



EPALE

Electronic Platform
for Adult Learning in Europe

N. **19** June 2026

Epale Journal

on Adult Learning and Continuing Education



**Assessing the impact of Erasmus+
in Adult Education: empirical evidence,
transformative processes, and comparative
perspectives within the RIA-AE Framework**

Guest editor Vanna Boffo

**IND
IRE** ISTITUTO
NAZIONALE
DOCUMENTAZIONE
INNOVAZIONE
RICERCA EDUCATIVA

RUIAP
Rete Universitaria Italiana per
l'Apprendimento Permanente

Epale Journal on Adult Learning and Continuing Education

Online magazine on adult learning edited by Ruiap and INDIRE- EPALE NSS Italy
Biannual release on the Epale website. Each issue is also available in English

All issues of the journal are available at the following address:
<http://epalejournal.indire.it>

Editor-in-chief: Luca Rosetti

Scientific directors: Vanna Boffo and Laura Formenti

ISSN 2532 - 7801 EPALE Journal [online]

ISSN 2533-1442 EPALE Journal [Print]

Scientific journal for Area 11 (pursuant to the ANVUR Regulation approved by Resolution of the Board of Directors no. 42 of 20/2/2019).

The articles are subject to double blind peer review.

Scientific Committee:

Aureliana Alberici (Presidente onorario Ruiap), Martina Blasi (INDIRE-Unità EPALE Italia), Vanna Boffo (Università degli Studi di Firenze), Franco Brambilla (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Barbara Bruschi (Università di Torino), Ilaria Buonomo (Libera Università Maria SS. Assunta), Alessandra Ceccherelli (INDIRE-Unità EPALE Italia), Giuseppe Luca De Luca Picione (Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II), Giovanna Del Gobbo (Università degli Studi di Firenze), Daniela Ermini (INDIRE-Unità EPALE Italia), Laura Formenti (Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca, Past President Ruiap), Fabiana Fusco (Università degli Studi di Udine), Marta Ghisi (Università degli Studi di Padova), Elena Luppi (Università di Bologna), Francesca Malagnini (Università per Stranieri di Perugia), Mauro Palumbo (Past President Ruiap), Gigliola Paviotti (Università degli Studi di Macerata), Roberta Piazza (Università di Catania), Fausta Scardigno (Università degli Studi di Bari "Aldo Moro"), Lorenza Venturi (INDIRE-Unità EPALE Italia).

Editorial staff: Glenda Galeotti (Università degli Studi di Firenze), Christel Schachter (Università degli Studi di Firenze), Marco Ceccarelli (Università degli Studi di Firenze), Davide Bonaiuti (Università degli Studi di Firenze)

Editorial coordination: Lorenza Venturi

Chief editor: Alessandra Ceccherelli

Graphic design: Miriam Guerrini, INDIRE – Ufficio Comunicazione

Layout: Studio Paolo Curina in collab. with Martina Trevisani

INDIRE - The National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (INDIRE) is the oldest research institution of the Ministry of Education. Since its foundation in 1925, the Institute has been supporting the evolution of the Italian school system by investing in training and innovation and supporting the processes of school improvement.
<http://www.indire.it/>

EPALE - Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe is the new multilingual online community for adult learning professionals, designed to improve the quality of adult learning provision in Europe. In Italy the EPALE NSS support service is hosted by INDIRE.
<http://ec.europa.eu/epale/it> | Contacts: epale@indire.it

The Italian University Network for Lifelong Learning (RUIAP) brings 31 Italian universities, organizations and professionals together that are all committed in promoting lifelong learning.
<http://www.ruiap.it> | Contacts: rete.ruiap@gmail.com

About the RIA-AE Network: <https://www.ria-ae.eu/>

This publication was produced with the contribution of the European Commission.



**Cofinanziato
dall'Unione europea**



Florence: INDIRE –Unità EPALE Italia

© 2026 INDIRE - Italy

Table of contents

5 Editorial

by Vanna Boffo

RESEARCHES WITHIN THE RIA-AE NETWORK

17 Mainstreaming intellectual outputs of cooperation partnerships (KA2) within Erasmus+: lessons learned from the Adult Education Sector

Bert-Jan Buiskool, Victor Verlaan

25 Erasmus+ as a policy measure to promote access to transnational mobility

Francesca Torlone, Marco Ceccarelli

39 “Non-obvious” narratives: mobility adult participants’ experiences from the perspective of reflexivity theory

Julita Pieńkosz

48 The value of a co-creational community approach for adult education and participation in a changing world

Willeke van der Werf

56 The Erasmus+ and adult education local organisations in Portugal: discussion based on an impact study

Paula Guimarães, Carolina Pereira, Ana Nascimento David

67 Rethinking the impact of Erasmus+ on Adult Education: lessons from Slovenia

Borut Mikulec

75 Research-based Impact Analysis of Erasmus+ Adult Education Programmes (RIA-AE) as an Evaluative Architecture for Lifelong Learning: Erasmus+, Adult Education and the Role of the National Agency in the Italian Context

Daniela Ermini

84 Formation of the self and KA1 mobility among adult learners in Italy: initial evidence from the second survey round within the RIA-AE Network

Vanna Boffo, Christel Schachter

RESEARCHES WITHIN THE RIA-AE FRAMEWORK

96 Beyond the journey: Erasmus+ mobility as a catalyst for transformative learning

Antonio Sacristano

- 102** Beyond language boundaries: an Italy–Spain comparative Erasmus+ study on L2 assessment and certification for adult migrants

Piera De Gironimo

- 109** From the Canary Islands to Finland: a comparative perspective on adult learner well-being through Erasmus+

Ángel Navarro Rodríguez

- 117** Bridging formal and non-formal adult language education: Erasmus+ job shadowing at VHS Frankfurt within RIA-AE

M. Amparo Aymerich Bort

EXPERIENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS WITHIN THE RIA-AE FRAMEWORK

- 124** “Tu duca, tu signore, tu maestro”: an abductive competence model for E+ trainings on sustainability

Angelo Fanelli

- 133** L’impatto di Erasmus+ nell’educazione degli adulti su organizzazioni e partecipanti: una lettura comparativa tra Paesi

Maria Teresa Caccavale

- 138** EVLE: functional literacy, inclusion and European citizenship in adult education

Juan Cristóbal Ruiz González

- 146** Erasmus+ as a framework for professional development of second chance school teachers: the case of KA1 mobility project

Ivan B. Šarčević

- 151** The Erasmus+ TOP project: job shadowing at school

Cristina Meneguzzo

- 160** EOI de Collado Villalba and Extensión de San Lorenzo de El Escorial’s Erasmus+ experience

María Álvarez Álvarez

- 168** Individualised teaching in adult schools. Innovation project based on the finnish model for adult students with learning difficulties

Rocío Romero Aguilera, Santiago Clúa Nieto

- 176** The NEAR project as a model and a method: assessing the impact of Erasmus+ through proximity and narration on adult education in the Naples area

Marianna Capo

Editoriale

English version follows

Una riflessione sull'impatto sociale e il programma Erasmus+. Introduzione per una ricerca europea

Vanna Boffo

Il contesto di riferimento

Chiedersi, oggi, nel contesto politico, culturale, sociale che stiamo vivendo quale sia il ruolo dell'Educazione degli Adulti in Europa è quantomai importante. Viviamo in un tempo di populismi attivi, di migrazioni massicce e, al contempo, percepite come invasive, viviamo in un tempo dove il termine *communitas* (Esposito, 2010) si è rarefatto di fronte alle chiusure sociali e politiche sempre più incisive.

In questo nostro tempo, distante dalla fine della seconda guerra mondiale, distante dall'ordine che la politica mondiale aveva dato al globo terrestre, abbiamo perso il senso dell'altro. Il numero delle guerre locali, eppure globali, sta lì, a farci vedere che abbiamo dimenticato una identità umana. Eppure non dobbiamo lasciar andare la speranza. Ecco, allora, che la politica europea *su e per* l'Educazione degli Adulti si rende fortemente centrale.

Ha un senso parlare di politica per la formazione degli adulti in Europa, oggi? Al netto delle riflessioni metodologiche, al netto della indagine che già da circa tre anni si sta portando avanti, ha un senso cercare di capire cosa voglia dire essere *europei*? Anche un viaggio, in termini tecnici si dice mobilità, può sostenere l'idea di Europa? Perché al fondo delle indagini che qui presentiamo, la domanda centrale è unica e consiste nel chiedersi se il progetto di mobilità intrapreso sia stato una esperienza di formazione adeguata al fine che si era prefisso. Questo il nostro assunto di partenza: nel contemporaneo scenario del Lifelong Learning, il Programma Erasmus+ trascende la sua funzione di strumento di mobilità per configurarsi come un dispositivo pedagogico complesso, essenziale per lo sviluppo del potenziale umano e culturale europeo (European Commission, 2019). Sappiamo, infatti, che il Programma *Erasmus+*, fin dall'esordio del primo nucleo di idea *Erasmus*, avrebbe dovuto agire quale leva strategica per l'innovazione dei sistemi educativi, per lo sviluppo di condizioni di apprendimento/educazione formali, informali e non formali (European Commission, 2000) e per la promozione di una cittadinanza attiva e consapevole (European Commission, 2015).

In questa cornice sociale, educativa e politica, il progetto europeo *Research-based Impact Analysis in Adult Education (RIA-AE)*, condotto da un network formato da varie agenzie Erasmus di altrettanti paesi europei, sta lavorando proprio per dare evidenza a quanto è stato e può essere implementato attraverso la mobilità europea degli adulti in formazione. Il progetto ha preso avvio nel 2023 e si concluderà nel 2027.

Nel settore dell'Educazione degli Adulti, strutturalmente connotato da una marcata eterogeneità degli attori, la valutazione dell'efficacia del Programma Erasmus+ pone sfide metodologiche ed epistemologiche significative. Sebbene la partecipazione in termini

Formation of the self and KA1 mobility among adult learners in Italy: initial evidence from the second survey round within the RIA-AE Network

Vanna Boffo¹, Christel Schachter²

Keywords

Erasmus+, KA1 mobility, Adult learners, Formation of the self, Lifelong learning.

Abstract

This contribution analyses KA1 mobility of adult learners in Italy on the basis of aggregate data from the second Survey Round of the RIA-AE Network. In the context of a descriptive-interpretative paradigm, mobility is conceptualised as an educational and formative endeavour that engages with adult subjectivity by fostering a nexus between personal lived experience, educational accompaniment, and future-oriented projectuality. The analysis takes into consideration a range of participant profiles, with particular attention paid to the participants' access to their first mobility experience, the support available to them, the outcomes they have perceived, and the knowledge they have declared. These aspects are analysed in relation to the horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme. The results demonstrate that participation varies according to gender and age, with adults in the central and later stages of life exhibiting a notable presence, particularly in group mobility. The outcomes that have been declared pertain to the development of practical skills, confidence, autonomy, responsibility and projectual orientation. In the context of a descriptive survey based on declarative data, the evidence provides valuable insights into the interpretation of KA1 mobility as an experience of self-recognition, capacity to act, and conscious belonging to social, cultural, and European contexts.

1. Introduction

The introduction of specific formative mobility opportunities addressed to adult learners represents one of the new features of the current Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programming cycle, defined by Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2021). Within this architecture, Key Action 1 (KA1), Learning Mobility of Individuals, supports pathways addressed to learners and staff across the different sectors of education, training, youth and sport, also including adult education (European Commission, 2026). In the domain of adult education, this openness assumes particular significance, as it enables adult learning to be situated within a framework that cannot be reduced to professional development alone. Instead, it relates to the possibility of continuing to learn throughout one's life, in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. This approach is consistent with the 'European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030' and with the Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move', adopted in May 2024, which strengthen the value of lifelong learning and learning mobility as opportunities to be made more accessible and inclusive (Council of the European Union, 2021; 2024).

Within this institutional framework, KA1 mobility of adult learners represents an area of particular interest for understanding how a transnational learning pathway may intersect with the formation of the self and with social participation in adulthood. The present contribution takes this area as its specific object of analysis in the Italian context, drawing on the aggregate quantitative data produced within the second Survey Round of RIA-AE. The RIA-AE Network (*Research-based Impact Analysis of Erasmus+ Adult Education Programmes*) is a long-term initiative that was initiated in 2022. It is a transnational research and monitoring network that aims to

strengthen the evidence base on the impact of the Erasmus+ programme in the adult education sector (Buiskool, Krichewsky-Wegener, & Erckrath, 2024). This is achieved through the involvement of national agencies and research institutions from twenty-one European countries. Consequently, the article does not seek to provide a comprehensive examination of the Erasmus+ programme or the degree of organisational collaboration. Instead, its focus is on adult participants as subjects of the formative experience, who are called upon to engage with a range of heterogeneous cultural, linguistic, educational and relational environments, mobilising their personal resources, awareness and possibilities for action.

The decision to focus on KA1 mobility responds to the need to analyse the micro level of the experience, relating to adult learners. This distinguishes it from the meso level, referring to beneficiary organisations, staff and the project-related and organisational conditions that make mobility possible, and from the macro level, which refers to the adult education system, European policies and the institutional orientations that define its frame of reference. Such boundaries allow for a more direct investigation of the correlation between mobility and adult subjectivity, thereby facilitating an analysis of how participants report having experienced the journey, which aspects of the experience are recognised as significant, and how the available evidence can be understood as descriptive indicators of a possible educational and formative process. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider the participants' profile in relation to gender, age, mode of mobility, and the life-course perspective, while also directing attention to the conditions that accompany the pathway -with particular reference to the first Erasmus+ experience, the preparation received, and language support. This, in turn, facilitates the interpretation of perceived benefits and declared knowledge in relation to skills, confidence, autonomy, responsibility, projectuality, intercultural openness, and European awareness.

The research question may be formulated as follows: What quantitative evidence makes it possible to interpret KA1 mobility of adult learners in Italy as an educational and formative experience associated with self-perception, capacity to act and participation across the life course? In this direction, the contribution proposes an interpretation of the outcomes declared by participants. These outcomes are not to be regarded as objective and immediately measurable effects, but rather as evidence which, within the limits of a descriptive-interpretative design, can be understood in the light of a theory of adult experience and of processes of formation of the self, as outlined in the theoretical framework.

2. Formation of the self in the KA1 mobility of adult learners

Within the framework of KA1 mobility programmes targeting adult learners, the formation of the self allows for a pedagogical interpretation of the relationship between lived experience, self-awareness and future planning. Mobility does not concern only the acquisition of knowledge or skills, but also the way in which the subject attributes meaning to their experiences, re-elaborates them in the light of their own history and integrates them into a personal trajectory that is still susceptible to alteration. Indeed, in adulthood, learning involves coming to terms with one's life experiences, recognising their meaning through a process of reflection, and reorganising one's understanding of oneself, others and the world (Schön, 1983; Mezirow, 1991).

KA1 mobility places adults into an unfamiliar situation, where distance from familiar points of reference may stimulate new ways of learning, orientating oneself, communicating and participating. Its pedagogical relevance stems not only from the transnational character of the experience, but also from its ability to foster greater awareness of a journey that has already been undertaken.

Adults do not participate in mobility programmes as abstract entities, but as individuals with specific backgrounds, formative memories, family and social responsibilities, cultural affiliations, personal and professional experiences, vulnerabilities, and expectations for the future. Exposure to different linguistic, cultural and educational

environments can therefore highlight the relationship between what individuals know, what they fear and what they discover they are capable of doing. Indeed, it is the experience of continuity, the reorganization of the relationship between the individual and their environment, and the opening up of further possibilities for understanding and action that constitute the formative experience (Dewey, 1916; 1938). It may also influence the perspectives of meaning through which adults interpret themselves and the world. However, this possibility does not justify viewing every form of mobility from a transformative perspective. Transformation is neither a linear consequence of exposure to something new, nor a result that can be directly verified through descriptive data, as it depends on the conditions underpinning the experience, on opportunities for reflection, and on the possibility of integrating what has been experienced into one's personal perspective (Mezirow, 1997).

From this perspective, mobility can be understood as a formative threshold. The process of engaging with an unfamiliar educational environment entails more than simply entering another country; it involves navigating an unfamiliar situation in which personal resources, encounters with otherness, educational mediation and subjective re-elaboration all interplay. A new environment has the potential to expand the scope for understanding and participation; however, it can also result in a sense of disorientation, particularly when the conditions required to prepare the individual for the experience, to guide them and to support their presence are absent. The educational value of mobility therefore lies in the quality of the support mechanisms that enable adults to navigate new experiences without being overwhelmed by them, whilst fostering their autonomy, sense of responsibility and ability to make sense of their experiences.

An understanding of the objectives and planned activities, the guidance provided by the organisation and educators, the support of the reference group and language support all help to make mobility more accessible and feasible. These conditions help adults to enter their new environment with greater awareness, to understand the situations they encounter and to cope with uncertainty without feeling excluded. This standpoint pertains to the realm of educational care, encompassing the provision of individualised attention to each learner's unique needs and personal history, the cultivation of a conducive relationship, and the assumption of responsibility for establishing the conditions that facilitate the engagement with, comprehension of, and processing of the educational experience. Care does not diminish the challenge of encountering the new, nor does it take the place of the individual; conversely, it supports the conditions enabling the adult to take part in the learning situation and gradually recognise their own capacity to act within it (Boffo, 2006; 2011; Tronto, 1993; 2013). In the context of adult mobility, providing care entails the creation of an environment in which encounters with otherness do not result in disorientation. This is achieved by preparing, informing, accompanying and providing linguistic support to the individual without relieving them of the responsibility of going through the experience.

The provision of linguistic support to an adult abroad is not merely concerned with the enhancement of their communicative proficiency; it is also concerned with the facilitation of their understanding of the environment in which they find themselves and the enablement of their active participation. The process of communicating in a language which one has not yet fully mastered necessitates an openness to error, the ability to request clarification, the capacity to negotiate meanings, and the acceptance of a certain degree of communicative vulnerability. It is precisely at this stage that what initially appears to be a limitation can take on educational value when the participant realises that they are able to understand, communicate and be understood even in a situation that is not entirely under their control. Language thus becomes not merely a functional tool, but also a space in which the individual experiences their own capacity to relate to others of their own accord.

When the experience is sustained by such conditions, the subject has greater possibilities to recognise their own resources, take initiative, orientate themselves within the situation and participate with greater awareness. The capacity to act does not stem solely from an individual's disposition, but from the interplay between personal

resources, social conditions, available opportunities and one's perception of one's own effectiveness. (Bandura, 1997; Sen, 1999). In adult learning, this possibility is rooted in previous experience, concrete needs, motivations connected to real life and the integration of the cognitive, emotional and social dimensions of learning (Knowles, 1980; Jarvis, 2004; Illeris, 2007). For this reason, competence is not reduced to performance, but concerns the capacity to mobilise personal and relational resources in meaningful situations. The pedagogically relevant passage is not only from not knowing to knowing, but from knowing to recognising oneself as capable of acting. Such recognition does not occur in isolation; rather, it is shaped through relationships and interaction with others. Mobility places the participant amongst a variety of interlocutors, practices and affiliations, through which otherness takes on not only an intercultural value but, as has been said, also a self-reflective value. Through engagement with different ways of communicating, learning and participating, the adult may understand differently their own position, points of reference and possibilities. From this standpoint, adult autonomy does not signify the absence of support; rather, it can evolve within relationships that render the experience viable, bolster personal initiative, and transform interactions with others into opportunities for acknowledgement and the cultivation of values.

When this encounter assumes a formative character, the process of constructing adult subjectivity also opens onto a civic dimension. Adult education cannot be reduced solely to employability or to the updating of functional skills, since it also concerns the possibility of participating, critically interpreting reality, recognising rights and responsibilities, inhabiting plural contexts and contributing to social life. Adult learning can thus be understood as a process that intertwines personal development, inclusion, social awareness and democratic participation (Milana, 2012; De Greef, Segers & Verté, 2010). In the case of KA1 mobility, this dimension is not taken as a directly verifiable outcome, but as a pedagogical horizon within which to question the relationship between transnationality, otherness and belonging to a wider social space. From this perspective, it is necessary to distinguish between a cultural and value-based citizenship, more immediately connected to openness to otherness, understanding of social diversity and knowledge of the European space, and explicit democratic participation, connected with more formalised practices of civic and political engagement. This distinction makes it possible to read the data without overloading them with meanings they cannot bear.

On this basis, the quantitative evidence will be interpreted not as direct proof of personal transformation, but as descriptive traces through which to question the relationship between mobility, educational accompaniment, capacity to act, relationship and social participation. The formation of the self is therefore assumed as the pedagogical key to the KA1 experience, insofar as it enables an understanding of how the adult subject may attribute meaning to mobility, recognise their own resources and situate themselves with greater awareness within broader social, cultural and educational contexts.

3. Adult Learners in KA1 mobility in Italy: initial evidence

3.1. Methodology

The empirical basis of this paper is founded on a re-analysis of aggregated secondary quantitative data relating to adult learners involved in individual or group mobility experiences in the adult education sector in Italy. The survey makes it possible to distinguish the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programming period, the RIA-AE Survey Round 2025-2026 and the period of the mobilities observed, 2021-2024, thereby specifying the temporal perimeter within which the analysis is situated.

Since the data have already been aggregated in percentage form, the analysis assumes a predominantly descriptive-interpretative nature and does not use statistical inference techniques. The aim is not to generalise

the outcomes beyond the available data, nor to measure causal effects relating to mobility, but rather to interpret the observed trends from an educational perspective, by linking participants' profiles, access conditions, support, perceived benefits and reported knowledge. The findings are therefore regarded as descriptive indicators of complex educational and training processes, rather than objective measures of personal transformation.

In relation to the research question, the formation of the self is considered neither as a directly measurable variable nor as a result that automatically derives from participation in mobility. It is interpreted as a key through which to analyse the convergence of multiple dimensions, such as access to the first Erasmus+ experience, the preparation received, language support, perceived benefits in terms of skills, self-confidence, independence and responsibility, and the declared knowledge relating to social diversity, the European space and the horizontal priorities of the programme. The most relevant indicators were selected on the basis of their relationship with adult subjectivity and with the educational conditions of mobility, and then reorganised into four interconnected analytical clusters. The first concerns the profile of participants; the second examines access to the first Erasmus+ experience and the forms of preparation, orientation and support that accompany participation; the third considers perceived benefits in terms of skills, confidence, independence, responsibility and personal planning; the fourth, finally, concerns the declared knowledge in relation to the horizontal priorities of the programme, with particular attention to social diversity, the European space and the civic dimension of mobility.

The distinction between individual mobility and group mobility is also considered as a descriptive criterion, rather than as a basis for comparison between statistically equivalent groups. These two modes outline different configurations of the KA1 experience and allow to observe how mobility may assume different forms in relation to personal exposure to the transnational context, the presence of the group and modes of accompaniment. The differences identified in the data must therefore not be interpreted as effects directly attributable to the mode of participation, but as descriptive elements to be assessed with caution.

Another methodological element to consider is the variability of the information sources, which are determined by the availability of valid cases for each indicator. As regards individual mobility, variability is limited, since the base fluctuates from N=1116 for gender to N=1088 for age, without significantly changing the overall scale of the observation. By contrast, for group mobility, gender is available for N=2023 participants, whereas other indicators, such as age, preparation, language support, perceived benefits and declared knowledge with respect to the horizontal priorities, are based on smaller samples, ranging from N=238 to N=262. This disparity requires caution in interpretation, since the group-mobility values represent the valid cases available for each indicator and do not automatically extend to the entire population of participants.

3.2. Participant profile in KA1 mobility

The first stage of the analysis focuses on the profile of the participants (Table 1). Variables relating to gender and age are not considered indicators of impact, but rather descriptive elements that help to understand who benefits from KA1 mobility and at what stage of the life cycle it takes place. The gender data show a female prevalence in both cases: 62% in individual mobility (N=1116 participants) and 64% in group mobility (N=2023). These data represent the composition of the population surveyed and do not allow inferences to be drawn about the declared benefits.

The age distribution makes it possible to move more directly towards the life-cycle perspective. With regard to individual mobility, which is calculated on a sample of N=1,088 participants, the 18–29 age group is the most prevalent, accounting for 59 per cent, followed by the 30–44, 45–59 and 60+ age groups, which account for 15 per cent, 14 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. Turning to group mobility, the distribution is more complex, based on a sample of N=238 participants. The age distribution of the group is as follows: 24 per cent of individuals

are in the 18–29 age group, 41 per cent are aged between 30 and 44, 17 per cent are aged between 45 and 59, and 18 per cent are in the 60+ age group. These two configurations indicate a possible complementarity: individual mobility mainly reaches young adults, whereas group mobility, limited to the valid cases available for age, shows a more substantial presence of adults in the central and later stages of life.

Table 1 - Participant profile in KA1 mobility.

Dimension	Information base	Selected data	Interpretative function
Gender, individual mobility	N=1116	Women 62%; Men 38%	Composition of the population reached
Gender, group mobility	N=2023	Women 64%; Men 35%; undefined 1%	Confirmation of female prevalence
Age, individual mobility	N=1088	18-29: 59%; 30-44: 15%; 45-59: 14%; 60+: 10%	Prevalence of young adults
Age, group mobility	N=238	18-29: 24%; 30-44: 41%; 45-59: 17%; 60+: 18%	Greater differentiation across the life course

Source: authors' elaboration, based on aggregate data from the second Survey Round of RIA-AE.

Note: N values vary according to the mode of mobility and the indicator, depending on the number of valid cases available for each question (see § 3.1).

These data allow us to view KA1 mobility in a long-term perspective. The participation of people from different age groups – and in particular of adults in the middle and later stages of group mobility – suggests that adult learners should not be regarded as a homogeneous category, nor should mobility be confined solely to the professional sphere. This interpretation is in line with studies on active ageing and the ageing society, building on the policy framework proposed by the World Health Organisation and pedagogical reflections on the need to support adults' life trajectories through educational and training processes capable of fostering autonomy, social relationships and social participation (WHO, 2002; 2015; Boffo et al., 2025).

From this perspective, KA1 mobility may be interpreted as part of a broader process of learning across the adult life course, in which the formative experience sustains not only the updating of knowledge and skills, but also the possibility of continuing to plan one's own existence within social and community contexts. While the inclusion of the 60+ age group does not imply a specific focus on older adults, it underscores the potential for the Erasmus+ experience to encompass adults across diverse stages of their lives and educational and social trajectories. This assertion serves to substantiate its relevance as a domain for engagement and acknowledgement throughout the entire spectrum of adult life.

3.3. Access to first mobility and accompaniment

The second segment of the analysis revolves around access to mobility and the conditions that facilitate the experience (Table 2). 79% of participants, out of a total of N=1116, state that this is their first experience with Erasmus+. This figure suggests that KA1 mobility can be regarded as a formative milestone, as, for the majority of participants, it represents their first entry into a European learning environment.

The educational value of this threshold emerges more clearly when placed in relation to support indicators. The vast majority of participants in both individual and group mobility programmes report receiving some form of

preparation, training, or information from the organisation. Notably, the proportion of individuals who receive such support is consistently high, with 93% of those in individual programmes and an overwhelming 100% of those involved in group programmes confirming this. Furthermore, 60% of participants (N=252) state that they received support to improve their language skills before or during their mobility placement. Although these data do not allow direct detection of difficulties or feelings of subjective disorientation, they suggest that entry into the pathway is sustained by organisational and educational systems that prepare, orientate and accompany the experience.

Table 2 - Access to first mobility and accompaniment.

Dimension	Information base	Selected data	Interpretative function
First Erasmus+ experience	N=1116	79%	Mobility as a formative threshold
Preparation, training or information received - individual mobility	N=1116	93%	Accompaniment of the individual experience
Preparation, training or information received - group mobility	N=262	100%	Accompaniment of the group experience
Language support before or during mobility	N=252	60%	Language as a condition for relationship and participation

Source: authors' elaboration based on aggregate data from the second Survey Round of RIA-AE.

Note: N values vary according to the indicator considered and correspond to the number of valid cases available for each question and for each mode of mobility.

The integration of preparation and language support is instrumental in enhancing accessibility, thereby equipping participants with the necessary tools to navigate, comprehend the context, communicate, and engage in training activities. This support functions as an educational component of mobility; while it does not supplant personal initiative, it renders access to the international context more structured and less dependent solely on individuals' ability to cope with uncertainty.

3.4. Perceived benefits and formative dimensions of KA1 mobility

The third part of the analysis concerns the benefits perceived by the participants (Table 3). The acquisition or improvement of useful practical skills is declared by 82% of participants in individual mobility and by 92% of those involved in group mobility. Such data suggests that, from the perspective of adult learners, KA1 mobility is associated with practical learning, which is recognised as useful and potentially transferable to various contexts in life. In addition to the skills dimension, indicators relating to increased self-confidence, independence and responsibility also proved significant. These were reported by 71% of participants in individual mobility programmes and 90% of those in group mobility programmes. Greater clarity regarding personal and professional goals was reported by 53% and 61% respectively. Although these data cannot confirm a direct link between mobility and personal transformation, they indicate a significant convergence of declared learning, self-recognition, and projectual orientation – a space where the shift from knowing how to do to feeling capable of doing can be descriptively identified.

Table 3 – Perceived benefits and formative dimensions of KA1 mobility.

Indicator	Individual mobility	Group mobility	Interpretative reading
Acquisition or improvement of useful practical skills	82%	92%	Concrete and transferable learning
Strengthening of self-confidence, independence and responsibility	71%	90%	Agency and self-recognition
Greater clarity regarding personal and professional objectives	53%	61%	Personal project-planning
Perceived improvement in employment opportunities	38%	31%	Employment-related outcome present but not dominant
Greater possibility of accessing further study pathways	30%	38%	Formative continuity

Source: Authors' elaboration based on aggregate data from the second Survey Round of RIA-AE.

Note: information base: individual mobility N=1116; group mobility N=262. For some indicators, multiple answers were possible; the percentages do not constitute exclusive distributions.

The resulting outcome alters a purely functionalist view of mobility. While benefits for the professional sphere and access to further study pathways are taken into account, these are less prominent than the indicators linked to skills, confidence, independence, responsibility and clarification of objectives. Mobility, therefore, is not reduced merely to an opportunity for professional development, but also includes subjective aspects of recognition and personal re-planning. However, it is important to recall that these are perceived benefits. The results obtained are a consequence of individual motivations, organisational mediations and relational contexts, and do not represent automatic effects of mobility itself.

3.5. Horizontal priorities and the civic dimension of KA1 mobility

The fourth nucleus of the analysis concerns participants' declared knowledge in relation to the horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme (Table 4). Among the indicators surveyed, understanding of social diversity recorded the highest figures, at 72 per cent for individual mobility and 87 per cent for group mobility. Subsequent to these, the subjects of Europe, the European Union and European values were identified, with 58 per cent and 82 per cent respectively. Furthermore, the subjects of the fight against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia and racism were identified, with 50 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. The remaining indicators, pertaining to sustainability, digital technologies and interest in elections and democratic processes, offer a more nuanced perspective.

Table 4 - Horizontal priorities and the civic dimension of KA1 mobility.

Indicator	Individual mobility	Group mobility	Interpretative reading
Understanding of social diversity	72%	87%	Intercultural openness
Knowledge of Europe, the European Union and European values	58%	82%	European awareness
Countering discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia and racism	50%	60%	Ethical-social sensitivity
Knowledge of environmental and climate sustainability	48%	53%	Socio-environmental responsibility
Useful use of digital technologies	43%	51%	Digital strengthening
Greater inclination to use digital technologies	39%	43%	Openness to digital learning
Change of habits towards sustainability	39%	43%	Orientation towards sustainability
Greater interest in elections and democratic processes	32%	32%	Explicit democratic participation less immediate

Source: authors' elaboration based on aggregate data from the second Survey Round of RIA-AE.

Note: information base: individual mobility N=1116; group mobility N=262. For some indicators, multiple answers were possible; the percentages do not constitute exclusive distributions.

The data shows that participants primarily associate KA1 mobility with intercultural and European dimensions, thereby broadening their relational and social horizons beyond mere operational skills. Understanding social diversity, knowledge of the European space and sensitivity towards issues such as discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia and racism outline an area of learning that concerns the relationship with otherness, shared values and coexistence in plural contexts.

However, these are declared forms of knowledge and orientations. The data do not reflect civic behaviour that is actually practised, nor do they allow for the verification of lasting changes in patterns of participation. In the case of KA1, the priority 'Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement' can be interpreted primarily as exposure to different educational contexts, encountering otherness, and the experience of belonging to a European learning space.

The finding regarding increased interest in elections and democratic processes – at 32 per cent in both categories – calls for a particularly cautious interpretation. Compared with intercultural and European indicators, formalised democratic participation is less immediately apparent from the available data. This does not diminish the educational significance of mobility, but it does indicate that the transition from stated knowledge to explicit democratic participation requires further conditions, time for reflection and supportive contexts.

3.6. Limitations of the analysis

The present study is grounded in aggregated quantitative data, precluding the reconstruction of participants' individual trajectories and the longitudinal tracking of learning processes triggered by mobility. The extant evidence thus permits the observation of trends, convergences and self-reported benefits; however, it does not allow for the verification of causal effects or the permanence of personal transformations.

A further limitation pertains to the self-reported nature of the indicators utilised. Dimensions such as self-confidence, independence, responsibility, intercultural openness and civic awareness are assessed through participants' own perceptions and accounts, rather than through direct observation or learning assessment tools. Consequently, they are not regarded as evidence of transformation; rather, they are considered descriptive indicators that can be utilised to explore the relationship between KA1 mobility, self-formation, the capacity for action and social participation from a pedagogical perspective.

4. Conclusions

The contribution provided an analysis of KA1 mobility of adult learners in Italy, based on the aggregate quantitative data produced during the second Survey Round within the RIA-AE Network. Overall, the data show a picture of mobility that crosses different adult age groups and cannot be attributed exclusively to the logic of professional updating. The presence of young adults, adults in the middle stages of life and participants aged 60 and over allows KA1 to be contextualised within a framework of lifelong learning – a reference that does not artificially broaden the scope of the analysis, but which reflects how the learning experience remains open to planning, relationships and recognition even in the middle and later stages of life.

For a significant proportion of the participants, the opening phase of the experience reinforces the view of KA1 mobility as a formative milestone. Access to a European learning space is not confined to mere movement across a transnational context; rather, it signifies entry into a learning environment which, for a considerable number of adults, may represent their inaugural opportunity to engage with divergent educational practices, relationships and frameworks. This threshold assumes educational and formative value when it is supported by mediations – such as preparation, information, language support and organisational accompaniment – which do not replace the subject's initiative, but contribute to creating the conditions through which it may be faced without generating disorientation or displacement. From this perspective, group mobility does not appear as a lesser form of autonomy. Instead, it is an experience capable of sustaining exposure to the new and of making the international experience more feasible for adults less accustomed to such transnational learning contexts.

While the acquisition of practical skills is undoubtedly a significant outcome, it does not fully capture the comprehensive formative significance of mobility. The experience is characterised by a declared strengthening of self-confidence, independence, responsibility and clarity regarding one's objectives. This allows for the interpretation of the experience as an opportunity for self-recognition and personal re-planning. In this convergence, the shift from 'knowing how to do' to 'feeling capable of doing' becomes apparent on a descriptive level – not as a directly measurable transformation, but as an interpretative indication of the adult's ability to navigate the contexts they encounter with greater awareness.

KA1 mobility also assumes a relational and civic dimension. An understanding of social diversity, knowledge of Europe and its values, and an awareness of discrimination and intolerance suggest that the experience can be linked to forms of intercultural openness and ethical and social awareness. However, this dimension does not immediately coincide with explicit democratic participation. The comparatively low level of interest in elections and democratic processes suggests a distinction should be made between a sense of citizenship based on culture and values – which can be more directly fostered through the experience of mobility – and explicit democratic

participation, which requires more time, further mediation and more complex contexts for educational re-engagement.

KA1 mobility of adult learners in Italy may therefore be interpreted as an educational and formative experience capable of bringing learning, accompaniment, self-recognition and participation into relation. Within the limits of the aggregated and self-reported data, the evidence analysed suggests that KA1 mobility for adult learners constitutes an educational and training experience in which adults can recognise their own capacity to learn, navigate new contexts, rethink their life path and participate in a broader social and European context, with greater competence, awareness and confidence in their own potential.

Notes

¹ Vanna Boffo is Full Professor of General and Social Pedagogy (PAED-01/A) at the Department of Education, Languages, Intercultures, Literatures and Psychology (FORLILPSI), University of Florence.

² Christel Schachter is a research fellow in General and Social Pedagogy (PAED-01/A) at the Department of Education, Languages, Intercultures, Literatures and Psychology (FORLILPSI), University of Florence.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman.
- Boffo, V. (Ed.). (2006). *La cura in pedagogia: Linee di lettura*. Bologna, Italy: CLUEB.
- Boffo, V. (2011). *Relazioni educative: Tra comunicazione e cura. Autori e testi*. Milano, Italy: Apogeo.
- Boffo, V. (2022). Active Ageing: il ruolo dell'apprendimento permanente. *EPALE Journal*, 12.
- Boffo, V., Bertani, M., Bramanti, D., Chattat, R., & Formenti, L. (Eds.). (2025). *Accompagnare la longevità: Buone pratiche educative e formative per l'invecchiamento attivo*. Firenze, Italy: Firenze University Press. <https://doi.org/10.36253/979-12-215-0744-7>
- Buiskool, B.-J., Krichewsky-Wegener, L., & Erckrath, M. (2024). Transnational analysis of the impact of Erasmus+ on the adult education sector. RIA-AE Network. Retrieved from <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/transnational-analysis-impact-erasmus-adult-education-sector>.
- Council of the European Union. (2021). Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021–2030 (2021/C 504/02). *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 504, 9–20. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2021_504_R_0002
- Council of the European Union. (2024). Council Recommendation of 13 May 2024 “Europe on the Move” – learning mobility opportunities for everyone (C/2024/3364). *Official Journal of the European Union*, C/2024/3364. Retrieved from <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/3364/oj>
- De Greef, M., Segers, M., & Verté, D. (2010). Development of the SIT, an instrument to evaluate the transfer effects of adult education programs for social inclusion. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 36(1–2), 42–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2010.06.001>
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education*. New York, NY: Kappa Delta Pi.
- European Commission. (2026). *Erasmus+ programme Guide 2026*. Brussels, Belgium: European Commission. Retrieved from <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/documents-and-guidelines/erasmus-programme-guide-2026>
- European Parliament and Council of the European Union. (2021). *Regulation (EU) 2021/817*. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 189, 1–33. Retrieved from <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/817/oj>
- Illeris, K. (2007). *How We Learn: Learning and Non-Learning in School and Beyond*. London, England: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203939895>
- Jarvis, P. (2004). *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning: Theory and Practice* (3rd ed.). London, England: Routledge-Falmer. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203561560>
- Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents/Cambridge Adult Education.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401>
- Milana, M. (2012). Political globalization and the shift from adult education to lifelong learning. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 3(2), 103–117. <https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0070>
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Tronto, J. C. (1993). *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- World Health Organization. (2002). *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/0418705f-1c82-4fe2-82d6-d4faee89dfa0/content>
- World Health Organization. (2015). *World Report on Ageing and Health*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565042>