidance and advise on all the services that are available. Larger towns and cities have this service through local Education and Training Boards, however, people from rural areas have in most cases to travel to these education centres to acquire access to these services.

Education and Training Boards are meeting the needs of adults within larger towns and cities by providing programmes that are developed in conjunction with industry, further education and third level. The new traineeships and the extension of the apprenticeship programmes meet the needs of many, however, those in rural areas often have to travel long distances to participate in these programmes. Moreover, adults who want to up-skill to go on to colleges or universities must travel into the larger towns and cities to access these specific programmes. While the centralisation of programmes into larger centres has increased the opportunities for those attending these centres, it has been at the detriment of rural areas.

In consideration of the difficulties of access to centres and limited transport infrastructure in rural areas there is a need to offer blended learning options which combine face-to-face teaching and online resources. This will require investment in both infrastructure and staff training.

In rural areas there is an absence of internet access, or where there is access it is very slow and limited. There is a need to invest in the rollout of high-quality high-speed broadband networks in rural areas. There is also a need to have permanent, purpose-built facilities so that people in rural areas have a place that they can up-skill with the use of high-tech facilities. Moreover, these centres need to have the same opportunities available to them, with the use of technology, that are available in the larger towns and cities.

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GREECE

In Greece, there are many adult education centres and lifelong institutes focusing on training adults in many sectors. In addition, many actions/initiatives are developed by individuals, NGOs and social enterprises trying to create knowledge centres, but they are lacking some key points of the 3M theory as there is limited collaboration with stakeholders, to develop common visions and strategies which will contribute to the infrastructure of adult learning and to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners. Most of these actions take place in the Region of Attika. In rural areas these actions do not exist and most of these learning institutions are limited to a more traditional approach, offering courses with no provision of support services, guidance or investment to accommodate the unique needs of young disadvantaged adults, employers and communities. Most of these actions, either public or private, act as a closed network with no provision to share knowledge openly or creative multiplier effects via a national cluster of knowledge centres.

Educational centres in order to become HUBs of knowledge and create local sustainability must look into the social integration of social groups at risk, social coherence, cultural change, and creativity.

In order to be more effective and meet the needs of disadvantaged target groups and achieve their engagement, lifelong learning educational centres in rural areas should focus on experiential learning, relevant to the local community activities, organise networking events and use former disadvantaged adult learners as ambassadors to promote personal development and be motivational to other groups.

However, there is a considerably small amount of interest in participating on behalf of prospective beneficiaries. One possible explanation is that educational programmes do not address the needs of adult learners, since to a large extent they are following a school-based approach. In addition, the current economic crisis and lack of supporting infrastructure may be a contributing factor (lack of funding and human resources). Although there is no well-documented research available about the impact of the economic crisis on adult education, experts have expressed serious concerns that adult education and vocational education and training programmes are affected.

Moreover, adult education centres in Greece do not efficiently link education and training with labour market needs, lacking also systematic consultation with social partners, local authorities and civil society. This means that adult education institutions are not capable of developing strategic educational programmes, which especially focus on people living in rural areas and in all age target groups, to offer integrated courses for certain target groups such as women, senior citizens, unemployed people, and people from immigrant families or minorities, people with mental and physical disabilities, socially disadvantaged persons.

Despite the variety of the institutions and the courses offered, their role is mostly educational, overseeing the connection with the labour market with no provision to develop common visions, aims and strategies, as a motor of development of innovative approaches and ideas. Lifelong learning institutions are missing innovative active teaching methods, which raise awareness and more interest to the participants. Another important element missing from the adult education centres is the transfer of knowledge and skills into the local, entrepreneurial eco-system and social economy actors by using mentoring.
and experiential learning methods where applicable and compiling existing knowledge and know-how into best practice.

According to Mr. Sotiriadis, Executive, Business & Career Coach – Trainer, the most important tools needed to improve the capacity of knowledge/adult education centres to serve the interests of rural and regional communities are:

Information systems to allow organising, indexing, searching and disseminating knowledge in various forms (articles and multimedia content, Q&A, Expert Systems) and at the same time support event management, networking and training.

Access to statistical data concerning the industries involved.

Funding (national or EU) on research relevant to the activities/industries of interest.

A key element for adult learners, taking into consideration the socioeconomic context of Greece, is the education centres and structures need to continuously adjust to societal changes, focus on special target groups with changing learning needs and new forms of learning and communication, combating social exclusion.

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ROMANIA

In Romania, knowledge centres can be considered as the educational centres which offer different courses within different topics, fields, meeting the various needs of the society in which they are based. The present report has been mainly focusing on three central counties of the country (Harghita, Covasna and Mures). In all these locations, adult education centres are operating based on a shared concept, addressing the educational needs of the regions they are established in.

In addition to these, the labour market agencies can also be seen as knowledge centres which, according to the present law, should be representing the bridge between companies/businesses and the unemployed.

No significant research has been found regarding active knowledge centres in the analysed region.

It has not been found that any of the educational centres are using the 3M principle, therefore the Know Hubs project will offer good opportunities for these centres and their employers to improve their services and afford better quality possibilities for those in need.

During the desk research carried out within this project in Romania, there were less than five institutions/organisations found that claimed to be a knowledge centre. All of these were focusing either on medical issues (Hematology) or on actions related to businesses. Therefore, it can be said that all the educational institutions that have been involved in this research function operate as, without calling themselves “knowledge centres”. They manage to gather people with different needs and expectations and try to offer solutions to their needs. One thing they lack is the mentoring aspect, even though the personnel working in these centres try to advise those interested on steps to follow once they have completed their training courses.

In Romania, in our opinion, the most important thing to be done, is related to a better application of the existing laws and regulations, mainly related to public services which unfortunately cannot be determined by a project. Nevertheless, improvements could be introduced within educational organisations. Urging these educational centres to more consciously use the 3M principle would be a helpful starting point for
the target group representatives. Apart from getting the needed training course, those in need could participate in counselling/mediation sessions on how they could benefit from the advantages of their improved skills and competences.

To achieve this, these knowledge centres should have staff members employed who are counselling/mentoring professionals and coaches who can advise whenever is necessary.

In addition to that, it could be useful for the target group representatives to have designated areas with well-structured programs/schedules/timetables based on how they could be organised for those in need.

See the report from Romania on page 66

SPAIN

We cannot find a common understanding of what “knowledge centres” are in Spain due to the present legal regulations and for cultural reasons. Adult learning is issued by 3 different authorities and policy regulations: education, employment and local, in addition to the 17 autonomous communities’ regulations. In this frame we can find a variety of centres that complement the “knowledge centre” approach (for example, focusing in ICT and a “living Labs” orientation according to regional Innovation and Information Society policies).

Thus:

• on one hand the overall wide regulation is national (ministries of education and ministry of labour)

• and on the other hand, the implementation of these regulations is regional

• this is complemented by the local authorities, responsible for organising popular education through popular universities, which offer a wide range of educational, training and cultural activities.

In this frame, we can find that there is still a dichotomy regarding formal and informal learning and between information and knowledge. While adult education centres are part of an “education” national regulation, the implementation is regional and local. These centres often coexist with other centres that are based on innovation, science and employment policies and that follow employability, information society and innovation approaches to also cover needs of territories with rural areas, which have different needs.

As a result of this, the information provided to users is fragmented, and for example, a “third country national” living in a rural area asking for a language course may get different responses regarding available centres depending if s/he lives in Galicia or in Andalusia.

In Spain, we do not find a real knowledge centre definition nor common understanding of what “knowledge centres” are, but in practice the mission of 3-Ms; mediator, motor and meeting place depending on the location, is partially covered by regionally funded centres.

A key improvement in Spain would be to promote the homogenisation of the approach focusing on the adult learner and their needs and not on where the policy or the regulation comes from. From a top-down perspective we may need to go towards a more bottom up orientation: a knowledge centre focusing on the needs of the adult learners.

See the report from Spain on page 72
SWEDEN

There is no description of what a knowledge centre should look like, hence it simply looks different in different municipalities in terms of training offered, the number of students and infrastructure. At present, we regard premises, tools and staff as the main factors for knowledge centres to serve as a Meeting place, Mediator and Motor of higher education.

Knowledge centres make higher education available in a way that allows people access it in the rural area in which they live. To study further and complete an education program leading to work in the local community. Examples of such work include nurses, teachers, social workers and police officers. Several students must first complete preparatory courses at upper secondary level to acquire the necessary qualifications to enter higher education. There is also the possibility to take Higher VET via knowledge centres, something that is becoming more common as Higher VET is expanded. These courses often consist of two-year vocational training courses that the labour market requested. In these programs LIA = learning at work constitutes one part of the training, which is done at the workplace.

The main challenges are to make local politicians recognise the importance of having a functioning knowledge centre in the municipality which can contribute to the supply of skills for both the public sector and private industry. Funding is the second major challenge. It is vital to realise that this is a matter of interest for both the local/regional level and national level.

In order to offer services, meeting the needs of the target group, improvement of premises is needed, above all more well-adapted venues with, very often, increased size. There also needs to be enough numbers of trained staff. It is vital that the person in charge of management, as well as contacts and collaboration with universities and the surrounding community, has an academic degree. In addition, there is a need for a person whose primary task is that of assisting the students. Technology support is also essential.

See the report from Sweden on page 82
GOOD EXAMPLES

Each country has been asked to highlight one or two examples of good practice. What defines a good example has been discussed and the project members have agreed to try to find examples of practical organisations where they work with at least two of the tree elements: meeting point, mediator and motor. See the list of indicators in the text about 3M above.

The included examples show a great variety of possible ways to conduct adult education and many different possibilities to finance the organisations.

Here are short descriptions of examples of good practice from each country in the project. The examples are described at length in each country’s own report, where impact, sustainability and transferability are also highlighted, see links for the different countries.
DENMARK

1. HUSC

Promoted by: Holbæk Municipality
Funding: public: Holbæk Municipality Private: companies in the area that are providing help and possibilities for apprenticeships.

HUSC i Holbæk was created from the principles laid out in the research report. The idea was to have all the 3M functions present and so far, the Motor and the Meeting place are working with success, but the Mediator function has yet to establish the online contact between the educators that are in the remote teaching institutions and the local meeting place. This is an important piece of the puzzle if the knowledge centre is to sustain its economic and didactical foundation.

Meeting point: HUSC meet most of the indicators for meeting space. They provide the physical location and technology for local and online education as well as having local hired teachers and counsellors. The online courses provided at the centre also provide the online education platforms through the different education providers that HUSC cooperates with.

HUSC facilitates internal meetings between teachers, students and counsellors and external meetings and events, for example with local businesses.

Mediator: HUSC acts as a mediator, through their central role as a municipal knowledge centre to identify local education and competences skills, needs and provide the education that matches these. They also cooperate with local businesses about providing internships as part of the provided education. They have a special target group of people who do not go directly into regular education for different reasons. Either they have not been ready for regular education, have been on maternity/paternity leave, have been ill or have other reasons for not being able to participate in education. They have accommodated this target group and have hired mentors who help the students complete the course they follow at HUSC and not drop out.

Motor: As stated under the mediator conclusion, HUSC very much acts as a local motor by providing needs-based education and internships in cooperation with local stakeholders as well as helping the municipality by providing learning to disadvantaged target groups that would otherwise not receive education.

HUSC is the only proper example of the 3M model found in Denmark. As such this is a prime example of the 3M functions. The other case from SDU Sønderborg is an example of a cooperation between a university and local businesses in a specific area providing local needs-based and relevant education and research as well as securing internships in local businesses as part of the education.

[https://husc.holbaek.dk/](https://husc.holbaek.dk/)
2. CIE

Promoted by: The Companies Danfoss and Linak
Funded: Public: the community takes care of the needs of the student, such as living quarters and social life. Private: takes responsibility for staff education needed in the future and developing the strength of the area in specific fields this will positively the entire community

Swønderborg requires a large number of engineers, so they decided to be proactive and have invested 175 million kroner to develop an educational centre. It will open on May 312019. The goal is to keep the engineers in the local area, by developing internships, easy access to knowledge about the firms in the local area and the guarantee of a position when they finish school. The community welcomes this and are now trying to make living in Sønderborg more attractive by developing the cultural offering of the area and enhancing student accommodation

Meeting point: CIE is created to facilitate an educational environment close to the large technological businesses in the area. The engineering education is specially designed to serve the needs of the large local enterprises. They provide the physical education environment, but not a virtual space.

Mediator: They function as a mediator between local businesses, meeting public development strategies for the area and the needs of students by assisting them finding work after their education. They do a lot of facilitation and networking activities and have many local corporations with different organisations.

Motor: They have a motor function in relation to local business needs, but not in any social capacity or towards any vulnerable groups.

https://www.sdu.dk/en/om_sdu/institutter_centre/centre+for+industrial+elektronics

ICELAND

1. Hornafjörður municipality social services/project manager of multicultural affairs.

Promoted by: Hornafjörður municipality.
Funding: public

The number of inhabitants of foreign origin in Iceland has increased tremendously over the past years. The tourism industry is growing fast and the need for a work force is at an all-time high. Workers from outside Iceland are now required to fulfil demands. It is very important that this growing group will be able to adjust and participate in the local community. However, they tend to become isolated and this does not only apply to newcomers. There are also many immigrants that have been living in Iceland for a long time that have not been integrated into the community. This is very much the case in Hornafjörður with foreign inhabitants at almost 20% of the population. So, the municipality decided to hire a project manager in multicultural matters in the summer of 2018. Since then the project manager has worked mainly with people of foreign origin who live in Hornafjörður. There has been a substantial change in the lives of these people since she started to work here. The project manager has managed to get the Red Cross, library, elementary school, adult education institution and the local companies involved in her work and this has worked to great effect, the emphasis
is on both language barriers and social participation. An example of one successful action is scheduled homework assistance once a week at the municipality’s library for the elementary school students, primarily for kids of foreign origin.

**Evaluation of the best practice**

When the example of best practice is evaluated using the indicators from the questionnaire the example seems to be functioning best as meeting place and motor but lacking the function of mediator. However, one may ask if this does necessarily give the right image of the example’s function in relation to the 3Ms. Indicators are focused on the function of a centre that is providing education and learning and/or career counselling, that does not apply to this specific example. The example could truly be considered a stronger mediator, motor and a meeting place than this evaluation implies. What is being pointed out here, is that it is difficult to do an evaluation with indicators that are not relevant to the activities of the example being evaluated.

**IRELAND**

Information and advice on accessing education, education programmes and skills courses are usually provided by the Education and Training boards, or the Institutes of Technology. The social partners (trade unions) provide information to members regarding upskilling and continuous professional development. Some trade unions have invested in the development of training centres for members. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions assisted in the development of a network of Local Trade Union Centres to assist members and provide advice and services to the unemployed.

In second level schools’ students can get access to advice from guidance counsellors regarding education routes and career pathways. Young adults can also gain information from the Post-Leaving Certificate Colleges (PLCs), the PLCs also offer a wide range of programmes that are of relevance to the world of work or suitable as an access route to higher education. Young adults can also access training centres to undertake skills courses which are relevant to local employer needs. The Institutes of Technology sector also provides outreach and access programmes to facilitate access to higher education by marginalised groups a Youthreach Centres provide support, advice and structured learning programmes to early school leavers, as is the case with adult education services in large centres.

In addition, community development groups also provide services and advice to adults in their local area. Usually the community development groups are established around a specific campaign, need or topic and develop another services overtime. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has a network of local centres which provide support and advice to unemployed people and marginalized groups. The centres also offer training courses in areas relevant to job seekers. In addition, meeting space is provided for groups and there are study facilities in some of the centres.

Within an Irish context the knowledge centre and the concept of the 3 Ms (Motor, Mediator and Meeting) is not applicable. Different providers, agencies and stakeholders offer the specific services which may be relevant to one or even two of the 3Ms, but none provide the three areas.
Future Library is a non-profit organisation devoted to reinforcing the significance of libraries as knowledge, creativity, and interaction-promoting institutions. It was established in Veria in 2011, addressing the call of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation to contribute to the development of a sustainable network of public and municipal libraries across Greece. It is a network of libraries open to everyone. The initiative believes passionately in the power of collaboration and experimenting with new ideas. These are some of the key ingredients that the library of the future needs to have in order to positively affect citizens’ lives. With hub.futurelibrary.gr, a social network is building, promoting online learning, information and interaction with all members. With mentoring and skills development through workshops, seminars and conferences, as well as with access to resources, Future Library supports the library community in its effort to offer innovative services. Moreover, Future Library works with libraries from Greece, the Balkans and the rest of Europe. With 140 municipal libraries included, it is a powerful network of libraries that every year organises summer campaigns with a specific theme, aiming to attract people to the libraries. Participating libraries host performances, book readings, thematic workshops, cinema evenings, etcetera, always based on the specific campaign subject.

Conclusion for the Central Public Library of Veria “Future Library”:
The Central Public Library of Veria “Future Library” meet most of the indicators for the meeting place. It provides both the physical and the virtual space for teachers and students. The Central Public Library of Veria “Future Library” has also the technological infrastructure available for its users. With hub.futurelibrary.gr, a social network is building and promoting online learning, information and interaction with all members. Networking activities and events are missing from the action. With mentoring and skills development through workshops, seminars and conferences, as well as with access to resources, Central Public Library of Veria “Future Library” supports the library community in its effort to offer innovative services. It also promotes the continuing professional development of their staff though workshops. No specific funding is available to implement these activities.

Central Public Library of Veria “Future Library” acts as a motor of development as it promotes collaboration with key stakeholders and experiments with new ideas in order to affect positively the learner’s lives. Moreover, the Central Public Library of Veria “Future Library” works with libraries from Greece, the Balkans and the rest of Europe. Internal meetings are also promoted to evaluate and improve the function of the initiative.

http://www.futurelibrary.gr/en/
The programme Mellon (Greek word for ‘Future’, i.e. ‘Μέλλον’) is an innovative social action for the intensive, personalised professional skills development and empowerment of people, with a focus and priority on unemployed and young people, to help ensure their entry and stay in the labour market and, thus, a better quality of life for them. The programme is offered at zero cost for beneficiaries and aims to address the urgent needs of those experiencing unemployment, marginalisation and poverty. Mellon adopts a personalised approach. It aims to strengthen each person individually, in a tailor-made way, based on their own professional profile, their needs and aspirations, serving their own professional choices, transferring directly applicable knowledge and facilitating the matching of professional profiles with market needs and employment positions. At the same time, Mellon strongly supports and promotes entrepreneurship, both as a form of self-employment and a source for job creation. Mellon is being implemented by the Collective Social Cooperative Enterprise known for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Conclusion for Mellon Skills Accelerator:
Mellon Skills Accelerator meets most of the indicators for the meeting place. It provides the physical space for meetings and events with ICT equipment available for its user. The Mellon Skill Accelerator also promotes meetings among learners, teacher and counsellors. Although, the virtual meeting space for both staff and students are missing as an e-learning platform has not been developed yet. Mellon Skills Accelerator promotes networking though several events and is funded by its own and private sources.

Mellon Skills Accelerator acts as a mediator though its educational methodology as it creates educational modules/materials based on the identification of the special needs of students, recognising the needs of the local labour market as well. It also promotes the continuing professional development of their staff though workshops. Usually, people participating in the social initiative Mellon Skills Accelerator come from a difficult economic environment as many of them are long-term unemployed and live in the limit of poverty. The aim of the initiative is to empower unemployed and young people with personalised professional skills and help them ensure their entry and stay in the labour market and, thus ensure a better quality of life for them. The programme is offered at zero cost for beneficiaries and aims to address the urgent needs of those suffering from unemployment, marginalisation and poverty.

Mellon Skills Accelerator promotes collaboration and special activities to match the need of the learners. These activities depend on both the need of the learners and the needs of the local labour market. Its educational methodology is based on a personalised approach as it aims to strengthen each person individually, in a tailor-made way, on the basis of their own professional profile, their own needs and aspirations, serving their own professional choices, transferring directly applicable knowledge and facilitating the matching of professional profiles with market needs and employment positions.

ROMANIA

1. Spektrum Educational Centre Foundation

Promoted by: Spektrum Educational Centre Foundation. Funding: European founded educational projects in different topics

The Spektrum Educational Centre was established in 1996 on the initiative of the Foundation for an Open Society. This nongovernmental organisation, which had a separate legal personality since 1998, became a self-sustaining NGO in 2001, and it has changed its name to Spektrum Educational Centre in 2016. Following political changes in 1989, in the early 90s, language learning became popular in the region, the Spektrum Educational Centre aimed to respond to that need, by offering foreign language courses and, alongside providing internet access, also advisory services for all those interested. Initially following its establishment after 1996, our organisation represented the only possibility in the rural region of Harghita county (central part of Romania) for expanding horizons through the development of foreign language (mainly English) courses and access to the Internet. Moreover, internet access has
been facilitated while also offering access to PCs which up to this point were difficult to source organisation. As already mentioned above, there were also no counselling or advisory services available either.

Spektrum Educational Centre is the best example of the 3M model found in the region covered by the research made by SEC. As such, this is a good example of the 3M functions.

Conclusion based on indicators for SEC:
SEC meets more of the indicators for a physical meeting space. They provide the physical education environment, but not a virtual space. Nevertheless, several training courses developed by SEC (and co-funded by the European educational programmes) are open educational resources with accessibility to the Internet, free of charge.

SEC facilitates internal meetings among teachers, students and external meetings and events, with various stakeholders from the educational field (formal education – schools, universities; non-formal education providers – such as language schools and other adult training providers) and from the businesses sector as well (association of local, regional businesses).

SEC is functioning as a self-sustained NGO, its cash flow is assured through paid courses, a variety of target groups attend, and European funds accessed explicitly via adult and youth education programs. SEC does not receive any state or municipality funds.

SEC acts as a mediator, being a key adult education centre in its region, one of its objectives is to identify local education and competence skills and needs and provide the necessary education and training to address these. However, the centre does not provide specific counselling, guidance or mentoring services (these are offered by the county employment agency) as its main objectives target more development of the region via non-formal education and training.

SEC very much acts as a local motor by providing tailor-based education and training in cooperation with local stakeholders as well as helping the municipality by providing learning to disadvantaged target groups that would otherwise not receive education.

It is important to mention that SEC applies for European funds on a regular basis, as being a self-sustained NGO, it does not receive state funding from public bodies or similar entities.

[www.sec.ro](http://www.sec.ro)
1. INFORMATE” TOOL.

Promoted by Spanish Ministry of Education
Funding: public

This is a Lifelong Learning initiative made up in order to support all people in Spain regarding training throughout their life, inside and outside the education system, in order to acquire, update, complete and expand their knowledge, abilities and skills for personal and professional development.


2. Guadalinfo eCcentres

Promoted by: Junta de Andalucia, regional authority in the region of Andalusia
Funding: public

The centres operate in the frame of the “social innovation network of Andalusia”, a 100% public network of citizen access centres to the information society in Andalusia. The centres, located in municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants, Autonomous Local Entities and in the less favoured urban slums, have been working since 2003. There are around 800 physical centres rooted in their communities (Interconnected and linked to www.guadalinfo.es) and 800 Local Innovation Agents paid by the regional authority to support more than 1 million users. They focus on the needs of the citizens in rural areas: employability, digital literacy, promotion of innovative culture, citizen participation, improvement of the quality of life, entrepreneurship, business digitalisation and electronic administration.

This example fits in with all the criteria selected as a meeting place. The mediator role is half covered as it meets 6 of the 10 criteria identified in the questionnaire, mentioned earlier in the text about 3M. The centre does not provide counselling, guidance or traineeships because that role is covered via the Andalucia Orienta programme and centres (http://andaluciaorienta.net/). As to the motor role it is only covered in 3 out of the 7 criteria we find in the questionnaire as some of them are part of the previously mentioned regional based employment and guidance services (Andalucia Orienta).“

Campus Västervik defines itself as a “local campus”, which means that it is owned and operated by the municipality of Västervik and works with place-based courses from various colleges and universities. It is supported by the municipality, educational institutions and companies. They mainly work with video conferencing as distance-bridging technology, but also other forms of technical solutions, as well as personnel on site in the premises such as lecturers. Campus Västervik has been assigned a local mission to work with higher education and contribute to increasing the post-secondary education level by 0.5% units according to Statistics Sweden’s measurements.

When assessing Campus Västervik to the 3M indicators we can see that they are fulfilling all of the agreed indicators of being a meeting place, mediator and motor in their area.

https://www.vastervik.se/Campus-Vastervik/
WHAT ROLE CAN A KNOWLEDGE CENTRE PLAY?

The lack of common definitions and research is one thing that unites the countries in the project. For a deeper understanding of each country’s background, current situation, research status and development needs, see each country’s report.

Through in desk research, interviews and co-creation workshops, the role of the knowledge centre has been discussed and in all of the countries’ reports it is evident that the centres are appreciated by both participants and the surrounding communities, but we also have to state that there is not much documented evidence or research about the actual impact that knowledge centres have. It is hard to summarise the role that knowledge centres can play when there is no collective understanding or definition of what a knowledge really is. The good examples that are shared by each country also display how diverse this type of organisation can be.

In many of the workshops where this question has been discussed there are numerous new insights about the possibilities of knowledge centres being the meeting place, the mediator and motor but the possibilities for the success of these organisations are dependent on the availability of resources making them accessible for participants.

In many cases, the many advantages of adult education are described, and each country emphasises the value of more citizens having access to a good education and the fact that this leads to personal empowerment and added life value for the individual. Some of the countries also emphasise the important role that knowledge centres have for the local society. The Swedish report offers lots of arguments for the important role of knowledge centres in the local community. It is obvious that the roles that the knowledge centres are permitted to play are partly decided by rules and regulations but mainly by how the local, regional and national politics understand, support and favours the organisation. The Irish report confirms this:

“The national policies need to consider the local circumstances, needs and specific issues and concerns relevant to rural communities: access to transport, access to facilities and resources, infrastructure, broadband and IT facilities. There needs to be local engagement, consultation and relevant information provided to local communities to develop localised and customised initiatives.”

Even if a knowledge centre is well functioning it can be hard to measure what impact it has, and this is still a question for research and development. This citation from a researcher (from the Icelandic report) shows what kind of contribution knowledge centres can make:

“Rural development policy in the Icelandic context revolves around economic growth and the increase of rural population. Projects that were launched have been aimed at those two goals. The knowledge society was supposed to stop out-migration, increase the population and create jobs for people with higher education. Anna Guðrún’s research showed that this has not (yet) happened. None the less it would not be fair to say that the knowledge society has not had any positive interaction with rural development in Iceland. It has been easier for the inhabitants to access higher education through distance learning methods and the general level of education has increased. It has also given higher educated people opportunities to work in research and innovation projects since variety within the labour market has increased. The knowledge society has had an interaction with social and
cultural sustainability, specifically on the quality of life and well-being of the rural people. With increasing higher educational standards in rural areas, more and more people have gained knowledge, and this is important. They also have developed local knowledge which can be just as important as scientific knowledge in a community-based approach, and both could be used to benefit rural communities. The knowledge society, along with universities, must work together in the spirit of epistemological pluralism by admitting that both local and scientific knowledge is equally valid and to organise projects and courses that combine scientific and local knowledge” (Edvardsdóttir, 2016, pp. 237-239).

**NEXT STEP: SKILLS NEEDED**

Next step in the project is to educate selected people to better contribute in the development of knowledge centres, working towards them functioning as meeting places, mediators and motors in the local societies.

To better understand the kind of skills needed for this, the question has been discussed at length in co-creation workshops in each country and the suggestions are many and quite diverse, due to the fact that the role of the knowledge centre is so widely interpreted by the different countries.

See SKILLS NEEDED in each country report

[Denmark](#) | [Iceland](#) | [Greece](#) | [Romania](#) | [Spain](#) | [Sweden](#)
Defining what a Knowledge Centre is has become a key question in this project, and in almost every country report doubts have been raised as to whether there are any Knowledge Centres in their own country. The reports present various forms of adult education, highlighting that the forms and organisational structures vary widely also within each country - which makes it difficult to give an overall picture and thus also difficult to make comparisons.

Since Knowledge Centre is not a statutory task in any of the countries, there is also no overall national legislation. What is regulated in most countries is the form of different adult education that is implemented. The same applies to research to a large extent. The research highlighted by the countries focuses in most cases on the results of various educational initiatives, rather than how adult learning and its organisation can influence surrounding society.

The project is based on ideas and theories about what a Knowledge Centre could be, primarily based on the concept of 3M - where the vision is that a Knowledge Centre can play the role of Mediator, Motor and Meeting Place. When the vision meets reality, we can see that in most countries, organisations delivering adult education have not utilised these clear roles and that it is therefore also difficult to define which roles these activities fulfil. The diversity in how the work is organised becomes even clearer as we look more closely at the good examples presented by the countries - which is wide ranging from local to national, public to private, net-based library for everyone to locally deep rooted needs, solely disadvantaged students to full range up to research and development.

The fact that the role of adult education differs between countries also becomes clear in what is reported about what role one thinks, or sees in practice, that Knowledge Centre can play. There are differences between the countries that focus more on individuals’ development and the regions / countries where the role of organiser and enabler of social development is also seen. Thus, in most cases, the role of mediator and meeting place is more obvious than the more general role of motor for social development. The most developed ideas about a centre’s contribution to regional social development are seen in the reports from Iceland and Sweden. The project will now continue the work to further develop adult education towards Knowledge Centres - to fulfil the potential of the role of mediator, meeting place and motor for regional social development.
References in this first part:

Glesbygdsverket (the Swedish rural agency) Knowledge Centre survey (2003).


In Denmark, knowledge centers are not part of the normal structure when it comes to helping people getting a job or an education. Instead the systems in Denmark rely heavily on digitalization as a way for the citizens to communicate with the various public services.

At the website Borger.dk Danish people can handle their transactions with most of the public services, in a wide range to topics like:

- Family and children
- School and education
- Health and disease
- Older
- Disabled
- Work, unemployment benefit, vacation
- Economy, dear, SU
- Pension and early retirement
- Housing and relocation
- Environment and energy
- Transport, traffic, travel
- Danes abroad
- Foreigners in Denmark
- Society and rights
- Police, judiciary, defense
- Culture and spare time
- Internet and security

Other civil services may require the citizen to attend a physical meeting with the municipality:

- Health insurance Health card (yellow health insurance certificate)
- European Health Insurance Card Health
- Passport and driving license Passport
- Driver’s license
- Grants for children Sibling allowance and free charge Babysitting Write your child up Report your child Siblings discount and free pick up
- Population Register (CPR)
- National Registry Moving Name and address protection, etc. residence Certificate
- ID card for young people
- Death report
- Housing and relocation and so on.

Here you can also receive help if you have difficulty using the digital entrance Borger.dk. For example, if you have a disability, a mental disorder, are socially vulnerable or homeless, have language difficulties, are highly dysfunctional or do not have the ability to operate a computer.

Other people with difficulties using borger.dk can get help at the Library, or by associations for the elderly.

In Denmark we have two separate systems to deal with either education or helping people get (back) into the labour market.

The legal framework of adult education in Denmark

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Primary education

The education system is divided into primary and secondary education, where the public and private schools take care of the primary education

Secondary Education - Academically orientated education.

The secondary education has 4 main academically oriented general upper secondary programmes:

- The 3-year Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination, Gymnasium (stx)
- The 3-year Higher Commercial Examination (hhx)
- The 3-year Higher Technical Examination (htx)
- The 2-year Higher Preparatory Examination (hf)

All four programmes prepare students for further studies while also developing the students’ personal and general competencies. The programmes aim to enhance the students’ independent and analytical skills as well as preparing them to become democratic and socially conscious citizens with a global outlook.

Secondary Education - Vocationally oriented education

Vocational education and training (VET)
Vocational education and training (VET) includes more than 100 main programmes leading to almost 300 different qualifications at level 3 to 5 in the Danish qualification framework. The duration varies from 2 to 5½ years, the most typical being 3½ to 4 years. VET programmes are combination “sandwich-type” programmes in which theoretical and practical education at a vocational college (approximately 1/3 of the time) alternates with practical training in an approved company or organisation (approximately 2/3 of the time). The dual training principle building on apprenticeship contracts in companies ensures that the trainees acquire theoretical, practical, general and personal skills which are in demand in the labour market.

The first basic course is structured around four broad vocational main subject areas which lead to the second basic course linked to the more than 100 different main programmes. The four main subject areas are:
– Care, health and pedagogy
– Administration, commerce and business service
– Food, agriculture and hospitality
– Technology, construction and transportation

If the Jobcentre deems that a person needs further education or training in order to get a job they can help provide the training opportunities. There are three scenarios for people in this situation:
• They have no formal education
• They have an education but can no longer find work based on that.
• They need to supplement their education with more levels.
If a person does not have a formal education there are more ways to go back and finish school. Some people coming to Denmark as refugees doesn't have an equivalent to our 9th grade school education. in FVU (preparatory adult education) they can supplement with the topics they need to do that. If more skills are needed, they can be enrolled in VUC (Adult Learning Centers) or take an AMU course (Vocational education).

If the person needs further language education to secure a job, they can study at a language center.

If the person has an existing education, but for some reason cannot work in the capacity any longer, they can apply for an adult training apprenticeship in another line of work. An adult apprenticeship can lead to certified education in a new sector and help people convert to another area of work. In rare and special cases, a new education can be given on special terms if you are handicapped or physically or emotionally worn down by your former work.

If you have a bachelor’s degree, you can return to school/university to get a masters or a diploma degree. It is always possible to study single topics at university as a self-paying student, as long as you don’t get two separate degrees on bachelor level. In Denmark you can only have one degree, even if that is a vocational bachelor’s degree like carpenter or police officer or nurse.

What is the current state of research about knowledge centres?

In recent years, citizens in Denmark and other European countries have witnessed how the education sector has become increasingly centralised.

In rural areas however citizens are either forced to commute long hours or leave their hometowns in order to study, and many of those who do so,
never return.
The answer in many cases have been to use IT technology to facilitate learning like MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) but the rate of completion for those enrolled is very low (10%). This may be due to the facts that there are no supporting structures, and social environment in place that we associate with traditional education formats such as academic guidance, study group activities, social activities and technical support.

At University College Zealand, they have made a report of the needs for a local learning center that can help students to get access to these kinds of structures, even though the actual teaching institutions are not in the local area.

A DESIGN-BASED INTRODUCTION TO LEARNING CENTRES:

In this report the researchers are discussing the needs for an effective study environment as a prerequisite for effective learning, and for getting decent completion rates for students that are not living in or around a large learning institution.

They define a learning centre as characterized by four principles:
a) A learning centre is a physical location, where citizens can meet other citizens who also wish to study. A learning centre does not comprise an online platform or an online education portal only.
b) A learning centre connects to education institutions through digital couplings. These couplings may take different forms, including synchronous telepresence or asynchronous learning platforms. The central premise is that the couplings connect the learning centre to one or more education institutions.
c) Teaching at a learning centre takes place through the digital couplings described above. That is, the teachers are not physically present at the learning centre, but various resource staff members may work there, such as mentors, career counselors and technical assistants.
d) A learning centre is rooted in the local community and owned by the municipality. This means that the municipality is in charge of running the learning centre, whereas the education institutions are responsible for offering courses by connecting digitally to the learning centre. The municipality defines the objectives and the design of the learning centre as well as the facilities available.

(A Design-based introduction to learning centres)
In the report they also bring up the 3M model to discuss the education format for a learning centre, but the format itself is not enough to secure effective learning. New learning designs have to be developed to secure that the dropout rates from traditional online learning courses can be reduced.

Synchronous and asynchronous technologies such as video conferencing and LMS’s (Learning management systems) are not enough in itself to secure success. And a learning design that mixes the different types of technology, and a Learning Centre format that provides a strong 3M based study environment is necessary to secure that the students complete their education, and that the dropout rate can be brought down.

Karsten Gynther (https://phabsalon.dk/ekspert/kgy/) is a researcher with a vocational education center PHA Absalon. He has spearheaded the research report we mentioned. And there is a new report coming up in February 2019.


He states that the research made in PHA Absalon is the only one focusing on Knowledge center in Denmark. And that the area is under prioritised both politically and economically.

The focus of the PHA Absalon research is to explain why things are moving so slowly in Denmark compared to neighbouring countries, but also to map out new ways of thinking the didactics models for education in Denmark.

The practical current state of knowledge centers in Denmark

Knowledge centers are not a common construction in the educational environment in Denmark. But some of the methods from Knowledge centers are used in other ways. More and more people are taking additional education levels after they have finished their main education. You can supplement your bachelor’s degree with an additional master’s degree or a
diploma degree at higher educational institutions. But a lot of these degrees are designed to be taken while still working full time. So, the methods of study seem more like the ones we associate with Knowledge centers than with a normal full-time study. The lectures are often in the form of seminars, where you stay at the teaching institution for a few days and then find a way to do the rest in your spare time, with the help of online forums, study groups, and Q&A sessions, either online or face to face.

This method of studying is common, but it demands a lot of the student, and you will need to have a strong motivation for keeping up the pace. In most cases the course is done with the cooperation of the workplace, and so time can be set aside to finish assignments. And the motivation may be in the form of advancement possibilities at work, or access to a higher pay grade.

Many municipalities have tried to find ways to overcome the problems of the young people leaving rural areas to study in the big cities. One way of doing this can be to gather the different educational offers in the same building complex. Lots of cities have campuses with different educations under the same roof, so even if the city does not have a University, young people still have a wide variety in the choice of education.

As for lifelong learning, there are a lot of private educational associations that are giving courses in everything you could possibly want, from language learning, to yoga and French cuisine. So there are a lot of possibilities to use some of these teaching methods in the didactic design of future Knowledge centers in Denmark. But as the research is showing, we still need to develop a culture where this way of acquiring knowledge is becoming the norm.

Do the learning methods enhance and prepare the adults for their transition to the labour market?

Lots of the learning methods that are used in the education system are also important tools to know when entering the workplace, like working in groups and using IT tools for researching. Also, in VET educations a pivotal part of the study is apprenticeships in companies. By trying out the theories in actual working situations in a company, the students gain valuable experience that can be used when they are seeking jobs.

The role of an adult education/Knowledge centre concerning its connection with the labour market

The role of the knowledge centre in relation to the students’ connections to the labour market is dependent of which of the 3 scenarios the student is part of.

- They have no formal education
- They have an education but can no longer find work based on that.
- They need to supplement their education with more levels.

A knowledge centre can have may play a vital role in helping students completing basic grade school training or providing the study facilities for a student that is training for a new line of work as an adult. But common for all of them is that there is a need for further cooperation between the educational institutions and the local companies. There might be a vital role for a knowledge center here.

What impact does knowledge centres have on the surrounding society?

MAIN CHALLENGES

The main challenge for knowledge centers in Denmark is that it is a new way of structuring the educational system. So, the mindset is not geared towards them just yet. But the same problems that can be found in other countries also exist in Denmark, where students leave town to go to the big cities to study.

Traditionally that has not been a big issue in Denmark, since the country is small and transportation is fast, and the IT infrastructure is very well developed. But lately the rural areas have begun feeling the consequences of this brain drain to the bigger cities, and so the motivation to see if this trend can be reversed or minimised is felt.

But since the culture in the educational system has not been changed toward online learning
with local study facilities, there needs to be a set of initiative to make this happen. At Aarhus University the CUDIM institution have been experimenting with creating an online community for students studying at the institution but staying in other parts of the country. This is a different approach that the knowledge centre since it lets students stay home but try to make them feel like a part of the institution by providing online activities for them. So, there are a lot of good initiatives on the way, but knowledge centre are sure to play a big role in the future for Danish education.

Conclusion
There are indeed a great need for knowledge Centers in Denmark. Large educational institution centered in the large cities are competing for students. So in order to get the relevant education young people need to move or make long commutes to school. There are not many alternatives for people who live in rural areas, and who are not willing or able to move or commute. Some people have children early and choose to start a worklife, or have to drop out of school due to disease or other challenges may have a hard time finding their way back to school due to lack of offers and opportunities in the rural areas.
Local Knowledge and study centers can provide a solution for those who find it hard to commute as well as those who are taking online courses but find it hard to find the motivation alone, without a good network and study environment. But the knowledge center are not yet a widespread feature of the danish educational environment. Slowly things are moving in the right direction. HUSC in Holbæk is a good example of a successful Knowledge center. But it takes political will and long term investments to continue that success. Research in the ares is also being conducted at the Vocational School Absalon, and they are providing the academic research that in the future will provide local politicians with the convincing arguments that they need to create local knowledge center in rural areas all over Denmark.
GOOD PRACTICE

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Nr 1 Holbæk
Name: HUSC in Holbæk
Country: Denmark
Promoted by: Holbæk Municipality
Website (if any): https://husc.holbaek.dk/

Target groups/actors involved in the project:
- Educational Institutions: Nursing school
- Experts in education: Cooperation with Professionshøjskolen Absalon and Center for Teaching & Learning, University College Zealand, Denmark
- Companies: Local companies have agreements to provide local apprenticeships to students.
- Students at secondary school or some further education (Nursing)
- Communities: Cooperation with the municipality of Holbæk.
- Low-skilled adults: Only if they are going to study.
- Level of implementation: Local

Background and needs for the development of the existing good practice
HUSC i Holbæk was created from the principles laid out in the research report. The idea was to have all of the 3M functions present and so far the Motor and the Meeting place are working with success, but the Mediator function has yet to establish the online contact between the educators that are in the remote teaching institutions and the local meeting place. This is an important piece of the puzzle if the knowledge center is to sustain its economic and didactical foundation.

Time frame needed to implement the good practice
It takes time to build a new structure for teaching locally, and it takes long term investments and a political will to form the local municipality to make it happen. There still need to be a shift in the culture of the education system. In other countries like Sweden, Norway, Scotland and Germany they are further ahead in the new ways of bringing together students and teachers and the physical place of teaching.
At HUSC they still only have a small number of local students and a few teachers.

Funding sources of the good practice:
- Public: Holbæk Municipality
- Private: companies in the area that are providing help and possibilities for apprenticeships.

TRANSFERABILITY OF THE BEST PRACTICE

What is the sustainability of the good practice?
HUSC is a municipality financed knowledge centre. So as long as they can sustain the political will and the economic structure behind it, HUSC should be able to have a stable foundation for years to come. The full potential of the centre will depend on whether or not the educational culture can be changed to the special needs that students at a knowledge centre have compared to the ones at regular teaching institutions. The cooperation with the nursing school will show if that potential can be implemented in the near future.

Could the good practice be transferred to other countries/regions?
Yes. The Idea for HUSC was taken from the swedish experiences with knowledge centres, so HUSC is in fact an adaptation of the swedish model to danish circumstances. As mentioned the normal educational culture in danish institutions will have to adapt to the new way of being a student, and the success of HUSC will be very closely linked to this, and to the new learning designs that will be developed to cope with this.

Nr 2 Sønderborg
Name:CIE
Country: Denmark - South of Jutland
Promoted by: The Companies; Danfoss and Linak
Website: https://www.sdu.dk/da/om_sdu/institutter_centre/centre+for+industrial+elektronics

Target groups/actors involved in the project:
- Educational Institutions
- Experts in education
- Social Enterprises
- Companies
- Unemployment people
- Communities

Level of implementation:
- Local
- Regional
- National
Background and needs for the development of the existing good practice
Sønderborg has a big need for engineers - so they took the case in their own hands, and have invested 175 mill. kroner to make an educational center. It will open 31st of May 2019. The goal is to keep the engineers in the local area, by giving them internships, knowledge about the firms in the local area and give them a job guarantee when they finish school.

The community welcomes this, and are now trying to make the possibilities to live in Sønderborg more attractive by making more cultural offers and better places to live as a student.

Time frame needed to implement the good practice
Actually we don’t know yet if it will be good practice, but we see the initiative as a responsible way to take care of the people working in the area, using money to give something back to the community and securing a future for the area.

Funding sources of the good practice:
• Public - The community takes care of the things around the student as living and social life.
• Private - Takes responsibility of educating the staff needed in the future, and making the area strong in one kind of business, which will also will effect the rest of the community with children, wives/husbands and so on.

TRANSFERABILITY OF THE BEST PRACTICE
We expect this solution to be easy to transfer into other areas both in and outside of Denmark. It depends on the partners’ ability to cooperate and will to find a solution.

If everything goes as planned with the project, it will be sustainable and a new way to think areas of the countries into specialised places.

It has to be a collaboration between the community, the state, existing schools in the area and then firms who wants to pay the cost of the project. So from discovering there is a difficulty in obtaining labour until there are a solution ready, it takes some years.
SKILLS NEEDED
Co-creation workshop to agree upon mentoring skills (Denmark)

DATE AND PLACE: 28 march 2019, Vonge
PARTICIPANTS: VIFIN Staff  Local stakeholders interested in participating in the mentor programme

The Co-creation workshop organised by VIFIN was held on March 28th, 2019 with 10 participants, adults (members of the community) and experts/stakeholders of adult education
The 3 main topics as proposed for the workshop, mediation, employment facilitation and social support, were in focus during the co-creation activity.
In the first part of the workshop the group discussed the impact and role of a knowledge center understood as a local network community in the towns og Vonge and Kollemorten near Vejle. The participants where local residents of Vonge and Kollemorten, and all actively involved in different associations and networking activities in their community.
The first part of the workshop focused on an introduction to the Know HUBs project and framing the identified needs and ideas of the local community into the project framework of the knowledge center concept.
A brainstorm session firstly identified different needs and wishes for activities in the local community. Then the needs and ideas were categorized into the 3 topics of mediation, employment facilitation and social support.

SOME OF THE TOPICS ARE HIGHLIGHTED HERE:
Mediation:
• Building a local community network which offers support on different needs such as how to get started with an education, with getting support from the municipality or in job search.
• A bank of help offers such as practical tasks (gardening, cleaning up, babysitting). By helping with smaller problems, they free resources to deal with more complex problems.
• Networking as a concept - people wanting to help people that they know.
• Employment facilitation:
• Providing resources and help adults with dyslexia
• Providing further education offers locally
• Local education guidance counselling - especially to young people who are in high risk of dropping out.
• Help with application writing (and job search)
• Use of social media in job seeking
• Training – body and mind – psychological support – working with barriers that prevent people to effectively “selling” themselves in the job market
• Cooperative ownership for small companies.
• Social support:
• Bank of helpers
• Childcare/babysitting
• Community dinners
• Social “friends” (for example visiting friends) and support groups (for example taking walks together), which can provide vulnerable people with the support and motivation they need to reach different goals.
• Cooperation between the local school and parent groups on providing extra support for vulnerable students (for example dyslexia).

Then participants, divided into working groups, have been invited to agree on the most important skills for mentors to work in the areas of MEDIATION, EMPLOYMENT FACILITATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT, and “Other Skills”. The results of the working groups are as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>MENTORING SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEDIATION</td>
<td>Listening skills  Coaching skills  Professional distancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>Understanding careers and employment  Advocacy skills  Problem-solving, trouble-shooting, and dealing with blockages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACILITATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL SUPPORT</td>
<td>Networking skills  Building Rapport  Action planning and goal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>Knowledge of the importance of physical training as a mean to gain greater confidence and wellbeing  Knowledge of local network, structures and available resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction – An explanation of the situation in Iceland

Knowledge and/or research centres and lifelong learning institutions are not categorized as the same type of organization in Iceland. Knowledge and/or research centres usually do not fall under the act of adult education but are nevertheless funded partly by the government. Many of them are operating in the rural areas of Iceland. These centres are all, in some ways, focusing on research and education but are regionally based, focusing on local circumstances. But because most of them are partly funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and have a contract with the Ministry regarding the operation of the centre, they do have to take the Ministry’s emphasis regarding education into account when creating an operation plan.

There is no legal framework regarding Knowledge centres in Iceland. In Parliamentary financial plan 2018-2022, chapter 21 on education at university level, research institutions at university level are included. Under this category the government/ministry funds eight regional research and knowledge centres. In the financial plan the main purpose of these centres is laid out. In broad spectrum, research at university level is intended to promote knowledge creation in various fields of study, as well as preserving and disseminating knowledge. The role of the centres is to promote knowledge activities and research in their local communities, and in many cases, they are in close collaboration with universities and research institutions. The centres do in some cases offer services to university students by providing them with facilities for distance education. The contracts with the Ministry regarding funding is the only official framework of the knowledge and/or research centres in Iceland.

Eleven lifelong learning institutions are operating around the country and some of them have offices in several places. To complicate this even further, two of the eight knowledge centres in Iceland also have the role as a lifelong learning institution. The lifelong learning institution then operates as a department within the Knowledge centre.

Lifelong learning institutions have in common their aim of offering academic, vocational and recreational courses and study programmes to people in the local community in collaboration with universities and regional parties of interest, such as municipalities, labour organizations and the business community. The institutions have two main focus groups; individuals who have not completed upper secondary level of education and immigrants. For example, lifelong learning institutions offer courses such as: Icelandic for foreigners, foreign languages for Icelandic speaking people, courses on general basic computer skills and also more advanced computer courses, occupational courses for health-care and social services employees, and employees in schools or kindergartens and education for adults with learning disabilities. Some institutions also provide; VPL (validation of prior learning) and career development, educational and vocational guidance and educational service for companies and public organizations. Those institutions do have a legal framework that they need to follow. This will be explained in the next chapter.

To fulfil the communities wishes, along with the contract of the Ministry of Education, Science and culture Nyheimar knowledge centre was established in 2013. Today the number of staff members in Nyheimar knowledge centre is three project managers along with the director of the knowledge centre. The centre operates as an umbrella organization for various institutions and agencies working in education, research, innovation and culture. The knowledge centres central role is to facilitate cooperation between the various sectors within and as a part of the Municipality of Hornafjordur. Another vital objective is to promote closer cooperation of individuals, businesses, organizations and public entities with a special emphasis on the integration of culture, education, innovation and research. The knowledge centres fundamental goal is to improve the quality of life of the people in rural areas. Nyheimar knowledge centre does not operate as a lifelong learning institution.

Which is the legal framework of adult education/knowledge centre?

Lifelong learning activities have a long history in Iceland and have for a long time been supported by the government. Due to fairly new Act on adult education, lifelong learning activities have evolved and changed through the last few years. Adult education has increased and service for university students has been rapidly growing and has become a permanent part of lifelong learning centres activities in rural areas. Also, in relation to these changes there have been mergers of
Describe the practical current state of your country

A couple of decades ago the Icelandic governments jumped on the knowledge creation wagon and made the development of the knowledge society in rural areas one of their goals in rural development, believing that increased research activities and an increased number of higher education students would create more jobs for higher educated people, stop out-migration and increase the rural population. This goal can be found in regional development plans from 1999-2011 (Edvardsdóttir, 2016).

The practical current state has also been explained in the introduction chapter of this report.

What are the objectives of an adult education/ knowledge center

Again, we would like to emphasise that there is a difference between knowledge centres and lifelong learning institutions (that offer adult education) in Iceland. This is explained in the introduction chapter of this report.

The objectives of adult education provided pursuant to Act 27/2010 are:

a. to provide those with limited schooling with increased opportunities for active participation in society;

b. to provide those in the labour market who have limited formal education with suitable education and training opportunities and facilitate their re-entry into the education system;

c. to enable people to increase their work-related skills and to take more responsibility in that respect;

d. to make available the resources and solutions needed to meet the demands of industry for a more knowledgeable and competent workforce;

e. to provide those with a reduced capacity for study or work with adult education adapted to their disparate situations and skill sets;

f. to promote recognition of the value of education pursued outside of the formal upper secondary and tertiary education systems;

g. to ensure that education and experience acquired outside of the formal education system are appreciated to an appropriate extent; and

h. to raise the general educational level in Iceland and strengthen the Icelandic education system.

(Adult Education, 2010)

Þórarinn Sólmundarson, Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, mentioned that it is difficult to answer questions regarding this topic. Mainly because of the fact that in Iceland there is a difference in the
definition between adult education / lifelong learning institutions on the one hand and knowledge centres on the other. Those types of organizations have different agenda and work in different ways. To complicate things even further we have organizations that are a mix of both adult education and knowledge centres (Sólmundarson, 2018). This has also been explained in the introductions chapter above.

In the financial program 2018-2022 eight research, education- and knowledge centres in the rural regions are mentioned. Among the priorities in the program that are related to the work of knowledge centres are:

1. Increased quality in the activities of universities, research institutions and knowledge centres
2. Strengthening the cooperation between universities and link them with other levels of education, industry and society.
3. Strengthen links between knowledge centres in rural areas and universities, research institutions, local business and society

Emphasis is placed on improved knowledge of the operations of the different centres, i.e. regarding projects, partnerships, professional relations, funding, planning and role. It is therefore proposed that the activities of the knowledge networks will be mapped and subsequently formulate a policy on their activities, in consultation with the institutes, universities and the local community. According to Pórarinn, this work has started, i.e. with data collection such as basic questions about their activities, operations and the funding. The purpose is to increase understanding on how to enhance their co-operation between themselves and co-operation with universities and other research institutions, making the most of their facilities and human resources (Sólmundarson, 2018) (Alþingi, 2017).

What is the current state of research about knowledge centres?

It is fair to say that there have been carried out very limited number of researches in Iceland regarding the influence and experience of the knowledge centres (Halldórsson, 2018).

In 2010 a study about the scope of the knowledge centres was performed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. That study looked in to the different emphasises of the knowledge centres in rural regions and describes the diversity of the centres, location and scope. According to one of our interviewee/experts this was the first summary on the activities of the knowledge centres (Sólmundarson, 2018).

In her dissertation for a PhD degree, Anna Guðrún Edvardsdóttir looked at the interaction of knowledge society and rural development in Iceland and Scotland. That project is one of the best researches about knowledge society in rural Iceland. The project was published in 2016 and aims to investigate the effect of selected historical events on rural communities; and to examine whether and how higher education and research activities encourage people to become active place-makers in their communities (Edvardsdóttir, 2016).

Currently one research is being executed about the status and role of knowledge centres in rural development. This study is funded by the Regional Development fund and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Edvardsdóttir, 2016).

What impact does knowledge centers have on the surrounding society?

Rural development policy in the Icelandic context revolves around economic growth and the increase of rural population. Projects that were launched have been aimed at those two goals. The knowledge society was supposed to stop out-migration, increase the population and create jobs for people with higher education. Anna Guðrún’s research showed that this has not (yet) happened. None the less it would not be fair to say that the knowledge society has not had any positive interaction with rural development in Iceland. It has been easier for the inhabitants to get higher education through distance learning methods and the general level of education has increased. It has also given higher educated people opportunities to work in research and innovation projects since variety within the labour market has increased. The knowledge society has had an interaction with social and cultural sustainability, specifically on the quality of life and well-being of the rural people. With increasing higher educational standards in rural areas, more and more people have gained knowledge, and this is important. They also have developed local knowledge which can be just as important as scientific knowledge in a community-based approach, and both could be used to benefit the rural communities. The knowledge society, along with universities, must work together in the spirit of epistemological pluralism by admitting that both local and scientific knowledge is equally valid and to organise projects and courses that combine scientific and local knowledge (Edvardsdóttir, 2016, pp. 237-239).

Both Pórarinn Sólmundarson, from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and Öli Halldórsson, from the Húsavík academic centre (HAC), are positive regarding the knowledge centres in the rural regions in Iceland. Pórarinn
mentions that the operations of the knowledge centres in Iceland have a major impact on their local communities, although it obviously varies. The centres are key players when it comes to the supply of adult education that is based on the Adult education law, providing students with learning and career counselling, creating collaborative opportunities with universities and research institutes on research, creating facilities and “knowledge based” community for graduate students, encouraging research on regional resources/uniqueness and society, provide university students with study facilities and facilities for exams. In general, the knowledge centres support the government’s emphasis on creating conditions for university education regardless of residence. Where the centres are most active, they are in good working relationship with the local communities, support progressive policy making, create increased equality with urban communities, and give regions the opportunity to become participants in a “knowledge society” (Sólmundarson, 2018). However, it is worth mentioning that in this answer, Þórarinn puts lifelong learning institutions and knowledge centres in the same category.

Óli Halldórsson talks on similar notes. It is his opinion that the knowledge centres have in general extremely high and positive local effects. The effects are primarily long-term and indirect, although there are certainly direct effects, such as in the form of valuable jobs and economic impacts of the business. Active community-based knowledge activities enhance education and increase, in the long-term, educational level of society, increases and shares knowledge that is useful for the labour market and encourages innovation and entrepreneurship. Fertile modern cities are based on universities, upper secondary schools, innovation and research. In the same way, knowledge-based activity is the prerequisite for competitive and modern communities in rural areas (Halldórsson, 2018). Húsavík Academic center, where Óli is the director, is one of the two knowledge centres in Iceland that has a lifelong learning department within the knowledge centre.

What are the learning methods used in an adult education/knowledge centre?

Those knowledge centres that have a lifelong learning department, are based on a long tradition in adult education in Iceland. In those institutions learning- and career counsellors work closely with the main industry of the community in question. They also offer special shorter and longer courses related to the industry. Real-time assessment of the labour market is also an increasing factor in the service of lifelong learning institutions in rural areas. Last but not least, facilities for university and adult education students is a key component of the services of the institutions. Lifelong learning institutions and/or knowledge centres are operated in almost all rural areas in Iceland. The institutions/centres form an infrastructure for study services in the communities, most of which are open 24 hours a day for the students, especially during exam seasons (Halldórsson, 2018).

Do the learning methods enhance and prepare the adults for their transition to the labour market?

In Óli Halldórsson opinion that is the case. Lifelong learning institutions are specialized in study programs directly related to the labour market. The boards of most lifelong learning institutions in Iceland include representatives from the labour market (Halldórsson, 2018).

The role of an adult education/knowledge centre concerning its connection with the labour market

In Þórarins Sólmundarson’s opinion adult education is very important, that is to say for those individuals who have for some reason paused their education to work in the labour market. They can return to their studies without moving away from the rural regions. In this context, consideration should be given to the education level of the region, i.e how large a population has only completed primary school (Sólmundarson, 2018).

To be able to offer lifelong learning programmes for the labour market is important for many lifelong learning institutions. Many institutions offer short/long courses for the labour market, which are based on the labour market’s needs. To have such opportunities in the communities is important; people don’t have to go to the capital for a course, they can study at home (Edvardsdóttir, 2019).

Educational methods of knowledge centres and connection with the labour market

Once again, we would like to mention that only two knowledge centres in Iceland have a department that operate as a lifelong learning institution. Other than that, lifelong learning institutions are a different type of organizations, with different legal framework than knowledge centres. This has been explained above.
The main challenges for knowledge centres in your country

Although research activities in rural areas have increased and some jobs for higher educated people have been created, fewer students attend higher education studies through distant learning, the out-migration has not stopped, and population growth has not happened (Edvardsdóttir, 2016, p. 152). In the year 2009 the number of online students in higher education in the rural areas of Iceland reached its peak but since then the number has decreased. This indicates that the market for students who want to use the on-line method is saturated. Those who offer distant learning at a higher education level in Iceland must ask themselves why that is. Is it because there are no more students who want to study on-line, is it because of the limited number of courses offered on-line or is it because on-line courses do not appeal to students? If universities and lifelong learning institutions look at themselves as active players in the rural development, they must start listening to the local inhabitants and the discourse about higher education studies (Edvardsdóttir, 2016, pp. 139-140).

Over the years several projects aimed at increasing the population in rural communities have been launched, yet many regions in Iceland face continued migration out of the area, especially young people and women. Many projects have emphasised on strengthening the economy and have given little or no attention to environmental, social or cultural aspects which influence sustainability (Edvardsdóttir, 2016, p. 245).

The main challenges are to be acknowledge as partners in the knowledge society in the country; meaning that universities and research institutions should look more to the centres and/or institutions and their capabilities in providing education and research which are based on local knowledge (Edvardsdóttir, 2019).

It is interesting to see the difference in answers between the specialists who were interested. Þórarinn from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture expressed his concerns regarding the adult learning and knowledge centres. He feels it is important that the operation of the centres should be more in line with the needs of the industry and society. Nevertheless, he pointed out that it is interesting to see that more focus has been brought to special educational projects in cooperation between the centres and some companies in the rural area.

Öli Halldórsson from the Húsavík academic centre feels that the challenges lie more in the diversity of the centres. The network between the centres is very complicated and not transparent at all, and worst of all the centres are not operated in the same way. He mentions a few examples; Adult learning institutions, Nature research centres, University centres, Research centres and Business development centres. All these centres/institutions have widespread networks all around Iceland, but they do not operate in the same way and in some cases do not “talk” together (Halldórsson, 2018).

What improvements should be done in order to offer services that meet the needs of the target group

In her research, Anna Guðrún suggests that the vision and ultimate goal should, in her opinion, be that in Iceland would be one university operating as an umbrella organisation, but all the seven Icelandic universities, the research institutions, and knowledge centres around Iceland would form a partnership on an equal basis. That would be a major structural change, mostly legally, but perspectives and discourse must also change. Knowledge society partnerships in Iceland with rural communities, could be the first step. This partnership and the communities would work together in both strengthening the status of research activities and increasing the courses that can be offered through distant learning. By diversifying what is available, the knowledge society would be both provider of knowledge and a learner of the knowledge the place possesses, increasing opportunities for diversification (Edvardsdóttir, 2016, p. 252). To meet these new demands for knowledge and skills, the knowledge society and universities must adopt a place-based pedagogy which promotes transformative learning and develops curriculum and research projects that are more suited to encouraging collaboration validation of community-oriented project work. By doing that, society, culture and environment work together to support the creation of sustainable and resilient communities (Edvardsdóttir, 2016, p. 253).

In his answer to this question, Öli Halldórsson emphasizes his earlier remarks about the different types of knowledge centres in Iceland. Therefore, the market group varies between centres/institutions. Most centres/institutions focus on their local community but some focus on academic researches and therefore their market group is more on a national, or even on international level. To clarify this, Öli feels it is necessary to define the market group of each “layer” or network of the centres/institutions. Last but not least Öli feels that it is extremely important to ensure funding for the knowledge centres in a different way. Many knowledge
centres can only operate with project-based funds but many of those types of funds do not take fundamental / core operations into consideration, i.e. housing, salary etc. Öli feels that the government needs to rethink how subsidy is provided for these institutions and stop thinking on a yearly basis and secure funds for the centres for at least three years at a time (Halldórsson, 2018).

With Öli’s latest comments in mind it is interesting to look into Þórarins answers to this question. As mentioned earlier, he is a Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The ministry is aware of the demands of the knowledge society and are planning a change in the fund application system for the centres. The plan is to have these new regulations ready by the end of 2019.

According to Þórður, the new regulations will focus on non-discrimination, objectivity, transparency and competition. It is also stated that if the intention of the Minister is to grant funding it is necessary to publicly advertise such grants. According to the government’s regulations of on Grants, each Minister shall make written allocation rules and publish on the Ministry’s website. Subsequent work will begin on the preparation of grants with reference to the allocation rules where discussions of the terms and conditions that applicants must satisfy are noted. This type of grant system gives the centres the opportunity to define their projects, focus and services. It is important that the centres make good use of this opportunity and define their goals, priorities and tasks that are based on the needs of adult education, industry and society, including developmental options, but also the needs of the university level. Contracts based on grants can last up to 5 years, which is important for the operation of the knowledge centres in Iceland (Sólmundarson, 2018).

**Conclusions**

The situation in Iceland is somewhat complicated. Mostly because of unclear definitions of the concepts. This is confusing, especially for the public and can therefore affect their willingness in seek assistance from the lifelong learning institutions and/or knowledge centres.

This unclear definition also affects international cooperation for the institutions and/or knowledge centres, as understanding of projects, operations and functions of the centres are understood in different ways.

With that being said, there is also many good things happening among the knowledge centres in Iceland. Most centres are working on many different projects, both regional, national and international, and most centres have even almost too much work. The funding of the centres does not allow them to hire more staff/ researcher but the staff already working there could almost work 24/7 and not even then would they be finished with all of the projects. This is in some ways a luxury problem for many centres.
GOOD PRACTICE

Name: Hornafjörður municipality social services / project manager of multicultural affairs
Country: Iceland
Promoted by: Hornafjörður municipality

Target groups/actors involved in the project:
• Educational Institutions
• Experts in education
• Unemployment people
• Disadvantaged learners
• Refugees/migrants
• Communities

Level of implementation:
• Local

BACKGROUND AND NEEDS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE

The number of inhabitants of foreign origin in Iceland has increased tremendously over the past years. The tourism industry is growing fast and the need for workforce is at an all-time high, therefore foreigners are moving to Iceland for work. It is very important that this growing group will be able to adjust and participate in the local community. But they tend to become isolated and this does not only apply for newcomers. There are also many immigrants that have been living in Iceland for a long time that have not been integrating with the community. This is very much the case in Hornafjörður with foreign inhabitants almost 20% of the population of Hornafjörður. So, the municipality decided to hire a project manager in multicultural matters in the summer of 2018. Since then the project manager has worked mainly with people of foreign origin who live in Hornafjörður. There has been a substantial change in the lives of those people since she started to work here. The project manager has managed to get the Red Cross, library, elementary school, adult education institution and the local companies involved in her work which already has shown great success, with emphasis on both language barriers and social participation. An example of successful actions is a scheduled homework assistance once a week at the municipality’s library for the elementary school students, primarily for kids of foreign origin.

TIME FRAME NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THE GOOD PRACTICE

As mentioned earlier the project manager only started this work in the summer of 2018 and already her work has made a huge influence in the life of foreigners in the municipality and will continue to do so while there is a need for this kind of work.

FUNDING SOURCES OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:
Public

KIND OF IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY POTENTIAL OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

The project manager’s work is funded by the municipality. Financially the project is therefore secure. Project wise her work is very important as there are many foreigners that live in Höfn, both the refugees, and people that move to Höfn due to their work, i.e. in the tourism industry and work related to fisheries. Those two are the main industries in Höfn. This is an ongoing work since turnover of staff in Hornafjörður is high, new people of foreign origin move in and out very rapidly, and this project could be considered as a part of trying to counteract this rapid moving of people, by them feeling more a part of the community and therefore perhaps wanting to stay longer.

COULD THE GOOD PRACTICE BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER COUNTRIES/REGIONS?

Other municipalities in Iceland could in a fairly simple manner transfer this to their regions with similar work by creating a position that works systematically on multicultural issues.

SKILLS NEEDED
LOCAL NEEDS AND HOW TO DEVELOP 3M

Instead of having the 3 main themes as proposed for the co-creation, mediation, employment facilitation and social support, Nyheimar in consultation with leaders of IO1 set the focus on the 3M: Meeting point, mediator and motor. Also, instead of deciding on the main needs and demands of our local community in advance, part of Nyheimar co-creation was to come to a common conclusion with participants on that part. There for the co-creation was twofolded:

1. Participants identified the main local needs of the community that they believe the knowledge center could in some way address.
2. Participants in group work identified important skills needed to become meeting point, mediator and motor for the purpose of becoming more qualified to meet those identified needs.

The Co-creation took place at February 19th with 11 participants coming from different sectors of the community, such as: educational, social, health,
The groups first task was to discuss the impact and role of the knowledge centre on the society. The conclusion in this part was that everyone believe that Nýheimar play an important role in the community. That Nýheimar are and should be a platform or place where people can come and seek knowledge, entertainment and companionship. They also believe Nýheimar should play a main role when it comes to empowerment of all individuals and groups of the society.

For the next part of the co-creation participants were asked to think about Nýheimar and what their role should be in context of the needs of the community. I.e. what community needs are the most pressing to foster, but keeping in mind Nýheimar values: research, innovation, education and culture. Participants were given three post-it stickers to write three different needs they believe Nýheimar could nurture. In collaboration with participants the three most commonly written needs were set as the focus of the next phase of the work. The three most pressing needs according to our participants are:

- empowerment of all inhabitants and groups of society
- innovation
- support and intigration of foreign residents

Once the participants had agreed on the three most pressing needs of the community, they were divided into three groups and asked to discuss what skills staff members of knowledge centres need to be able to become the 3M in relation to each need, each group was given a form for this work (see below).

After reviewing the skills that participants considered necessary to become a motor, mediator or meeting place for each need, it was clear that often the same skills are mentioned for different needs. We therefore decided to compile all mentioned skills for each M and group related skills and combined them under a broader concept. We therefore set forth 3 main skills needed for each M factor, as seen below skills also tend to overlap between the 3M.

- Motor- Research skills, leadership skills and networking skills
- Mediator- Management and organizational skills, networking skills and marketing and media skills
- Meeting place- Marketing and media skills, adaptability and public speaking/communicational skills.

We find the outcome of the co-creation interesting, both discussion about main needs of the community, also the consensus among the groups regarding key skills needed. It is also interesting how the skills to become motor, mediator or meeting place are similar regardless of need being discussed. We believe that this suggests that if the Knowledge Centres promote their activities and staff to operate as 3M, the centres will become more capable to address and meet the needs of their different communities. This should give more value to the projects work since 3M toolkit should be transferable to different centres, in different communities with different needs.

REFERENCES
Describe the practical current state of your country

The population of Ireland is recorded as 4,761,8651 according the Census Data from 2016. The population has increased steadily year upon year, in 1960 there was less than 3,000,000 people in Ireland. However, population growth is not evenly distributed throughout the country, the main cities and surrounding regions are experiencing the largest growth rates. Currently the population per region are; Leinster which includes Dublin has 55%, Munster which includes Cork city has 27%, Connaught including Limerick city 11% with Ulster has 6%. There is a definite trend towards urbanisation with cities (particularly Dublin) acting as major attractors for people. This trend has resulted in loss of population in rural areas with a familiar pattern of decline in rural economic activity and fall in social, cultural and sporting participation in effected areas. In urban areas the trend is putting pressure on the supply of affordable accommodation and facilities such as schools, medical, transport and other infrastructure. This trend is a major challenge that needs to be considered within the long-term sustainable development of the country.

Ireland is a small open economy on the outer perimeter of Europe. There is no direct land connected trading routes to Europe, instead Ireland is reliant on air and sea transport. The lack of a land connection adds to the costs of both exports and imports. While this additional cost places a burden on trade it has been cushioned by membership of the European Union and agreements and policies regarding the single market, freedom of movement and mobility policies and initiatives. Ireland experienced a significant economic crash in 2008 because of banking failure. The country required assistance and supports from the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This engagement resulted in a period of austerity which included cuts to wages, services and infrastructure. The measures included a long-term commitment to debt repayment. However, in terms of economic growth indicator Gross Domestic Product (GDP) it could be argued that the measures had a positive effect, in 2009 GDP was -3.4% compared to 2019 it is 4.1% which is 2% more than the European average.

Another important economic indicator is the unemployment rate, during the height of the economic recession unemployment rate2 in Ireland reached 16% in 2012, this has reduced to 5.7 in January 2019. While Ireland as an economy shows positive signs of growth, this cannot be said to equally apply to all sectors of society, many are still suffering from the impacts of the cuts imposed to social welfare, health, education and infrastructure during the austerity measures. It will take considerable political will to undo the damage caused. This is further challenged by the uncertainty caused by Brexit and the potential adverse impact an unorderly withdrawal by the United Kingdom will have on Ireland and Europe. Ireland as a small open economy is again exposed to the economic and political dynamics of larger economies.

Which is the legal framework of an adult education/knowledge center

The government (and elected representatives) develop and present the terms of legalisation (called Heads of Bills) to the Irish houses of parliament (Dail Eireann and the Sinéad Eireann) for debate, amendments and votes. Once a piece of legislation has successfully completed all stages the President of Ireland signs the Bill into law as an Act. Some of the key education and training Acts relevant to adult education are:

- Further Education and Training Act 2013
- Education and Training Boards Act 2013
- Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999
- Education Act 1998
- Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992
- Regional Institutes of Technology Act 1992

The government directs the public funded education and training system by means of annual budget allocation to the sectors and the development of national policies and strategic plans. During the austerity years (2008-2018) public funding to education and training was cut by up to 35%. The total public funded expenditure for the education sectors in the term 2016-2017 was 8.23 billion euro (nearly 16% of all government expenditure). The budget

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The government’s education and training policies and strategies are implemented by the Department of Education and Skill (DES) who has responsibility to: administer and account for funds to the system, coordinate and prioritise national objectives, provide direction and oversight to the system, engage with other government departments (including for example; enterprise and employment, social welfare) national agencies. The DES also engages with the European Commission and its structures with a view to achieving key indicators and objectives. The following lists key policy and strategy initiatives developed by successive governments and the DES which are relevant to adult education and training are:

1) White Paper, Adult Education (2000), the top priorities were;
- to allocate priority resources to addressing adult literacy needs;
- to systematically increase opportunities for adult learners within the system, prioritising the needs of those with less than upper secondary

2) Further Education and Training Strategy (2016), the three key priorities of this strategy are;
- Address the unemployment challenge and provide targeted skills programmes that support job seekers to reskill and upskill for areas where sustainable employment opportunities are emerging.
- Modernise and expand the apprenticeship system.
- Implement the new structures for FET to deliver higher quality flexible and responsive programmes.

3) National Skills Strategy (2016), the key objectives are stated as:
- Education and training providers will place a stronger focus on providing skills development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy.
- Employers will participate actively in the development of skills and make effective use of skills in their organisations to improve productivity and competitiveness.
- The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of education will be continually enhanced and evaluated.
- People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning.
- There will be a specific focus on active inclusion to support participation in education and training and the labour market.
- We will support an increase in the supply of skills to the labour market.

In terms of adult education in Ireland the education and training structure with responsibility for implementing adult education polices within the formal education system are:
- the sixteen Education and Training Boards who offer programmes from levels 1 to 6 of

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3 See https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/
4 See https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en
the National Framework of Qualifications (European Qualifications Framework Levels 1-4)

- the 14 Institutes of Technology\(^5\) who deliver programmes from level 6 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualification (EQF levels 5-8) provide programmes and supports for disadvantaged, low skilled adults and those seeking upskilling in the regions.

- the 7 universities and specialized colleges (EQF 5-8) also over some courses for adults and disadvantaged (those over 23 years of age).

There are also other organisations who receive public funding to offer courses for adults, these courses can be formally accredited with a qualification, although many are not accredited and can be considered as informal and non-formal education and training courses some examples of providers are; Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Aontas, Collette. There are also a limited number of self-financed private providers.

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is central to all the above education and training policies and strategies. The ten-level framework provides awards from post primary, undergraduate and postgraduate. The framework provided a structure and mechanism to make awards of; major, minor, special purpose and specific purpose. It included a methodology based on learning outcomes, credits and quality assurance to process and validate awards. The framework provides transparency of awards, provides recognition of learning and provides for progression pathways. It also provides recognition of awards within European and internationally, which enables the mobility of students and workers.

What are the objectives of an adult education/ knowledge center?

Unlike some Nordic countries Ireland has no defined ‘Knowledge centres’, however, there are centres and initiatives which cater for adult education and training. As from 2013 and the restructuring of the 33 Vocational Education Committees\(^6\) and Fas\(^7\) the remit for adult education moved to the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). ETBs have responsibility to organise on a regional bases, the development and delivery of both; national curriculum post-primary courses and training courses relevant to work. The ETBs manage schools and training centres within the fields of vocational education and training (VET), further education and training (FET). ETBs also manage Training Centres which deliver Phase 2 of the National Standards Based Apprenticeship\(^8\) and other work-related training courses based on the needs of industry and business. In addition, ETBs provide for special education interventions such as; Youtheach\(^9\) which provides education services to early school leavers between the age of 16 and 18 years of age, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme\(^10\) (VTOS) which offers funding to those at least 21 years of age and who are on Job Seeker Allowance (unemployed) to engaged in ETB education and training programmes. Adults may apply to attend courses offered in various ETB run schools, colleges and centres such as:

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5 In January 2019 three institutes of technology merged to become the Technological University of Dublin
6 See https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Bodies-and-Committees/Vocational-Education-Committees-VECs.html
7 See https://www.fas.ie/
8 See http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/about/Pages/About.aspx
9 See http://www.youthreach.ie/
10 See http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Vocational-Training-Opportunities-Scheme.aspx
11 See https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Bodies-and-Committees/Vocational-Education-Committees-VECs.html
12 See http://www.fas.ie/
13 See http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/about/Pages/About.aspx
14 See http://www.youthreach.ie/
Scheme\(^\text{15}\) (VTOS) which offers funding to those at least 21 years of age and who are on Job Seeker Allowance (unemployed) to engage in ETB education and training programmes. Adults may apply to attend courses offered in various ETB run school, colleges and centres such as:

- **Post Leaving Certificate Colleges (PLCs)** can deliver national curriculum such as the Leaving Certificate. The programmes are usually of one academic year duration. They also develop other programmes which can focus on subjects which are relevant to; self-development, progression routes to higher education or skills for the world of work.

- **Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)\(^\text{16}\)** which provides funding to those at least 21 years of age and who are on Job Seeker Allowance (unemployed) to engage in ETB education and training course, without effecting the persons social welfare payment.

- **Back to Education and Training Initiative\(^\text{17}\) (BETI)** provides structured funding to enable those who would are over 16 years of age and who left school early (better completing the Leaving certificate) to attend education and training courses both short courses and full programmes at post primary and tertiary education levels.

- **Skills for Work\(^\text{18}\)** providers information, advice and opportunities for young adults to engaged in reskilling or upskilling courses with a view to enhance employment and career opportunities.

- Within the ETB’s specialised programmes are also developed to cater for specific groups and communities for examples; Travelers, Refugees, new communities, women’s groups, community development groups, pensioners, special needs group etc.

The underline principle for ETBs is to provide meaningful education and training that is relevant to the person (the learner), the community, society, career routes, work skills and the economy. ETBs promote Lifelong Learning (LLL) initiatives and facilitate engagement of youths and adults in formal, informal and nonformal education and training at a regional level.

**What is the current state of research about adult/knowledge centers?**

The European Commission Education and Training 2020 Strategy identified the need for EU member states to increase the participation rate of adults in education training to remain relevant to the skills needs of the world of work. Successful reports have noted the challenges that industrial 4.0 will posed for low skilled and unskilled workers as robotization, digitization and automatization replace jobs. The OECD have produced a Dashboard Adult Learning which explores countries readiness to priorities adult learning within the new challenges of the world of work. The Dashboard uses seven indicators to measures the ‘future-readiness of countries’ adult learning systems in seven dimensions: i) urgency, ii) coverage, iii) inclusiveness, iv) flexibility and guidance, v) alignment with skill needs, vi) perceived training impact, and vii) financing (scores for Ireland can be obtained [foot note\(^\text{19}\]). CEDEFOP have produced a Skills Panorama which provides a snapshot of data related to specific countries (Ireland scores as [be seen at foot note\(^\text{20}\)). Within Ireland the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs\(^\text{21}\) (EGFSN) undertake regular research into work and skills demands and the education and training requirements that need to be considered.

**What impact does adults/knowledge centers have on the surrounding society?**

Adult centres contribute to the development of capacity in local communities in terms of both social capital and human capital. They can act as hubs to stimulate local community development and economic activity by means of education and training courses. Adult education centres can assist in supporting disadvantaged communities to engage and participate in education and training at different levels. Adult education centres contribute towards the development of social inclusion by means of participation in courses and activities. In addition, adult education centres can provide upskilling opportunities in the regions to support the needs of local business and enhance employment opportunities.

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15 See [http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Vocational-Training-Opportunities-Scheme.aspx](http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Vocational-Training-Opportunities-Scheme.aspx)
16 See [http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Vocational-Training-Opportunities-Scheme.aspx](http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Vocational-Training-Opportunities-Scheme.aspx)
18 See [http://skillsforwork.ie/](http://skillsforwork.ie/)
21 [http://www.skillsireland.ie/](http://www.skillsireland.ie/)
What are the learning methods used in an adult education/knowledge center?

All education and training providers who offer programmes which lead to an award on the National Qualifications Framework must have their programmes validated by the national authority Quality Qualification Ireland. Provider must have the appropriate quality assurance procedures and processes in place and incorporate the precise learning outcomes relevant to the award type and level. In addition, provider must clearly indicate the access requirement to enter the programmes, the progression option to other programmes and the assessment criteria for the programme. In addition, programmes must include assessment for advance entry and credit accumulation. Also, there needs to be a statement on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) options.

Centres can utilise numerous approaches to promoting and encouraging individuals to engage in the learning process these can be:

- formal learning approach which has the objective of teaching the national curriculum, an established course curriculum which can lead to a recognised qualification and award type.
- non-formal approaches whereby the centre encourages the participant to in in projects and tasks which do not have a direct link to a recognised award. However, this approach can contribute to elements of an award or learning outcome.
- informal learning, the centre encourages the individual to reflect and consider their experience in the community, work or sports and to identify achievements and gaps. This approach facilitates both self-directed learning and the development of portfolio that can be used for assessment for an award through the Recognition of Prior learning process.

FACE TO FACE

Adult education and training centres use learning approach such as: Structure learning session relating to national curriculum or specific awards and learning outcomes. There is also less formal approach which use small group work, discussion sessions, thematic workshop and round table debates. In most cases teaching and learning occurs in a face-to-face classroom setting.

PROJECT WORK

Depending on the capacity of the participants and their willingness to engage centres can use project work approaches which require the group to work together on a common them and develop insights and understanding. This type of approach consists of some face-to-face teaching and then facilitated learning process.

TEAM WORK (PEER LEARNING)

In some cases, teachers may use team work scenarios to encourage group interaction and stimulate peer learning within the group. This type of approach is still in development.

INFORMATION SESSIONS

Centres can also provide information and raise awareness about issues and topic (local and national) by using approaches such as; seminars, expert talks, conferences and events.

ELECTRONIC

Centres can also use technology to engage in teaching or consultation with individuals by means of online learning processes, blended learning options and audio and video productions.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Centres can over training in practical skills to individual with a view to preparing for work. In additional, with the cooperation of employers centres can offer structured workplace opportunities.

Do the learning methods enhance and prepare the adults for their transition to the labour market?

In some cases, specific short training courses are organised to assist a learner in preparation to enter the labour market, areas such as; communications, interpersonal skills, interview skills and team work are covered in these courses.

Other courses provide a person with the certification required to work in a sector for example Health and Safety Pass for construction workers. Some programmes also run short work placements to give learners an understanding of work tasks and work environments and gain relevant work experience.

It is accepted that transferable skills including, team work, communications, leadership, problem solving, and interpersonal skills are required for the new world of work. Also, employers are looking for workers to have skills to act autonomously, creativity and entrepreneurial.

Through the NFQ individuals/workers who have not obtained a qualification may seek their prior knowledge skills and competencies assessment through an RPL process. Through the production of a portfolio of work individual/workers can seek their work assessed against a specific standard, award and level. If the assessment is successful they may be provided with; entry to a
programme, advanced entry to a programme, a partial award for a programme or a full award.

THE ROLE OF AN ADULT EDUCATION/KNOWLEDGE CENTER CONCERNING ITS CONNECTION WITH THE LABOUR MARKET.
The adult education centres have access to data from local authorities, skills fora, Department of Education and Skills and local employment services. The centres can engage with local communities and employers with a view to exploring needs and identifying areas for future education and training courses. In some cases representatives of the adult centre are members of local innovation, skills or development boards. Training centres on the other hand have direct engagement as a norm with local businesses and employers. They seek to develop relevant short courses that meet the needs of local business and industry and skills of participants.

What tools are needed to improve the capacity of knowledge/adult education centres to serve the interests of rural and regional communities?
It is an issue of funding and resources to enable access and participation. The local needs must be considered and not an imposition of national and urban policy initiatives (not a one size fits all approach). The national policies need to consider the local circumstances, needs and specific issues and concerns relevant to rural communities: access to transport, access to facilities and resources, infrastructure, broadband and IT facilities. There needs to be local engagement, consultation and relevant information provided to local communities to develop localised and customized initiatives. There is a need to have courses in capacity building initiatives such as knowledge of interpersonal skills, effective communications and group dynamics to enhance the capacity to establish and maintain relationships and networks with rural communities and employers.

How can local knowledge/adult education centres in rural regions be more effective in engagement with disadvantaged adult learners and promote LLL strategies?
Need to start from the position that people may not come, or perhaps cannot come, to a centre. Therefore, outreach initiatives need to be prioritised. There needs to be a local situational analysis done to map out the population and demographics of the region. Could engage in a multi-agency approach to explore the areas of disadvantage. The Central Statistics Office has a substantial amount of statistical data that can be investigated. Develop cluttered consultations and round table discussions with young adults in the area. There needs to be an analysis and then supports developed for:
- Not in Employment, Training or School (NESTS)
- Early school leavers
- Young offenders
- Pensioners
- Persons with disabilities
- Carers in the home
- Adults with no transport links.

The capacity building work can include developing links with support networks and associations which already exist within communities such as farming groups, women’s groups, social groups, carers’ groups, sporting groups. Also make connections with local schools and parents to ascertain the needs and possible areas for development of relevant courses. World Café style workshops are engendering creative ways to open discussions about what people want and need.

How best can knowledge/adult education centres increase the transfer of knowledge and skills into local rural enterprises and the social economy?
The Chambers of Commerce, Local Authority, County Councils have industry engagement staff/persons who provide information to local business. Need also to have strategic approach to meet with business and provide information. A dual approach of providing information and exploring the needs of the business can be developed.
Opportunities for awareness raising and dialogue between knowledge/adult education centres and business need to be created and fostered e.g. open days, participation in local and national industry events, breakfast briefings, membership of business group locally e.g. area business network. The centres need to establish themselves as a credible and integral part of local enterprise/social economy.
The provision of facilities and equipment and technologies to enable exploration of ideas. Develop connections with employers with a view to creating advice options, mentoring support and work placements.
How can knowledge/adult centres better contribute to the development of an entrepreneurial cultural in rural communities, or regions?

Develop courses to support adults to explore innovation and new technology. Start-up centres to explore new business idea. Consider what is the most sustainable business option relevant to the region. Need to carry out a need’s analysis in consultation with the specific group/communities, develop an operational plan from the report. Seek to gain support and resources to implementation plans. There may also be a need to carry out feasibility studies to test whether an initiative is workable and sustainable.

What steps can an adult/knowledge centre take to stimulate equity and equality in rural communities and regions?

The centre needs to explore the demographics of the region including gender, race, ethnicity, age and living standards index. From the data different types of possible interventions can be considered. For example, using focus groups and surveys to find out the specific needs of identified groups (women in the home, youths, older people, disabled people) and then developing engagement projects to support and encourage the group to participate in activities.

The initiative could include subjects for: the individual; wellbeing, personal development, learning place, career advice, entrepreneurial skills for business start-ups a group; team building, team work, community development, support groups, project work, community arts or investigations, joint enterprise start-ups.

Participants could be encouraged to share or tell their stories by means of visual, audio, video or images and then display the work in an appropriate forum. VIRTAL tools can be used to create an online platform where stories and discussions are promoted.

With assistance from employers the individual could be provided with mentoring or work placement opportunities to get experience of work activities and tasks.

Need to identify the barriers stopping participating and develop options that support engagement and participation

The centres need to be flexible in their approach to course delivery, and incorporate strategies to combat some factors that may limit access e.g. transport, caring responsibilities, demands of shift and seasonal working.

What are the main problems which an adult educator face with disadvantages learners?

Aside from the obvious problems of lack of funding and resourcing, educators face challenges such as;

• Lack of meaningful engagement by the participants
• How to get information to people and then encourage participants
• Meeting the people in their own setting with a view to consultation
• Obtaining the trust of individuals
• Getting the long-term commitment from individuals
• The individual may have a complex social, emotional or psychological issue
• Providing a safe and access space/place for the individual to meeting and engage.
• Educators need specific training to be able to cater with the specific needs of disadvantaged learners who may have issues and experience from relationship, family, emotional and psychological issues. Disadvantaged adults may not have the time, resources or supports to engaged in courses and support services.
• To encourage people’s own motivations to return to education or to engage in business.

The main challenges for adult/ knowledge centers in your country

After nearly 10 years of cuts during the austerity period adult centres are suffering from the cutbacks, particularly with poorly maintained facilities and equipment, lack of upgrading and modernizing equipment. Out dated resources and equipment is making it difficult to provide learners with the essential state-of-the-art equipment required to prepare them for business and industry.

Access to facilities in rural areas is very limited and transport routes to regional hubs are not adequate. There is a need in rural areas for centres to have transport facilities provided to enable people to participate in actives.

Programmes need to be developed with consideration for family and caring requirements of learners this means timetable programmes to suit user needs including child minding obligation.

Centres need to get their message out to individual in an accessible way and using mediums that individual have access to, this includes using social media, local media, posters.
in local premises including sport, communities and sports groups.

Centres need to consider the specific requirements relating to diversity and new communities to encourage and facilitate participation.

**What improvements should be done to offer services that meet the needs of the target group?**

There is a need to have a joined-up approach to the provision of services, in many cases there are separate initiatives, services, supports and centres which manage individual schemes for specific purposes. In such circumstance the individual learner is not presented with the full range of opportunities and options. It would be best to have a One stop-shop to provide guidance and advise on all the services that are available.

In consideration of the difficulties in access to centre and limited transport infrastructure in rural area there is a need to offer blended learning options which combine face-to-face teaching and online resources. This will require investment in both infrastructure and staff training. In rural areas there is an absence of internet access, or where there is access it is very slow and limited. There is a need to invest in the rollout of high quality fast broadband networks in rural areas.

**Conclusions**

Adult education service in Ireland is provided by numerous agencies and providers. There is a multitude of providers and types of courses offered. The providers seek cater for a diverse range of client groups; early school leavers, community, employers, refugee etc. Whilst significant resources are made avail for adult education the lack of a unified approach and connectivity between the providers limits the potential. A dynamic adult education approach would have structural connections between the providers underpinned by cooperation and quality assurance mechanism which facilitate mobility through the sector. Including the advancement of innovative practice within the workplace to assist in upskills and reskilling workers. To provide of clear, accessible information and the mapping out of possible education and learning routes needs to become central. In addition, there is a need for adult education to become more inclusive to the needs of community society and the economy.

**REFERENCES AND RESOURCES**

Aontas [https://www.aontas.com/]
Citizens Advice Centres [Coillte [https://www.coillite.ie/]
Congress [https://www.ictu.ie/]
County Enterprise Boards
Department of Education and Skills [https://www.education.ie/en/]
Education and Training Boards Ireland [https://www.etbi.ie/]
Foróige
Irish Framers Association [https://www.ifa.ie/]
Irish Youth Council
Local authority enterprise [https://www.localenterprise.ie/]
Local Employment Services
MABS
MACRA [https://www.macra.ie/]
Meitheal [http://www.meitheal.ie/]
Regional Skills Fora [https://www.regionalskills.ie/]
Skills for Work [http://skillsforwork.ie/]
Pobal,
Teachers’ Union of Ireland [https://www.tui.ie/]
Teagas [https://www.teagasc.ie/]
Describe the practical current state of your country

Lifelong Learning (LLL) is considered a policy priority at European as well as at international level. It is strongly linked to a person’s employment, prosperity and full participation in society. The challenges in Greece placed today by the ageing population, the skills and competences deficit of the workforce and the global competition are further enhanced by the ongoing financial crisis and thus, highlight the crucial role of Lifelong Learning in addressing these issues. The percentage of the population aged 24-65 participating in Lifelong Learning in Greece (3%) appears to be well below the European average (9,1%) and the Europe 2020 target (15%).

The law Nr. 3879/2010 on Lifelong Learning that was voted by the Greek Parliament in September 2010, sets the basis for the planning and implementation of a national holistic strategy on lifelong learning and for the creation of the National Network of Lifelong Learning (NNLL), which encompasses all LLL governing bodies and LLL service providers operating under the auspices of different ministries. In this framework, the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning, acting as the executive authority for Lifelong Learning in Greece. The Law 3879/2010 set some important objectives concerning adult education as the systematisation and coordination of investigating the educational and training needs of adults in relation to the needs of labour market and social development, the assurance of accessibility for people and especially the members of socially vulnerable groups in all training and general adult education and the continuing education and evaluation of educators for adults.

The holistic concept of General Adult Education in Greece includes all organized learning activities addressed to adults that seek to enrich their knowledge, develop abilities and skills, grow their personality in order to become active citizens.

In Greece, apart from universities which offer knowledge in various fields, the main providers of adult education centers are the Second Chance Schools, for adults who have not completed compulsory education. There are 63 such schools, out of which 8 are located within correctional institutions. Second Chance Schools are co-funded by European and national resources, through the Operational Programmes of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Another educational provider for adults is the vocational Training Schools (SEKs) which is one option for students interested in practical postsecondary education and job training. Vocational schools typically offer relatively short, career-focused programs that quickly prepare graduates for the workforce. Attendance in SEKs lasts 3 years. Vocational schools, sometimes referred to as trade schools or career schools, provide practical training with few unrelated academic course requirements. They are relevant for many kinds of learners, including:

> Individuals who are planning to enter industry for the first time
> Adults who are looking to reenter the workforce
> Professionals who wish to pursue a new career field

The education offered at vocational schools allows adults to focus on the skills to enter a particular industry, with the option of not taking unrelated general education courses required for an associate’s degree at a community college. Vocational schools also provide technology training or retraining for workers in their current occupations.

Moreover, Adult Education Centres (KEE/AEC) and lifelong learning Centers at municipalities focusing on education and lifelong learning for all ages, with a view to fostering a positive attitude towards learning, promoting equal opportunities in accessing education, encouraging the productive use of free time, increasing accessibility chances in the labour market, and finally, linking or re-linking those who did not complete compulsory education with adult education. According to the principles of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination on the basis of race or origin, religion or belief, disability, gender and age, the education programmes administered by Lifelong Learning Centres are suitable for all adults (unemployed and employed people, regardless of gender, attainment level, country of origin, religion, place of residence), young people, students, etc. The only requirements are genuine interest in acquiring knowledge and active participation. Independent learning classes for vulnerable social groups (Romani, prisoners, muslim minorities, migrants - repatriates, disabled) have been set up for full and equal integration into society. The programmes selected by municipalities are reflecting the National and European policies in adult lifelong learning issues based on local needs and aim to foster residents’ economic, social, cultural and personal development.
Educational methods and connection with the labour market

All the above lifelong learning institutions have a common aim, offering courses to adult learners in the capital and in some of the biggest rural areas, as well. The main courses offered are: Greek Language, Mathematics, English Language, Information Technology, Social Education, Environmental Education, Physical Sciences and Cultural - Aesthetic Education. In spite of the variety of the institutions and courses offered, the role of these centers is mostly educational, thus the connection with the labour market is inefficient and there is no provision to develop common visions, aims and strategies as a motor for the generation of innovative approaches and ideas. The learning methods used in the above lifelong learning institutions based on the traditional educational methods. The most common teaching methods used are lecturer, presentations, discussion, workshops and on-visit in companies related to special fields. These institutions can offer programs ranging from short-unit classes of ten weeks or less to long-term programs of up to two years in length. Some of them are also provide guidance services, with a psychologist and a career counsellor. What is missing from the above lifelong learning institutions is the active teaching innovative methods that raise awareness to the participants. Adult learning institutions need to continually adjust to societal changes, target groups with changing learning needs and new forms of learning and communication, combating social exclusion and digital divide. According to Mr. Sotiriadis, Executive, Business & Career Coach – Trainer, the most important tools needed to improve the capacity of knowledge/adult education centres to serve the interests of rural and regional communities are:

> Information systems to allow for organizing, indexing, searching and disseminating knowledge in various forms (articles and multimedia content, Q&A, Expert Systems) and at the same time support event management, networking and training.
> Access to statistical data concerning the industries involved.
> Funding (national or EU) on research relevant to the activities/industries of interest.

In order to be more effective and meet the needs of disadvantaged adult learners as ambassadors to promote personal development and motivate others. Another important element missing from the adult education institutes is the transfer of knowledge and skills into local rural enterprise and the social economy by using mentoring and experiential learning methods where applicable and compiling existing knowledge and know-how into best practices. Two important actions that will help the development of an entrepreneurial cultural in rural communities is providing mentoring and coaching services to startups and offering networking activities among other entrepreneurs and providers of complementary services, potential partners and suppliers.

Barriers in participation in adult education

There are serious concerns that in spite of a policy drive and the establishment of supporting legal and structural frameworks, participation remains low. One possible explanation for this is the development of programmes that do not identify the needs of adult learners. In addition, the current economic crisis and lack of supporting infrastructure may be a contributing factor. Although there is no research available about the impact of the economic crisis on adult education, social partners have expressed serious concerns that adult education and vocational education and training programmes are being affected.

Another factor that influence adult knowledge centers in Greece is the poor links between education and training and labour market needs and the lack of systematic consultation with social partners, local authorities and civil society. This mean that adult centers are not capable of developing strategic implementation of educational programmes, focusing on people in the rural areas and all ages target groups and offering integrating courses for certain target groups as women, senior citizens, unemployed people, and people from immigrant families or minorities, people with mental and physical disabilities, children and teenagers from families with social problems.

The main challenges for knowledge centres in Greece

In Greece, there are many challenges that need to be addressed in order to cover gaps in knowledge/educational centers. Initially, there is lack of links between initial and continuing education and training; - Fragmented and non-
systematic framework regarding education and training services. Moreover, the links between education and training and the real national and European labour market needs for adult learners are poor.

Another challenge in Greece is the fact that between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, the collaboration is inadequate and a better coordination and future provisions should be developed in order to have a common line of development. Moreover, one important gap in Greece is the lack of systematic consultation with social partners, local authorities and the civil society. Stakeholders have limited engagement in education policy development at the national level and even less at the local level, as well. Stakeholders engagement is an important way to build trust through co-operation with local government, through public dialogue at different levels up to development for an overall vision in education.

Within the Greek society, Knowledge centers have to focus on a particular industry and how to build added value. They should attract local market experts and potential beneficiaries in order to accumulate and organize knowledge in an automated way, without being dependent on particular "gurus", but on a knowledge base and community. Improvement actions should also be focused on intercultural awareness activities for both, beneficiaries and mentors/coaches. An important step to meet the needs of disadvantages learners in rural areas is to focus on experiential learning relevant to the local community activities and to develop direct connection to the market needs by networking with potential employers, producers and/or customers.

Finally, Knowledge centers in Greece must be viewed as part of a wider social reform to improve the knowledge, capacities and skills of the Greek population to be focused on learner needs by offering opportunities for the recognition and accreditation of nonformal and informal learning. Moreover, knowledge centers have to support the development efforts by ensuring the upgrading of skills linked directly to market needs and the social inclusion of vulnerable groups for the development of the individual as an active and informed citizen and the cultivation of social and cultural behaviour that is in line with the new socio-economic conditions.
Conclusion

Taking into consideration the above research, it is clear that there are practically no real knowledge centers covering all three elements (3M - meeting point, mediator, motor). There are many Adult Education Centers (now called Lifelong Learning Centers) focus on training adults, not on knowledge management. In Greece, there are many attempts by individuals, NGOs and social enterprises trying to create knowledge centers but all of these actions lack the ‘Motor’ function as there is limited or no collaboration with other stakeholders in order to develop common visions and strategies to contribute to the infrastructure for all adult learning. Most of these actions take place in the capital of Greece, Athens. In rural areas these actions do not exist and most of the adult education centers are limited to a traditional approach, offering courses with no provision of support services, guidance or investment in developing infrastructure to accommodate the unique needs of young adults, employers and communities. These public and private actions act as a closed network without sharing knowledge openly nor create multiplier effects. The connection of all the relevant stakeholders (entrepreneurs, policy makers, academic community, research centers, existing SMEs etc) and the sustainable coordination of their activities, is missing. (Andreas Stefanidis, Co-founder Academy of Entrepreneurship & Accelerator Director Aephoria.net).

The potential impact of knowledge centers in rural areas may contribute in the socioeconomic development of the particular areas: Build know-how in an accumulated way that can be reused and grow over time, producing sustainable added value and also facilitate the creation of people networks, collaboration and partnerships (Takis Sotiriadis, Executive, Business & Career Coach – Trainer). The most important skills that need to be developed by Knowledge centers in order to become HUBs of knowledge for the creation of local sustainability is the social integration of special populations, the enforcement of social coherence, cultural change, optimism and creativity. Facilitators’ skills to achieve the experience of a knowledge center are: culture change programs experience, listening skills, convincing, intercultural awareness by organizing mixed teams, team building events, enforcing the human-centric approach. Moreover, adult centers could contribute to the development of knowledge centers in rural areas by familiarizing people with terms and tools of entrepreneurship, using simple examples from neighborhoods and daily life.

Concerning the skills needed for participants, the most important are adaptability, openness, team working, creative and positive thinking, respect to others and willing to change (George N. Vlachos, Business & Life Growth Mentor).

A knowledge center in order to stimulate equity and equality in rural communities and regions should embrace and communicate a culture of equity and equality, follow the same principles for all when recruiting and create custom activities to support vulnerable groups. To sum up, adult learning institutions need to continually adjust to societal changes, target groups with changing learning needs and new forms of learning and communication, combating social exclusion and raise awareness.
GOOD PRACTICE

As we explained above, there are no knowledge centers in Greece identifying the 3M points. As best practices, we examine two actions that cover in a high level the real needs of the local society in a rural area of Greece (Veroia) and offer innovative services that could be considered as a knowledge hub with the creation and the further development of the program “International Network of Emerging Innovative Libraries in the Balkans” aiming to the exchange of knowledge, collaboration and experimentation with new services. The second practice is a tool called “Mellon” developed by the Social Entreprise Knowl focused on personalized professional skills development and empowerment of people to help them ensure their entry and stay in the labor market and, thus, a better quality of life for them.

1. Name: Future Library
   Country: Greece
   Promoted by: Stavros Niarchos foundation, the Welfare Foundation for Social and Cultural Affairs, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the European Union
   Website (if any): http://www.futurelibrary.gr/en/

   Target groups/ actors involved in the project:
   • Educational Institutions
   • Experts in education
   • NGOs
   • Unemployment people
   • Disadvantaged learners
   • Youth associations
   • Low-skilled adults

   Level of implementation:
   • Regional

   BACKGROUND AND NEEDS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE
   The initiative started in order to cover the real needs of the local society (Veroia). The library was developed as a community hub aiming to help people to become creative through socialization as it is a meeting point of education, culture and creativity.

   TIME FRAME NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THE GOOD PRACTICE:
   There is no time frame as it is a continued action.

   FUNDING SOURCES OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:
   • Public
   • Private

   DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE (max 150 words)
   Future Library is a non-profit organisation devoted to reinforcing the significance of libraries as knowledge, creativity, and interaction-promoting institutions. It was established in Veria in 2011, addressing the call of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation to contribute to the development of a sustainable network of public and municipal libraries across Greece.

   It is a network of libraries open to everyone. The Initiative believe passionately in the power of collaboration, experimenting with new ideas. These are some of the key ingredients that the library of the future needs to have in order to positively affect citizens’ lives. With hub. futurelibrary.gr a social network is building through which are promoted online learning, information and interaction with all members. With mentoring and skills development through workshops, seminars and conferences, as well as with access to resources, Future Library supports the library community in its effort to offer innovative services. Moreover, Future Library works with libraries from Greece, the Balkans and the rest of Europe. Including 140 municipal libraries, is a powerful network of libraries through which every year are organized summer campaigns with a specific theme, aiming to approach people to the library. Participating libraries host performances, book readings, thematic workshops, cinema evenings, etc., always based on the subject of the campaign.

   COULD THE GOOD PRACTICE BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER COUNTRIES/REGIONS
   An even more important achievement was the expansion of the Future Library on Balkans, and the creation of the program “International Network of Emerging Innovative Libraries in the Balkans” aiming to the exchange of knowledge, collaboration and experimentation with new services. After three years of constructive work in Greece, Future Library continues its action beyond the Greek borders, enhancing the Balkan libraries through the new INELI-Balkans (International Network of Emerging Innovative Libraries in the Balkans). Through INELI-Balkans, they will share knowledge and methods with populations that have enormous potential to contribute to and gain from an innovation network:
   • by helping libraries to import and manage
new services
• coordinating actions that strengthen local communities
• ensuring sponsorships and collaborations that contribute to the sustainability of the network.
The main issues/obstacles addressed during the implementation of the practice are: The lack of knowledge on issues regarding refugees and the lack of funds so as to provide computer and language courses, skills appropriate for the integration of disadvantages learners.
In order to promote the integration of migrants and refugees in employment, firstly there should be focus on their integration in local communities. Solving basic obstacles that these groups are facing with their coming in Greece, is a foundation for their acculturation.

2. Name: 
Mellon Skills Accelerator
Country: Greece
Promoted by: Knowl Social Enterprise for Education and Lifelong Learning
Website (if any): http://www.mellon-accelerator.eu/el/

Target groups/actors involved in the project:
• Experts in education
• Social Enterprises
• Companies
• Unemployment people
• Disadvantaged learners
• Refugees/migrants
• Communities
• Low-skilled adults
• Other (please indicate)

Level of implementation:
• Regional level

BACKGROUND AND NEEDS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE
Unemployment rates in Greece have reached unprecedented levels, mainly due to the impact of the economic crisis and the spill-over effects on the provision of social services and social cohesion, reaching 23% in Nov. 2016, compared to the EU28 average of 8.1% (Eurostat), bringing Greece in the first place among EU28.
At the same time, 45% of enterprises are facing problems due to the lack of skills of newcomers to the labour market (Mc Kinsey, 2014) while 80% of businesses in the last three years needed to replace staff due to skills shortage and 50% of companies are planning to do the same within the next three years (People for Business, 2014). Entrepreneurship education is also gradually becoming a strategic objective for increasing employability, growth, competitiveness and innovation.
Within this framework of skills shortages and employment opportunities, to date, skills development and empowerment in Greece is addressed in a fragmentary, inflexible and predetermined manner, without taking further into account neither the individual’s needs, ambitions and skills nor the market requirements, seriously lacking a holistic approach. Existing national support structures are unable to cope in a coordinated and integrated way with the current conditions and challenges and rapidly adapt intervention models and support mechanisms, especially when the country is under financial and budgetary control.
To this end, a swift, versatile, holistic and sustainable model to occupational training and market (re)integration, namely the program Mellon (Greek word for ‘Future’) Skills Accelerator, is put forward as a response to the problem highlighted above.

TIME FRAME NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THE GOOD PRACTICE: Each cycle duration is about three - four months (min 65 hours per person).

FUNDING SOURCES OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:
• Private
• Own-funded

DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE (max 150 words)
The program Mellon (Greek word for ‘Future’, i.e. ‘Μέλλον’) is an innovative social action for the intensive, personalized professional skills development and empowerment of people, with a focus and priority to unemployed and young people, to help ensure their entry and stay in the labor market and, thus, a better quality of life for them.
The program is offered at zero cost for beneficiaries and aims to address the urgent needs of those suffering from unemployment, marginalization and poverty. Mellon adopts a personalized approach. It aims to strengthen each person individually, in a tailor-made way, on the basis of their own professional profile, their own needs and aspirations, serving their own professional choices, transferring directly applicable knowledge and facilitating
SKILLS NEEDED

CO-CREATION WORKSHOP
The co-creation workshop took place on March 13th with 9 participants from education, entrepreneurship and youth sector. We divided at 3 groups of 3 participants each. Participants first asked to recognize the term of knowledge center. Most of the participants did not feel familiar with the term.

Afterwards, a presentation of the Know-hubs project made where the 3M points and the role of the knowledge center explained. Participants were asked to think about the impact of a knowledge center on the society. All of them agreed that the impact and the role of a knowledge center will play an important role in the community and all of them recognized the proposed skills as essential and necessary. Specifically, they stated that a knowledge center will play a crucial role in:
- the active participation in society
- the increase of the skills needed to meet the demands of the labour market
- the empowerment of their individual skills and will facilitate the connection with other services concerning social services and employment services where bureaucracy is often an obstacle in everyday life.

After explaining the skills regarding the 3Ms (motor, meeting point and mediator) they had 5 minutes to think the most appropriate mentoring skills. Below you can find the table with the 3 most prevalent skills for each M.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Mentoring Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use of technology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Counselling</td>
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<td>Employment facilitation</td>
<td>Networking skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understanding careers and employment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Problem-solving and organizational skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>Action planning and goal setting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding diversity</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Emotional intelligence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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Which is the legal framework of an adult education/knowledge center
Generally, in Romania, according to an overview on the country, published on Eurydice, Adult education includes training programmes at all qualification levels, organized in the public or private sector.
At public level, the Institute of Education Sciences provides training courses by which it promotes education reforms. The Teaching-Staff Resource Center offers professional development courses with regard to the system of professional and transversal skills necessary to the teacher and to the national and European policies and strategies in the education field. (source: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/romania_en)
The present report will focus on three counties from the central part of Romania, where SEC is located. These counties are Harghita (SEC offices), neighboring counties Mures and Covasna.
In addition to the above-presented, which rather refers to the school system in general, it can be said that the adult education centers in Romania, and consequently in those three counties on which the report will focus on, are representing/ offering possibilities for adults to train/re-train themselves. These can also be seen as meeting points for adults, functioning therefore as knowledge centers. Within these centers, a wide range of courses/training possibilities is available for adults, assuring therefore all types of skills and competence development of those interested.

Describe the practical current state of your country
If we are to look into the practical current situation in Romania related to knowledge centers it can be said that adult educational centers working within different NGOs and providing training, meeting and counseling possibilities for adults, as well as libraries, socio-cultural houses can all be considered as places where those interested can get together in order to develop new skills and competences which will enable them in improving their lives. These establishments target all adults, representing the population who has completed or not the compulsory public education. These institutions mainly offer course possibilities for 16+ year olds. In addition to this, it also needs to be mentioned, that, labour market agencies could also be added to this list, but unfortunately, as with many other things in the country, legislation related to this, is not working properly. Even though, for ideal situations, there are regulations in place, according to which, registered unemployed need to take part at different career fairs and training courses, which are concentrated on the needs previously forwarded by local employers to the labour market agencies. Even though, it could benefit both the employer and the employees, these courses cannot be in all cases regarded as real help for those in need.
Consequently, responses to the needs of companies, by training and advising possible employees cannot be fulfilled to its high potential.
The reason for this is either the bureaucracy which is involved with these processes -within which training organization representatives do not have time for, if they want to “produce” something valuable - or the high corruption rate which can be experienced throughout the public institutions within the country. The tenders which are published for the needed courses by the Labour Market agencies, which should help the unemployed in getting a possible future job, for which they could qualify, is really complicated and time consuming. Therefore, well known and experienced organizations which could apply for these may get uninspired and unmotivated to participate. As a result, the labour market agencies are not in all cases able to provide the right course, therefore unemployed don’t have high quality learning possibilities, society can not move forward as it should.

What are the objectives of an adult education/ knowledge centre?
As it has been outlined at the previous point, educational centers such as the Spektrum Educational Center can be seen as knowledge centers in the analysed region.
Therefore, regarding the objectives, we can say that as a self-sustaining, dynamic organization that is open to cooperation, our aim is to offer a wide range of formal and informal trainings to the organizations wishing to develop in the region, and also to those wishing to learn without age limits.
Today, people’s skills and abilities, entrepreneurship skills, and management skills are considered basic requirements in a growing number of professions. Likewise, the competences that are to be acquired in different accredited courses, like the ‘Office Manager Training’ or ‘The Training of Trainers’.
Within the framework of the Spektrum Educational Center’s educational development projects we are searching for effective ways and means to prepare the region’s workforce for the rapid economic changes and encourage entrepreneurship.

During conducting training programmes we seek cooperation with local businesses, institutions, non-governmental organizations, communities and local organizations.

We also take part in education, training-related research, contribute to publications, and publishing of books as well.

Our Centre guarantees the high-level mastery of skills, which are essential in most professions and life situations. Among these ‘transversal’ skills, language competences are of utmost importance.

In addition to the above mentioned, all those institutions, who choose as their objective the skills and competence development of adults, are aware of the fact that alongside providing training possibilities for those who need it, they, maybe without being aware of the fact that, they act on the 3M principle, Mentor, provide Meeting place and are also Mediators within their environment. Therefore, it does often happen, that the 3M principle can be experienced within educational centers / different community organizations, but the people who provide that are not even aware of that.

As presented at the previous point, the labour market agencies can also be seen as knowledge centers, which aim to represent the bridge between the unemployed and companies/businesses. Among their goals we can find:

- mediation and guidance for those in need,
- organization of job/career fairs and training courses,
- information and professional counseling.

As already mentioned, these objectives can be met in ideal situations, which in real life does not characterize the everyday life in Romania, consequently neither in the 3 counties (Harghita, Covasna and Mures) this report is focusing on.

What is the current state of research about knowledge centers?

Related to the current state of research regarding the knowledge centers in Romania, these are carried out mainly within different European Commission founded or other types of projects. Universities would be other institutions which carry out different researches, but they rather concentrate on the field of higher education from different perspectives, instead of adult education.

What impact does knowledge centers have on the surrounding society?

As far as the impact is concerned these knowledge centers can have on their surrounding society, it can be stated that, by offering training possibilities, alongside with gathering, grouping up opportunities, which consequently lead to experience change and even can foster common problem solving situations, these centers can improve the lives of those in need or those willing to get the most out of their lives through education, training/re-training themselves.

What are the learning methods used in an adult education/knowledge center?

Adult education/knowledge centers are mainly functioning, as already stated within this document, as NGO’s or organizations which are independent of the public education. But, as intellectual work/trainers/teachers, come from public schools as part time teachers in these centers it is real a challenge for these centers to find those trainers who are ready to offer something different, innovative and creative while comes to teaching. As, alongside with the topics offered, the teaching methods used represent one of the main reasons why adults would come to adult education centers. As a result, these centers try to focus on the following:

- preparing for teaching
- facilitating the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes
- teaching and learning in groups
- facilitating learning and setting ground rules
- explaining
- managing the group
- small group teaching methods and discussions
- computer-based teaching and learning – information technology and the World Wide Web
- e-learning methods also started to be used.

Do the learning methods enhance and prepare the adults for their transition to the labour market?

As these learning, educational centers are mainly concentrating on offering the best available training possibilities, they do not have the required manpower, qualified personnel for offering counseling/mentoring which at the end could help the unemployed better integrate into
the labour market. In addition, also the following points should be taken into account, while it comes to the learning methods, which should prepare adults’ transition to the labour market:

- Ensuring teachers and trainers are well prepared even (where possible) with industry experience on what they teach
- Target group representatives (where possible) should be able to make full use of workplace learning

In Romania, this would be the task of the Labour Market Agency, which is trying to fulfill this assignment with more or less success.

The role of an adult education/knowledge center concerning its connection with the labour market

While talking about the role of an adult education/knowledge center, as it has been stated also at the previous question, these try to fulfill the educational needs of the large public or specific target groups and respond to the educational needs a local community may have. Therefore, their role is to improve the lives of marginalised, disadvantaged groups or simply of those who feel a need for that. These institutions may not have any direct connections with the labour market, even though, with their course offers they try to address different needs. These organizations might be, or should be, contacted by the local/regional labour market agencies, who are actually more aware of the needs related to workforce/qualified personnel, expressed by the local companies, businesses.

What tools are needed to improve the capacity of knowledge/adult education centres to serve the interests of rural and regional communities?

In our experts’ opinion, regarding the tools needed to improve the capacity of a knowledge/adult education centers’ of serving their communities, first of all lies in the “intangible tools” which are represented by trainers, education advisors and education managers who can keep in touch with the local community on the one hand. On the other hand, contact with the international/global professional world is another important aspect to consider, as the educational tendencies and the use of the technological tools should be kept in focus. Alongside with the “intangible tools” our experts also mentioned the importance of the “financial tool”, as rural communities do struggle economically in many cases. As a result, seeking financial support for disadvantaged learners should be another viewpoint to reflect on.

How can local knowledge/adult education centres in rural regions be more effective in engagement with disadvantaged adult learners and promote LLL strategies?

At this question, our respondents enumerated the following actions which can be taken into account while trying to involve effectively the disadvantaged adult learners:
- try to reach out to them, by going to their communities
- ask what they need
- open free-of-cost services
- involve disadvantaged children in education projects (family members can be involved together with children)
- create opportunities where they can teach each other skills, crafts
- attract them by technological tools

How best can knowledge/adult education centres increase the transfer knowledge and skills into local rural enterprise and the social economy?

Education centers should seek to support existing initiatives of local social economy organisations (be present on fairs, facilitate workshops) or can think to offer skills that are missing from local businesses (e.g. help with online marketing, help with visual design, help develop language competences.).

How can knowledge/adult centres better contribute to the development of an entrepreneurial cultural in rural communities, or regions?

Knowledge centers’ contribution to the development of the entrepreneurial culture in the rural communities, could be done through:

- promotion campaigns where local successful enterprises are presented
- organization of study visits to similar (but more developed) rural areas,
- supporting entrepreneurial training, basic business skills.

COUNTRY REPORT FROM ROMANIA
What steps can a knowledge centre take to stimulate equity and equality in rural communities and regions?

According to our experts, the following steps should be followed:

- Offer free-of-cost programs for the disadvantaged
- Offer free-of-cost places on trainings offered for cost for other community members
- Figure out what special skills and intangible assets can disadvantage community members bring to various community events and involve them, appraising their contribution.

What are the main problems which an adult educator face with disadvantages learners?

Regarding the main problems adult educators might face while working with disadvantaged groups, our experts highlighted the lack of financial aid which would be needed in order to boost their motivation or even the simple participation at the activities. Reaching to and keeping these disadvantaged learners engaged is another issue, which also could be overcome, in our respondent’s opinion, with having financial possibilities for offering interesting programs and possibilities.

The main challenges for knowledge centers in your country

During the desk research carried out within this project in Romania, there were less than five institutions/organizations found which claimed to be a knowledge center. All of these were focusing either on medical issues (Hematology), either on actions related to businesses.

Therefore, it can be said, that all those educational institutions this research has been completed upon, without calling themselves knowledge center, act like ones. They manage to gather people with different needs and expectations and try to offer a solution to their needs. The thing they lack is the mentoring aspect, even though, the personnel who usually works within these centers, tries to advise those interested on steps to follow after they’ve completed their training courses.

What improvements should be done in order to offer services that meet the needs of the target group

In Romania, in our opinion, the most important thing to be done, is related to a better application of the existing laws and regulations, mainly related to public services which unfortunately cannot be determined by a project.

Nevertheless, where improvements could be introduced, is within educational organizations, the so-called knowledge centers. Urging these educational centers to use more consciously the 3M principle would be a helpful starting point for the target group representatives. Apart from getting the needed training course, those in need, could participate at counseling/mediation sessions on how they actually could benefit from the advantages of their improved skills and competences.

To achieve this, these knowledge centers should have among their staff members, counseling/mentoring professionals, coaches who can advise whenever is necessary.

In addition to that, it could be of good help for the target group representatives, to have designated areas with well-structured programmes/schedule/timetables on the basis of which they could work with those in need.

Conclusions

In Romania, knowledge centers can be considered the educational centers which offer different courses within different topics, fields, meeting the various needs of the society in which they are based. The present report has been mainly focusing on three, central counties of the country (Harghita, Covasna and Mures). In all these locations, adult education centers are operating based on a shared concept, addressing the educational needs of the regions they are established in.

In addition to these, the labour market agencies can also been seen as knowledge centres, which according to the present law, should be representing the bridge between companies/businesses and the unemployed.

No significant research has been found regarding active knowledge centres in the analysed region. It has not been found that any of the educational centres would be using the 3M principle, therefore the Know Hubs project will bring good opportunities for these centres and their employers in order to improve their services and offer better quality possibilities for those in need.
GOOD EXAMPLE

Name: Spektrum Educational Center Foundation
Country: Romania
Promoted by: Spektrum Educational Center Foundation
Website (if any): www.sec.ro
Target groups/actors involved in the project:
• Educational Institutions
• NGOs
• Social Enterprises
• Companies
• Unemployment people
• Disadvantaged learners
• Communities
• Low-skilled adults
Level of implementation: Local

BACKGROUND AND NEEDS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE
The Spektrum Educational Centre was established in 1996 on the initiative of the Foundation for an Open Society. This nongovernmental organization, which had had a separate legal personality since 1998, became a self-sustaining NGO in 2001, and it has changed its name to Spektrum Educational Centre in 2016. As, after the political changes of 1989, in the early 90s, language learning became really popular in the region, the Spektrum Educational Center aimed at responding to that need, by offering foreign language courses and, alongside with providing internet access even advising services for all those interested. At first, right after its establishment after 1996, our organization represented the only possibility in the rural region of Harghita county (central part of Romania) for opening the horizons of many, through offering foreign language (mainly English) courses and Internet surfing opportunities. Moreover, internet access has been facilitated here, but as in those times PCs were representing also quite a problem for citizens, our organization even assured the possibility of using those for symbolic prices. As already mentioned above, there were also consultation, advising services for those in need.

Through the years, our course offers and also other services which we have, have changed in relation to the needs which can be experienced within the region. Nevertheless, being an active organization in the adult education projects’ field, we manage to respond and improve the skills and competencies of adults in different fields.

Our organization is dealing within an academic year with almost 500 learners, who come to our courses for 8 months. In addition to all these, within the projects we also offer to almost another 100 attendants in different topic related trainings, skill and competence development courses. As the daily fluctuation of learners is really high, we believe that having a new headquarters building/separate building could improve the possibilities for more creative environments and

FUNDING SOURCES OF THE GOOD PRACTICE:
• Own-funded
Other – European founded educational projects in different topics

KIND OF IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY POTENTIAL OF THE GOOD PRACTICE
Within our organization, our colleagues who are in charge of course organizing are fostering, trying to offer as many information as possible related to all the educational/training possibilities for those interested as possible. In addition, it can be said, that they are “mentoring” our trainees, who are coming to attend our courses. Having an average number of 400 – 450 trainees in every academic year, each applicant is separately advised, his/her knowledge level assessed before enrolling to the course, timetable possibilities discussed and adjusted and considered according to the possibilities, to each candidates’ needs. The impact our activities have on the region and the inhabitants of Harghita county, can be best described by one of our learners’ feedback, which says: “Thank you for taking care of us!”
We, at SEC, believe, that there will always be a need for education, whether it is about lifelong learning, re-training or simply improving existing competencies, general language learning, cultural awareness raising, entrepreneurial skills development, leadership or teacher training. Therefore, we are convinced that our activity is sustainable and hugely impacts our surrounding environment through improving, even changing lives.

COULD THE GOOD PRACTICE BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER COUNTRIES/REGIONS
Yes. The key would be to have the human resources, staff, teachers and trainers who would be able to carry out the same type of work and could create the same atmosphere for the learners or those in need, which exists in the Spektrum Educational Center, which, on the basis of the opinion of our learners, customers is one of its kind in the region.
Nevertheless, thinking about overcoming the financial barriers, by obtaining financial support is also a very important aspect to consider.
SKILLS NEEDED

DATE AND PLACE: Mar 7, 2019
PARTICIPANTS: Spektrum staff, adult learners, experts in adult education

The Co-creation workshop organised by Spektrum Educational Center Foundation was held on March 7th, 2019 with 10 participants, adults (members of the community) and experts/stakeholders of adult education. The 3 main topics as proposed for the workshop, mediation, employment facilitation and social support, were in focus during the co-creation activity.

Similarly, questions such as
• What impact do you believe knowledge centers may have on their surrounding society?
• What are the skills related to MEDIATION, EMPLOYMENT FACILITATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT the workforce of the knowledge centers may need?

have been discussed by participants after the general presentation of the KNOW HUBs project objectives and expected results.

In the first part of the workshop the group discussed the impact and role of a knowledge center (as for example the case of Spektrum Educational Center) as far as the community’s development is concerned. Not surprisingly participants shared unequivocally that adult education centers have decisive roles in the community’s development by offering non-formal education to its adult members. Furthermore, was agreed by the participants, that such centers like Spektrum Educational Center can have significant impact on the region’s development by constantly promoting the importance of lifelong learning and engaging its members by trying to reaching out to them, find out what they need, offer low cost (or free) educational services, create opportunities (e.g. tailor made entrepreneurial skills development trainings, quality courses for language competences enhancement) to empower all members of the society (e.g. young unemployed with high or lower educational background).

Then participants, divided into working groups, have been invited to agree on the most important skills in the areas of MEDIATION, EMPLOYMENT FACILITATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT, and “Other Skills”. The results of the working groups are as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>MENTORING SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEDIATION</td>
<td>Understanding the role of mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adapting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building Rapport (Clutterbuck 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>Action planning and goal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACILITATION</td>
<td>Problem-solving, trouble-shooting, and dealing with blockages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL SUPPORT</td>
<td>Understanding diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening skills (can be seen as part of EI – establishing empathy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>Conflict management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of prejudice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Please include 3-5 references (including web references) using APA style

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/educational-support-and-guidance-56_en - Eurydice, Romania, Educational Support and Guidance

https://igvromania.weebly.com/ - IGV KNOWLEDGE CENTER - AIESEC IN ROMANIA

https://www.aontas.com/knowledge/blog/

exposure-to-adult-education-in-romania - an article about a Romanian visit, of one of the Aontas representatives within an EU project, highlighting the role of adult education institutions in Romania

Our experts, that we interviewed, were teachers (working within our organization for years) with waste experience, but none of them has a blog or website which could be cited/included in the report.
INTRODUCTION

This report introduces the results of the desk and field research implemented by ITC from December 2018 to February 2019.
It is structured in 3 main sections: Practical state of the art of knowledge centers in Spain, impact on the surrounding society and main challenges and conclusions.

PRACTICAL CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE CENTERS IN SPAIN

Which is the legal framework of an adult education/knowledge centre

In Spain, the general organic Law about Education, LOGSE (3/10/1990, published in the National Official journal 4/10/1990) introduced for the first time in Spanish education the principle of Lifelong Learning, which implies a conception of adult education that exceeds the idea purely remedial or compensatory applied to this type of education.

The normative development implemented further by the Spanish Ministry of Education and the 17 Autonomous Communities, focuses on the adaptation of the curricula of the education system. It is understood that the organization in courses, levels or modules of adult education must be based on the acquisition of skills at each educational and training stage.

Adult training provision comprises different types of programmes, which are organised by the education, employment and local authorities (source Eurydice, EU 2019):

1. The EDUCATION AUTHORITIES provide adults with an opportunity to acquire basic education or complete the different types of provision of the education system leading to the award of an official qualification. In addition, they periodically organise entrance examinations to have access to different types of provision or to obtain an official qualification without having to complete the corresponding studies. For more information, see Provision to raise achievement in basic skills and Provision to achieve a recognised qualification during adulthood

2. the EMPLOYMENT AUTHORITIES organise a series of training actions aimed at both employed workers and unemployed people, with the aim of improving the employability of the population. These measures include:
   • training actions with recruitment commitment
   • work-linked training
   • training plans primarily aimed at the unemployed
   • specific plans for the training of employed workers. For more information, see Provision targeting the transition to the labour market and Other types of publicly subsidised provision for adult learners.

3. LOCAL AUTHORITIES are responsible for organising popular education through popular universities, which offer a wide range of educational, training and cultural activities. Thus, adult education CENTRES as such are the official ones regulated by the ministry of education and funded by the regions in Spain with some local implementation in the frame of “popular Universities”.
There are 51 adult education centres all over the territory and provide initial and secondary education for adult learners (51 centres), non-formal education for adults (9), adapted education for immigrants (15) and non-compulsory secondary education (21).

This overall framework (educational, employment and local authorities) is complemented by the 17 autonomous communities regulations and in this frame we can find a variety of centres that complement this approach, focusing in ICT and a “living Labs” orientation according to regional Innovation and Information Society policies. As example, we can include 2 regions:

• ANDALUSIA: The social innovation network of Andalusia, called Guadalinfo is a 100% public network of citizen access centers to the information society in Andalusia. The Guadalinfo centers (in municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants, Autonomous Local Entities and in the less favored urban slums) have been working since 2003. There are around 800 physical centers rooted in their communities (Interconnected and linked to www.guadalinfo.es) and 800 Local Innovation Agents to support more than 1 million users. They focus on employability, digital literacy, promotion of innovative culture, citizen participation, improvement of the quality of life, entrepreneurship, business digitalization and electronic administration (http://www.guadalinfo.es/). Please see Good practice 2.
• CASTILLA Y LEÓN: CyL Digital is a regionally funded program open to all citizens that offers activities and initiatives to raise awareness, train and advise people in ICT. It counts on 9 centres in the capitals of the 9 provinces plus counts
on a wide network of local associate centres (libraries, local funded centres...etc) to cover the rural areas. (https://www.cyldigital.es/que-es-cyldigital).

Describe the practical current state of your country

The practical state of the art mainly lies on the “formal education” side, complemented by the ICT centres available in some regions. In order to recognize and integrate previous experiences and knowledge of adults who start in basic education a procedure called Initial Student Assessment (VIA) is planned. It is a process of assessment and initial guidance of the adult person who must lead to his ascription to a certain group and level. This process begins with an initial interview conducted in the moment of access to the centre, followed by a study of the (academic) documentation provided by the person for the purpose of validation. With the data obtained from all these actions, which can be complemented with a psych pedagogical interview if necessary, we proceed to a provisional assignment from the person to a group and level. One month after the beginning of the classes, the situation is reviewed by the teaching team after confronting their opinion with the opinion of the person concerned, thus taking the definitive decision. This procedure of analysis and verification of prior knowledge also applies in cases of promotion, permanence, or partial follow-up of the courses. The idea is to make it easier for the adult to stay in the system in conditions of flexibility according to the needs of each person.

Regarding adult centres in rural areas, we may place a special attention to ELearning:

Distance learning is managed by the Ministry of Education, Social Policies and Sport via the Innovation and Development Centre for Distance Learning (Centro para la Innovación y Desarrollo de la Educación a Distancia - CIDEAD), created in 1992 with the purpose to organise and coordinate all kinds of e-learning activities and to facilitate the improvement of adults education. CIDEAD provides Courses for Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria - ESO), Secondary Education Distance Learning for Adults (Educación Secundaria para personas adultas a Distancia - ESPAD), and bachelor’s degrees (Bachillerato). Autonomous Communities regulate distance learning for adults. They have created some specific centres of primary and secondary distance learning education. They are fully supported by CIDEAD.

Thanks to the initiative of the National Centre of Information and Educational Communication (Centro Nacional de Información y Comunicación Educativa), Mentor Classes (Aulas Mentor) organise distance-learning courses initiated throughout the Spanish territory. Courses are provided in Mentor Classrooms, where there is an administrator who plays the role of “learning facilitator” and a tutor. Courses are available for learners studying at home, if the Internet is available. These courses are mostly organised in rural areas, located in Centres of Adult Training, in prisons or town councils. There are over 100 different courses on different subjects, including many aspects of the environment, as well as health care, entrepreneurship, languages, or history. Students learn on their own with an absolute flexibility and pay a small monthly fee. When participants finish a course, they take the relative examination, obtaining a certificate, so-called Certificado de Aprovechamiento.

These formal education centers in many cases are the same or coexist with the ICT centres funded by the regional authorities previously mentioned that offer more informal lifelong learning opportunities oriented towards IT, entrepreneurship and social innovation.

What are the objectives of an adult education/ knowledge centre

ON THE ONE SIDE we hereby present the objectives of the adult education centres. Starting from the principle of adapting the general curriculum, different issues were considered such as the need to recognize and integrate the experiences and previous knowledge of adults, the different rhythms of learning according to different ages, the training and life paths, or the present personal circumstances. All this has resulted in the design and implementation of educational offers differentiated from those directed to children and adolescents, whose general objectives, that we can understand, of “Adult Knowledge Centres” in Spain, are:

1. The construction of authentic learning: learning is a process of construction of meanings and, therefore, it is constructed, not acquired. This construction must be carried out starting from the previous knowledge, an issue that in the case of adults acquires a capital importance. On the other hand, the significance of learning must refer to a double dimension: logical and psychological. Learning is significant for adults if it is coherent. That is, the learning should be integrated into the personal psychological structure of the adult.
2. The learning functionality. It seems a universal principle, but it is specific to adults who left the circuits of initial learning and, therefore, are not learning professionals. When a worker, a housewife, a professional or a retiree decides to devote a part of their free time to improve their education or training in regulated systems they are not driven by a clear functional need that if not satisfied leads to the abandonment of the system.

3. Activity based. It is based on the idea that an intense activity by the person who learns contributes much more significantly to the construction of learning than a pure receptive attitude towards knowledge that comes from outside.

4. Participation. The participatory methodology is an essential asset for adults. Leaving aside the technical elements, it must be extended to all stages of the process: planning, development and evaluation.

5. Autonomous learning. It can be said that autonomous learning is an intrinsic condition of adulthood. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that when we refer to formal learning, in which it is necessary to have a background of previous knowledge, autonomous learning is limited by the academic level of departure, so autonomous learning will be more feasible in the higher than in the starting level.

6. Cooperative learning. This principle is one of the most deeply rooted in the tradition of Spanish adult education; it implies that the learning with others prevails, as well as the importance of the establishment of affective bonds between the components of the learning group, in the consideration that in order to learn, besides putting into operation intellectual mechanisms, it is necessary to activate Affective mechanisms of acceptance of the content that is learned and the context in which learning is taking place. In addition, this type of learning helps adults, especially those with low levels of education, who initially live their learning situation with a certain anxiety.

7. The use of prior knowledge of adults who learn. It is an essential methodological tool, as it allows the knowledge and certain skills of the teaching institution to value and take advantage of the teaching institution, independently of the acquisition procedure. In addition, it clearly facilitates the significance of learning

HORIZONTAL ISSUES are also key such as equal treatment between adults, whether they are students or teachers, and also the consideration of students and teachers as architects in the construction of their own knowledge.

ON THE OTHER SIDE, this may be complemented with the objectives of those centres funded regionally that serve a more IT or innovation orientation. As example the objectives of the Guadalinfo centres in Andalusia are:

• employability,
• digital literacy,
• promotion of innovative culture,
• citizen participation,
• improvement of quality of life,
• entrepreneurship,
• business digitalization and electronic administration.

Also complemented by “social innovation” aim, including a specific platform to generate ideas and provide support to the so called “innovators”: http://www.guadalinfo.es/web/innycia/-que-es

Moreover, THE KEY APPROACHES OF ADULT EDUCATION IN SPAIN are:

a) Different learning timing load: basic adult education leads to the title of Graduate in Secondary Education and is, logically, much shorter than Education Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO), for children, while the Baccalaureate a course may be lengthened more than that of the ordinary offer. There are no such organizations differentiated in the Regulated Professional Training, except in the offers of the modality to distance.

b) Both face-to-face and distance learning are used, which also hold of a different organizational structure (see section 1.2).

c) Variation in the distribution of teaching-learning contents in some teachings; in adult basic education, for example, they are organized in fields of knowledge. These fields of knowledge integrate the different areas in which the Compulsory Secondary Education is organized.

d) They allow flexible use of educational itineraries, according to the level of reference accredited by each person, partial follow-up of the study plans, repeated permanence in the educational levels depending on personal circumstances...etc.

e) They imply a differentiated didactic methodology.

Main challenges for knowledge centres in your country

The main challenges lie in the organization of adult learning issued by 3 different authorities and policy regulations: Education, Employment and local PLUS the 17 autonomous communities’
regulations. From the regional perspective, we can find a variety of centres that complement this approach: for example, “living Labs” orientation regional funded centres in Andalusia available in rural areas that work in the frame of regional Innovation and Information Society policies.

On the one side, the overall wide regulation is national (ministries of education and ministry of labor) and on the other side the implementation of these regulations is regional and local. That means that, depending on the region, the centres will have one or another orientation. And this of course, complemented by the local authorities, responsible for organising popular education through popular universities, which offer a wide range of educational, training and cultural activities.

We cannot find a common understanding of what “knowledge centers” are in Spain due to the present legal regulations and to cultural reasons. We can find that there is still a dichotomy regarding formal and informal learning AND Information and knowledge.

While adult education centres are part of an “education” national regulation, the implementation is regional and local, and these centres in many cases coexist with other centres that are based on Innovation, Science and employment policies and that follow employability, Information Society and Innovation approaches to also cover needs of territories with rural areas, which have different needs.

As a result of this, the information provided to users is fragmented, and as example a “third country national” living in a rural area asking for language course may get different responses regarding available centres depending if s/he lives in Galicia or in Andalusia.

**What improvements should be done in order to offer services that meet the needs of the target group**

In Spain, we have read that we have the national level issuing national wide regulations complemented by regional and local implementation of those regulations and also find more space to complement adult learning with other aspects such as employability, ICT and information society related issues.

A key improvement in Spain would be to promote the homogenization of the approach focusing on the adult learner and their needs and not on where the policy or the regulation comes from. From a top-down perspective we may need to go towards a more bottom up orientation: a knowledge centre focusing on the needs of the adult learners.

**What impact do knowledge centers have on the surrounding society?**

This section is being completed first by summarizing the results of the desk research, which also served to make an introduction of the field research, a co-creation exercise that was implemented with 11 stakeholders that was based upon 2 activities:

1. First an introduction about the project and a first debate about the current situation of adult and information centres.
2. Co-creation session on the skills that would be needed to make the centres real 3-Ms; mediator, motor and meeting place’.

The exercise was implemented trying to balance a top down orientation (that emerged from the desk research) with the bottom up co-creation exercise.

As a result of the desk research we can say that we cannot find a common understanding of what “knowledge centers” are due to the present legal regulations and to cultural reasons. We can find that there is still a dichotomy regarding formal and informal learning plus Information and knowledge and, in this frame, the information provided to users is fragmented.

While adult education centres are part of an “education” national regulation, the implementation is regional, and these centres in many cases coexist with other centres that are based on Innovation, Science and employment policies and that follow Information Society and Innovation approaches to also cover needs of territories with rural areas which have different needs to other territories.

The debate with the participants was very interesting as, as citizens they pointed out that depending on where you are based in Spain you have different perception of what the centre close to you may help you and cover your needs.

After the debate, we can finally state that in Spain we do not find a real knowledge centre definition but in practice, the mission of 3-Ms; mediator, motor and meeting place’ in rural areas is somehow covered by regionally funded IT centers that serve a higher “Information Society” and “living Lab” orientation.
CONCLUSIONS EXTRACTED FROM THE STATE OF THE ART

We cannot find a common understanding of what “knowledge centers” are in Spain due to the present legal regulations and to cultural reasons. Adult learning issued by 3 different authorities and policy regulations: Education, Employment and local PLUS the 17 autonomous communities’ regulations. In this frame we can find a variety of centers that complement this approach (for example, focusing in ICT and a “living Labs” orientation according to regional Innovation and Information Society policies).

Thus:

• On the one side the overall wide regulation is national (ministries of education and ministry of labor)
• and on the other side the implementation of these regulations is regional.
• and this is complemented by the local authorities, responsible for organizing popular education through popular universities, which offer a wide range of educational, training and cultural activities.

In this frame, we can find that there is still a dichotomy regarding formal and informal learning AND information and knowledge. While adult education centers are part of an “education” national regulation, the implementation is regional and local, and these centers in many cases coexist with other centers that are based on Innovation, Science and employment policies and that follow employability, Information Society and Innovation approaches to also cover needs of territories with rural areas, which have different needs.

As a result of this, the information provided to users is fragmented, and as example a “third country national” living in a rural area asking for language course may get different responses regarding available centers depending if s/he lives in Galicia or in Andalusia.

We can find that there is still a dichotomy regarding formal and informal learning AND Information and knowledge. As a result of this, the information provided to users is fragmented, and as example a “third country national” living in a rural area asking for language course may get different responses regarding available centers depending if s/he lives in Galicia or in Andalusia.

While adult education centers are part of an “education” national regulation, the implementation is regional, and these centers in many cases coexist with other centers that are based on Innovation, Science and employment policies and that follow Information Society and Innovation approaches to also cover needs of territories with rural areas, which have different needs.

In Spain, we do not find a real knowledge centre definition but in practice, the mission of 3-Ms; mediator, motor and meeting place’ in some rural areas is somehow covered by regionally funded IT centers that serve a higher “Information Society” and “living Lab” orientation.
GOOD EXAMPLES

Name: **INFORMATE" TOOL**
Country: Spain
Promoted by: Spanish Ministry of Education

**Target groups/ actors involved:**
- Unemployment people
- Disadvantaged learners
- Refugees/migrants
- Low- skilled adults
- Other (please, indicate): other people trying to find out Lifelong learning options

**Level of implementation:**
- National

**Background and needs for the development of the existing good practice:**
This is a Lifelong Learning initiative made up in order to support all people in Spain regarding training throughout their life, inside and outside the education system, in order to acquire, update, complete and expand their knowledge, abilities and skills for personal and professional development.

**Kind of impact and sustainability potential of the good practice:** Could the good practice be transferred to other countries/regions: yes. This tool is made up to provide all the different training options and the existing itineraries to enable adults to organize and guide the learning experience, making time and effort profitable. This information and guidance portal aims to help citizens to know the option and training that best fits their personal, family and professional life. It also incorporates a collection of materials and resources to support their learning process that can also be used by families, professionals and anyone related to training and education.

It has several screens in which the system asks you to introduce your basic data (date of Birth, educational situation, preferences of face to face and distance learning, formal or informal education, kind of learning preferred: artistic, languages, sports...etc.). After all the options, you receive a final screen with links to all the LL options you have: see screenshot (IN ES):
- If yes, what adaptations could be required to assure possible success: translation and adaptation to other contexts and countries. There is an informative video available in Spanish and English.
- If the project was already transferred, please identify the main issues/problems which were addressed in applying the practice: NO.

**Name: Guadalinfo eCentres Network**
Country: Spain
Promoted by: Junta de Andalucia, regional authority in the region of Andalusia

**Target groups/ actors involved:**
- Companies
- Unemployment people
- Disadvantaged learners
- Refugees/migrants
- Youth associations
- Low- skilled adults
- Other (please, indicate): other people living in rural areas trying to find out Lifelong learning options

**Level of implementation:**
- Regional, mainly focusing on rural areas

**Background and needs for the development of the existing good practice:**
The centres operate in the frame of the “social innovation network of Andalusia”, a 100% public network of citizen access centers to the information society in Andalusia. The centers, located in municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants, Autonomous Local Entities and in the less favored urban slums, have been working since 2003. There are around 800 physical centers rooted in their communities (interconnected and linked to www.guadalinfo.es) and 800 Local Innovation Agents paid by the regional authority to support more than 1 million users. They focus on the needs of the citizens in rural areas: employability, digital literacy, promotion of innovative culture, citizen...
participation, improvement of the quality of life, entrepreneurship, business digitalization and electronic administration.

Kind of impact and sustainability potential of the good practice: Could the good practice be transferred to other countries/regions: yes. We have included here the map of Guadalinfo centres to try to illustrate the real impact in the territory. It is actually a “model” that is now also working in other regions, such as for example Castilla y León in Spain.

If yes, what adaptions could be required to assure possible success and if the project was already transferred, please identify the main issues/problems which were addressed in applying the practice: It is based upon regional funding but in Castilla y Leon also operated with “volunteers”. The policy initiative is necessary but the funding may vary according to the selected model.

Mock exercise using this practice against the 3M positioning exercise:
As it can be extracted from annex 1, this example fits in all the criteria selected as a meetingplace. The mediator role is half covered as it meets 6 out of the 10 criteria identified in the questionnaire. The centre does not provide councelling, guidance or traineeships because that role is covered via the Andalucía Orienta programme and centres (http://andaluciaorienta.net/). As to the motor role is oly covered in 3 out of the 7 criteria we find in the questionnaire as some of them are art of the previously mentioned regional based employment and guidance services (Andalucía Orienta).
SKILLS NEEDED

What are the skills related to MEDIATION, EMPLOYMENT FACILITATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT the workforce of the knowledge centers may need?

The EXERCISE was implemented 25th February, 2019 with 9 participants: ITC staff, adult learners, experts in adult education and mentoring. The main questions laid of the fact that the skills mentioned were considered very complete (maybe a bit too much) but were regarded as too oriented towards a “formal relationship” which may be better oriented more informally in the case of the staff of the (3M) centre.

The following table reflects the results of the exercise and includes the feedback in each skill. They are presented by importance and during the exercise the participants were asked to rate those by their importance (see number of voted after each set of post it notes) as reflected on the picture on the left. Below we have inserted the number of the skill from the list so that it can be easily identified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>MENTORING SKILLS (organized by importance)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEDIATION</td>
<td>Adapting (adding adapting to the needs particularly if the user belongs to a specific migrant of disadvantaged background)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building Rapport and 11. Relationship management (together))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding the role of mentor and 3. Understanding the stages of the mentoring relationship (together)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding their own values (but applied also to the values of the user)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding boundaries and confidentiality (this was considered very important)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing mentoring meetings (but dealing it in an informal way)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognising achievement/objectives attained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>These 2 were pointed but considered less important:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orchestrate a good ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT FACILITATION</td>
<td>Problem-solving, trouble-shooting, and dealing with blockages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding careers and employment (also commented that may include mentioning the routes and possibilities available) so also merging it with Advocacy skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching skills merged with 21. Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action planning and goal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL SUPPORT</td>
<td>Non-verbal communication and merging it with Questioning skills (also connected to Other below, that is “Using tools to better understand the needs (not only education and learning related) of the users”). The importance of communication was highlighted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening skills (very linked with other soft skills like empathy, assertivity...etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving and receiving feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional distancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story-telling (Parkin 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>Managing diversity and multiculturality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using tools to better understand the needs (not only education and learning related) of the users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The information contained here is based on the interviews implemented with 3 experts who also provided references to the following sources to illustrate the current state of knowledge centers:

SOURCES:


WEBSITES CONSULTED:
Ministry of Education: http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/ 
CIDEAD: http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/educacion/mc/cidead/portada.html 
Aulas Mentor: http://www.aulamentor.es/

INTERVIEWED EXPERTS:
1 female expert in adult education and language learning with national prizes for innovative learning materials (PhD from University of Granada, Spain)
1 female expert in adult education with a profile in adult education, VET and higher education - field economics and entrepreneurship (Associate profesor in University of Almería, Spain)
1 male expert in entrepreneurship for adult learners (PhD from University of Almería and currently Associate profesor in University of Almería, Spain)
FINAL CONCLUSIONS

We cannot find a common understanding of what “knowledge centers” are in Spain due to the present legal regulations and for cultural reasons. Adult learning issued by 3 different authorities and policy regulations: education, employment and local, in addition to the 17 autonomous communities’ regulations. In this frame we can find a variety of centres that complement the “knowledge centre” approach (for example, focusing in ICT and a “living Labs” orientation according to regional Innovation and Information Society policies).

Thus:

• on one hand the overall wide regulation is national (ministries of education and ministry of labor)
• and on the other hand, the implementation of these regulations is regional
• this is complemented by the local authorities, responsible for organizing popular education through popular universities, which offer a wide range of educational, training and cultural activities.

In this frame, we can find that there is still a dichotomy regarding formal and informal learning and between information and knowledge. While adult education centres are part of an “education” national regulation, the implementation is regional and local. These centres often coexist with other centres that are based on innovation, science and employment policies and that follow employability, information society and innovation approaches to also cover needs of territories with rural areas, which have different needs.

As a result of this, the information provided to users is fragmented, and as example, a “third country national” living in a rural area asking for a language course may get different responses regarding available centres depending if s/he lives in Galicia or in Andalusia.

In Spain, we do not find a real knowledge centre definition nor common understanding of what “knowledge centers” are, but in practice the mission of 3-Ms; mediator, motor and meeting place depending on the location, is partially covered by regionally funded centers. In the mock exercise we implemented using the 3M positioning questionnaire, the Guadalinfo eCentres from Andalusia fit in all the criteria selected as a meetingplace. The mediator role is half covered as it meets 6 out of the 10 criteria identified in the questionnaire. The centre does not provide councelling, guidance or traineeships because that role is covered via the Andalucía Orienta programme and centres. As to the motor role is oly covered in 3 out of the 7 criteria we find in the questionnaire as some of them are art of the previously mentioned regional based employment and guidance services (Andalucia Orienta).

A key improvement in Spain would be to promote the homogenization of the approach focusing on the adult learner and their needs and not on where the policy or the regulation comes from. From a top-down perspective we may need to go towards a more bottom up orientation: a knowledge centre focusing on the needs of the adult learners.
Describe the practical current state of your country

Knowledge centres are gaining a more general significance and may include several levels of education, where both college/university education and higher vocational education can be included, as well as upper secondary education, primarily in adult education and SFI - Swedish for immigrants - and commissioned education and training. In some cases, there are also folk high school courses and study circle activities.

There is no description for what a knowledge centre should look like, hence it simply looks different in different municipalities in terms of training offered, number of students and infrastructure. At present, we regard premises, tools and staff as the main factors for knowledge centres to serve as a Meeting place, Mediator and Motor of higher education.

From the Vinnova project "New Roads" the following description of knowledge centres for higher education is made:

*There are different names for municipal entities working with or having worked with higher education relocated to the community to a certain extent; knowledge centre, campus, study centre and additionally various forms of proper names such as, for example, Viadidact, CFL Söderhamn (Centre for Flexible Learning) and Knowledge Well. In the final report of the Rural Committee (SOU 2017: 1) chapter four, the problem of skills supply is described from a "whole-country perspective". The concept of knowledge centre for higher education was chosen as a collective name for this form of entity. For these entities there is a national network, NITUS (The Network for Municipal Knowledge Centres), which has about 90 member municipalities today. The entities are structured in different ways with different activities, some offer technology and premises as support for students, while others work with courses and educational programs located in the community. Some entities have researchers attached to their activities, while others see other needs for their operations (SOU 2017: 1).*

The purpose for municipalities to work with knowledge centres is to be able to meet and manage the challenges present on local and regional level concerning future skills needs. The municipalities work with higher education in different ways. Some offer independent courses and program courses that are completely distance-based, others offer courses and programs with their own application code. This study form also has a variety of names, such as distance, flexible or on-site education and training. We have chosen to use the term distance education and training when talking about courses or programs that are wholly or mainly online. When we use our own application code, it can also vary to what extent there are face-to-face meetings, but in those cases the courses or programs are to some extent located in the community.*

What is the legal framework of adult knowledge centres?

The legal framework regulates exams, curricula and syllabi in college/university and higher vocational education, and it also defines who can carry out such education and training. There are also rules concerning the provision of secondary adult education. However, there are no formal rules for knowledge centres as they are a voluntary municipal construction.

What is the current state of research about knowledge centres?

Over the years, several studies have been carried out of students at educational centres, mainly in the provinces of Hälsingland, Dalarna and Småland. In the latest of these, from 2015, we can obtain the following summary:

*The surveys show that higher education students, to a greater extent than before, are women who take educational programs and later get work and stay in their home municipality. The average age of the students is 35, which is significantly higher than those studying on campus. In addition, most students have children and family. Concerning the social background of the college students, they come from the working class to a greater extent than before. Regarding students from Bollnäs, Ljusdal, Nordanstig, Ovanåker and Söderhamn, 64% of their fathers are blue-collar workers. Knowledge centres thus respond to a national desire to broaden the recruitment to higher education.*
Research from colleges and universities and reports from authorities, as well as a few relevant projects are presented in the appendix. In addition to these studies, there are some studies from Academy North and Lapland Municipal Association. A longer list of current research in the field is available in the appendix.

It seems that studies on knowledge centres, flexible learning and distance studies have decreased in recent years. Most of the studies are from the 1990s and 2000s and studies over the past five years are very few, at least from what can be found in the web.

What are the objectives of a knowledge centre?

Some knowledge centres offer everything from adult basic education, adult education for the intellectually challenged, SFI (Swedish For Immigrants), adult education VET to study circles. The knowledge centres offering Higher VET programs are a natural link to working life, as the representatives of the latter need to be the majority in the management group for each Higher VET program. Linked to the knowledge centres of Halsingland Education Association there are also so-called “competence mediators”, who have regular meetings with the business world, and thus can hear what companies need in terms of skilled labour. The ambition is, in one way or other, to try to ensure that such trainings are licensed. This can be done by organising AE VET, applying for Higher VET programs or by persuading other AE VET organisers to use several knowledge centres and in the case of tertiary education try to interact with universities to relocate requested programs, either as a blended learning approach or as pure distance education. The national organisation called Nitus, which is a voluntary association of knowledge centres in the country. It was founded in Söderhamn 1996 with 37 members, and today it has about 90 members. Nitus works with common quality criteria and is the lobby organisation for knowledge centres to make higher education and training available throughout the country.

What impact do knowledge centres have on the surrounding society?

Research results of the presence of knowledge centres show that about 2/3 of students studying at knowledge centres would not go to university unless the knowledge centres existed. And another fifth of the students are uncertain. More than nine out of ten stay in the area where the knowledge centre is located after completing the studies. In addition, the survey studies show that higher education students, even more than before, are women who take educational programs and receive employment and remain in their home municipality. The average age of the students is 35, which is significantly higher than those studying on campus. Furthermore, most of the students have children. Regarding the social background of higher education students at knowledge centres, it is more common that they have a working-class background, as opposed to campus students. The fathers of 64% of the students from Bollnäs, Ljusdal, Nordanstig, Ovanåker and Söderhamn are blue-collar workers. Knowledge centres are thus responding to a national desire to broaden the recruitment to higher education. In addition to getting a job in the home municipality, respondents state themselves that they can participate in the public debate in a completely different way than before and that they are now leading a richer life.

In co-creation workshops with civil servants connected to this issue, the impact of knowledge centres has been discussed and the following views have been mentioned, and rated out of importance:

IN SOCIETY IN GENERAL:
1: Access to higher education on several locations. Increased education level. Important for municipal and regional growth. More people have access to higher education. Provides a local arena for regional, central and international players.
2: Enables higher education. Motor for growth. Reduced unemployment. Broader recruitment. Possibility for “locals” to get a share of higher education. Education - a real and clear alternative when different changes occur.
3: Provides working life with necessary skills. Creates opportunities for individual development. Reduced crime. Local centres are created for knowledge and education. Important for “Life-long learning”.

LOCAL COMMUNITY:
1: Increased educational provision. Increases the level of education. Contributes to the municipality’s development. Generates hope and lowers thresholds, the individual gains access to development.
2: Social contact - breaks the isolation of distance studies. Increases motivation for education.
3: Lowered thresholds to higher education. The threshold is lowered to the college world (or Higher Vocational Education). Makes higher education less dramatic for several groups. Increased collaboration between the local community and the university (increases the possibility of better adaptation to local needs). 

TRAINING:
1: Knowledge is the individual’s opportunity to freedom and power - should be accessible for everyone. Increases the proximity to higher education physically, virtually and to taking the step to higher education.
2: Gives access to education. Allows the business community to hire people with adequate education. Increases the possibility for more people to study by having access to smaller knowledge centres as compared to colleges.
3: Meeting place for education. Lifelong learning becomes more possible.
No rating: Collaboration.

In another workshop the following views were mentioned:
• The possibility of municipal growth when people can be trained locally, which means that they stay in the municipality. Individuals develop personally.
• Strengthened supply of skills to local companies = more local jobs = local development.
• Increased employment.
• Having the opportunity to study locally gives all individuals a life-long opportunity, regardless of where one is in life. It also gives society a good opportunity to get the skills needed. Development for the individual and society. Growth.
• There is an opportunity to access training and acquire skills to meet the demands of everyday life, family etc. Also, the competence remains where the investment is made.
• Great impact on the development of society and on individuals / families when it is possible to study locally. Companies can also solve their skills supply.
• Important in order to increase the level of education of residents (families in the area).
• Important for the supply of skills locally.

What are the learning methods used in adult knowledge centres?
Blended learning is the most common approach of long-term higher studies at knowledge centres, which means that there can be group gatherings at the university and/or that the teacher comes to the knowledge centres, this combined with distance technology, in the form of web conferencing and learning platforms, e.g. Blackboard, Ping-Pong. Some single courses can be completely web-based, with tools like Google Drive, Moodle and similar learning management systems.

The premises and social environment of the knowledge centres are important - that they are equipped with a enough rooms and that the environment feels “homely” and welcoming. As for the technical equipment, it is important that most systems are compatible so that students can use video conferencing, data conferencing systems, Internet, mobile phones in one and the same conference. The staff of the larger knowledge centres usually comprises a manager (head), who has a university degree, and an education coach/administrator and some technical support.

Do the learning methods enhance and prepare the adults for their transition to the labour market?
Learning methods used at knowledge centres have a positive effect on students’ chances on the labour market as they lead to employment in most cases. Long-term education programmes that are guaranteed to lead to jobs are the ones for social workers, nurses, teachers and police officers. Studying as a distance student often requires more autonomy and self-planning skills, as well as good knowledge of communicating with the help of a computer. This means that those who have undergone the training through local knowledge centres are often well prepared for the working life they come to.
What is the role of knowledge centres in relation to the labour market?

Feedback about the role of adult knowledge centres in connection with working life has been given from the labour market by the competence mediators, through the management teams for Higher VET programmes and at labour market days, which serve as a fair for jobseekers. This is also the case with other contacts from the SME’s and the public sector.

What tools are needed to improve the capacity of the knowledge centres to serve the interests of rural and regional communities?

At present, the main factors being investigated, in order to improve the capacity of the knowledge centres, are premises, equipment and staff for the centres to function as meeting places, mediators and motors for higher education. The existence of modern, up-to-date technical equipment and the existence of personal service are two fundamental factors for a well-functioning knowledge centre. Over the years, the technical development has moved forward so that today most systems are compatible, which means that video conferencing, computer conferencing systems, Internet, mobile phones can be used in one and the same conference. It should perhaps be pointed out that an open network is important, so that the municipality’s firewalls do not hinder participation from the home when education is given through the Internet. The premises of the knowledge centre and the social environment are also important - that there are enough classrooms and group rooms, access to a cafeteria, dining areas, toilets and that the environment feels “homely” and welcoming.

The staff is the most important factor of all. Having one or a few people employed, who have student service as their main task and personal experience of college or university studies, is a success factor for a well-functioning knowledge centre.

In order to meet what is required for M = Mediator, there must be a person, familiar with universities and university values, who has acquired a well-functioning contact network there and in addition has sufficient "status" to be able to influence colleges and universities to deliver training programs in demand locally or in the region.

In addition, there is a need for cooperation between different actors or stakeholders. In collaboration with several municipalities it is possible, for example, in dialogue with colleges and universities, to work for the obtaining of a license agreement for examinations and gain access to various courses. In this way, the offer of educational programs can be relocated to different educational centres by using their own unique “application codes”, so that students can start different semesters at neighbouring knowledge centres.

It is also a requirement to bring prospective students to the programs, thus attracting groups that normally do not engage in further studies. Only through making higher education less dramatic, it is possible to get groups from the “working class” to start higher studies to a greater extent. This can happen by encouraging and explaining that it is not excessively difficult, and that most people are able to complete their studies, but at the same time pointing out that it requires a real effort and convey realistic conditions.

Good collaboration with upper secondary adult education also facilitates transition to higher education. Here, there are different models, where upper secondary adult education is in the same or nearby section within the same building, or where they are geographically located in different places, but with collaboration still taking place so that students who take upper secondary courses receive information and make study visits at the knowledge centre for university studies.

An important professional group is also the career counsellors, who present the possibilities of conducting college studies “at home” and can guide the student to appropriate educational programs.

How can local knowledge centres in rural regions be more effective in engagement with disadvantaged adult learners and promote LLL strategies?

For other groups, for example the functionally impaired, an individual adjustment must always be made. It is of great importance that the municipalities take responsibility for this. It is also possible to conduct a special selection to create opportunities for disabled people. At present, access to higher education is not available for the intellectually disabled, but it is possible within the framework of an experimental activity to gain access to higher vocational education.

How best can knowledge centres increase the transfer of knowledge and skills into local rural enterprises and the social economy?
The M = Motor, requires that contacts with working life are very good and that surveys have been carried out regarding existing and future professional shortage areas in the coming years. In the public sector, this is a well-known factor and for that reason educational programs for future social workers, police officers, preschool and elementary school teachers and nurses for example, are offered at several educational centres.

For the needs of the private business sector, it is more difficult to organise training. There are often different types of educational programs that are in demand, for which it is difficult to train groups of people, except for university engineers, who are in demand in many companies. The problem is that it is very difficult to recruit students to these courses. Efforts have been made in several places in the country, but these educational programs have almost always not been carried out, due to lack of applicants.

A small step in the right direction is a collaboration between the municipalities and the University College of Gävle regarding the basic year of science and technology that is currently going on in Gävleborg County, where students study at their educational centres in the municipalities and occasionally do laboratory work at the university.

A good solution model for technical professions, where higher education is required, might be to have small study groups at more education centres all over the country. Within this area, there is great development potential.

How can knowledge centres better contribute to the development of an entrepreneurial culture in rural communities, or regions?

By stimulating entrepreneurial education and having an intra- and entrepreneurial approach in their activities, knowledge centres can contribute to the development of an entrepreneurial culture. It can also be stimulated through Junior Achievement Companies, frequently started in upper secondary school.

What steps can a knowledge centre take to stimulate equity and equality in rural communities and regions?

One of the measures to stimulate equity and equality in rural communities is, first and foremost, to ensure that access to education is attractive to both men and women and that it can lead to work in the local area. It is also vital to promote traditionally male and female professions by emphasising the benefits for the under-represented sex.

What are the main problems an adult educator face with disadvantaged learners?

It is the responsibility of the education provider to support students with disabilities. Having said that, it is difficult to say anything specific, because the needs are different. What is possible to say, in general terms, is that support often is demanding in terms of resources and competences. Knowledge centres try, as far as possible, to help solve the specific problems that exist, it can help with speech synthesis, recording of text and similar support.

What are the main challenges for knowledge centres?

The main challenges are to make local politicians recognise the importance of having a functioning knowledge centre in the municipality which can contribute to the supply of skills for both the public sector and private industry. Funding is the second major challenge. It is important to realise that this is a matter of interest for both the local, regional level and national level.

What improvements should be made in order to offer services that meet the needs of the target group?

In order to offer services, meeting the needs of the target group, improvement of premises is needed, above all more well-adapted venues with, very often, increased size. There also need to be enough numbers of trained staff. It is vital that the person in charge of the management, as well as contacts and collaboration with universities and the surrounding community, has an academic degree. In addition, there is a need of a person whose primary task is that of assisting the students. Technology support is also essential.
Conclusions

Knowledge centres make higher education available in a way that allows people, in the rural area they live, to study further and complete an education program leading to work in the local community. Examples of such work include nurses, teachers, social workers and police officers. Several students must first complete preparatory courses at upper secondary level to acquire the necessary qualifications to enter higher education. There is also the possibility to take Higher VET via knowledge centres, something that is becoming more common as Higher VET is expanded. These courses often consist of two-year vocational training courses that the labour market has asked for. In these programs LIA = learning at work constitutes one part of the training, which is done at the workplace.
GOOD EXAMPLE

Västervik Campus

Campus Västervik defines itself as a “local campus”, which means that it is owned and operated by the municipality of Västervik and works with place-based courses from various colleges and universities. It is supported by the municipality, educational institutions and companies. They mainly work with video conferencing as distance-bridging technology, but also other forms of technical solutions, as well as personnel on site in the premises such as lecturers. Campus Västervik has been assigned a local mission to work with higher education and contribute to the post-secondary education level being increased by 0.5% units according to Statistics Sweden’s measurements.

At Campus Västervik, 18 people work, the activities are varied, and staff are employed in service centres, communication and marketing, R&D (research and development in welfare and engineering science), education and labour market. In addition to the regular staff, staff are affiliated with several different colleges and universities, for example through lecturers and various research projects.

Describing what partners Campus Västervik works with can be partly difficult to specify, since there are more than those currently offering training or working with research today. At present, there are five different universities and colleges that offer education in the community and some of these are also active in ongoing research projects.

The two universities and colleges that are located closest to Västervik municipality are Linnaeus University and Linköping University, both with a geographical distance corresponding to at least 1 ½-2 hours of commuting by car single trip.

At Campus Västervik there are about 350 students enrolled in programs and independent courses, including those taking solely distance-based courses, but using the premises. Students not included in this figure are students who take part in commissioned education and training, higher vocational education or those who sit exams locally, but otherwise do not study in the premises.

COULD THE GOOD PRACTICE BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER COUNTRIES/REGIONS?

Any possibility of transfer of good practice depends on the will of local politicians as well as the annual budget and the objectives of their operations.

If the project has already been transferred, please identify the main issues/problems which were addressed in applying the practice

That the political will exists together with hard work from the knowledge centre manager and collaboration, preferably in networks with other knowledge centres.
SKILLS NEEDED

In co-creation workshops adult learners have discussed and rated skills they consider necessary to develop.

DATE AND PLACE: 11 feb 2019, Söderhamn
PARTICIPANTS: people working at knowledge centers and one student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>MENTORING SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| MEDIATION                 | Information management  
                              | Relationship management  
                              | Networking skills  
                              | Understanding the role of mentor |
| EMPLOYMENT FACILITATION   | Understanding careers and employment  
                              | Problem-solving, trouble-shooting, and dealing with blockages  
                              | Networking skills  
                              | Understanding diversity |
| SOCIAL SUPPORT            | Emotional Intelligence  
                              | Counselling  
                              | Listening skills  
                              | Questioning skills |
| OTHER                     | Good knowledge of IT to be able to support students with IT-related problems. |

INTERVIEWS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED WITH
- The present Chairman of Nitus,
- The former and first Chairman of Nitus and
- Assistant campus manager, Campus Västervik

REFERENCES
SOU Styr- och resursutredningen (Strut) (U 2017:05)
Campus Västervik: https://www.vastervik.se/Campus-Vastervik/
https://www.uka.se/kvalitet--examenstillstand.html
https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/vuxenutbildningen
https://www.myh.se/
The Know-Hubs project is funded by Erasmus+ and is implemented by an international consortium in Sweden, Romania, Spain, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland and Greece.