

Chapter 1

Active Citizenship, Lifelong Learning and Inclusion: Introduction to Concepts and Contexts



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Introduction

Promoting the active participation and inclusion of young adults is a complex and multi-dimensional process, and might be facilitated or undermined through different contexts, including formal and informal environments, such as workplace, education and community settings. Over the past decade, social exclusion, disengagement and disaffection of young adults have been among the most significant concerns faced by EU member states. Some young adults are particularly at risk of being excluded and marginalised, such as early school leavers, members of ethnic minority groups, young refugees and migrants. The research project that underlies this book, *Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP)*¹ started in 2016 in response to the current challenges affecting the social inclusion of young adults across Europe and beyond. These challenges, stemming from uncertain political, social and economic situations, have resulted in barriers affecting the inclusion and integration of young adults across different contexts and settings.

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Such barriers can be created by the way in which education provision is tied to receiving financial support. Conditions in some cases restrict young adults in their choice of programmes, creating either barriers related to access, to learning, or with regard to motivation. This is exemplified by different factors, especially in the case of integration programmes, which usually lack the flexibility to accommodate the needs of all individuals related to their specific situations.

This compilation offers a collection of chapters discussing country- and region-specific developments in relation to national approaches to the social inclusion and active citizenship of young adults at risk of vulnerability, in selected European countries and one non-EU country, Turkey. Drawing on both desk and empirical research findings undertaken by the EduMAP consortium between 2016 and 2019, the chapters consider how the promotion of active participatory citizenship for young adults translates into their specific national and local contexts, reflecting on the implications for both the strategies for social inclusion and barriers undermining it. The EduMAP multi-country consortium aimed to consider, in particular, the role of adult education (AE), and the extent to which various AE programmes and initiatives might facilitate the political, social and economic participation of young adults, thus encouraging them to take a more active role as citizens in their immediate as well as wider social contexts. The recent policy and research debate on citizenship and inclusion has raised a question on how active citizenship could be exercised in a way that would promote social justice, inclusion and participation and what the contribution of different forms of AE and lifelong learning (LLL) might be² (Jarvis 2012). Examples of good practice from EU member states and Turkey have been used to provide an illustration of practical approaches to engage and facilitate the life chances of vulnerable young people across Europe. In selecting examples of good practice, the focus is on initiatives that relate to learning about, for or through active citizenship (Kalekin-Fishman et al. 2007) either directly or indirectly (implicitly) through promoting economic, political and social engagement and the participation of vulnerable young people.

The findings of the country-specific chapters imply that the development of policies and practices to facilitate the social inclusion of young adults has been acknowledged as crucial for sustaining European democratic societies and stabilising political, social and economic situations in the region. The social and community contexts across Europe have been becoming increasingly diverse, multicultural and multilingual. The recent decade, however, has been characterised by extremely turbulent political, social and economic developments across Europe and its bordering countries, which in many ways, have undermined the notion of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity.

²Conceptual and terminological overlap between the terms ‘adult education’ and ‘lifelong learning’ has been recognised in the literature (Aspin et al. 2012). While recognising this terminological and conceptual complexity, in this book, drawing on research by Evans (2009), we will employ both concepts and consider LLL in its broadest term as learning through the life course, which encompasses adult education as a configuration of learning throughout life (Evans 2009; Aspin 2012; Kersh 2015).

Political and social trends, such as migration, the rise of far-right powers in some European countries, and results of the Brexit referendum in the UK in 2016, have affected both European and national contexts, contributing to the changing perceptions of social inclusion and citizenship, as well as to tensions and often hostility between ‘local’ and ‘migrant’ populations. The acts of terrorism occurring across Europe have further damaged attitudes towards migrants and refugees. The European migrant crisis reached its peak in 2015, resulting in the influx of refugees and migrants across European countries. The geographical spread of the migrant and refugee population has been uneven and patchy across Europe, with some countries being affected more than others (e.g. Turkey, Greece).

Although there has been a decrease in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe since 2016, the implications of the global migration crisis are presenting a long-term challenge for the EU countries and Turkey, and finding approaches for integration and inclusion has been identified as one of the most pressing tasks to be addressed at local, regional and national levels (Kersh and Huegler 2018). The expansion of multicultural societies has underpinned the need to foster social cohesion, tolerance and mutual understanding, to overcome factors such as tensions, antagonism and hostility between the newcomers and the local population, especially in countries affected by terrorist acts. The integration of refugees and migrants into local societies and domestic labour markets has become one of the most significant challenges faced by the countries and regions affected by the migration crisis in 2015.

During the past decades, the promotion of active citizenship has emerged as an influential concept within official European policy. The strategic goal set for the European Community was to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion (European Council 2000). In the communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, the European Commission promoted three major pillars, one of which was learning for active citizenship (see Commission of the European Communities 2001).

The key idea of active citizenship is that a person is engaged in participation in activities that support a community. The nation-state is typically in the focus of the debate but the *community* may also refer to local associations or communities, to European community or even to a global community. The policy discussion on active citizenship has been driven by a concern that young people, in particular, may lack the knowledge and skills to act effectively as citizens, and are often not strongly embedded within their communities (Brooks and Holford 2009; Henn et al. 2005; Vromen 2003). In this discussion, education is seen as a key means for ‘supporting active citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion’ (de Weerd et al. 2005: 1). Learning for active citizenship is seen as part of lifelong activity in which a person constructs the crucial links between learning and action. The role of adult education for the promotion of active citizenship has thus been recognised and acknowledged in both research literature and policy papers (e.g. European Parliament 2006; GRALE III 2016, 2016, Holford et al. 2008).

However, in practice, the role of AE in the promotion of active citizenship is weakly recognised and conceptualised. The policies and practices for AE and active citizenship have been influenced strongly by the humanitarian migration across the EU as well as by the implications of the 2008 economic crisis, which resulted in the rise of unemployment across Europe. Both these trends have contributed to the risks of exclusion and disengagement for a number of young adults who find themselves in vulnerable positions, for example as migrants or NEETs (not in education, employment or training). The response of AE to these challenges of social exclusion has been to set up programmes and strategies with the aim of integrating refugees and migrants into domestic labour markets and facilitating their social inclusion. The extent to which the programmes have been effective varies from context to context, and different countries have demonstrated different approaches to integration and inclusion. The political, social and economic country-specific contexts, as well as historical traditions have played an important part in developing strategies towards inclusion. Fostering the active citizenship of young people, both directly and indirectly, is an area where many AE programmes overlap, and this has become a core approach to integration.

Research Scope and Methodology

The Horizon 2020 project ‘Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship’ (EduMAP), conducted in 2016–2019, aimed to address the complex issues of social inclusion, advance understanding and further develop both the current and future impact of adult education on learning for active participatory citizenship (APC) in Europe and beyond (e.g. Saar et al. 2013; Jarvis 2012; Evans 2009). EduMAP involved the partnership and cooperation of six European countries, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary and the UK, and Turkey as a non-EU partner country. In the course of the project, particular attention was paid to the educational policies and practices needed to foster APC among young people facing different types of vulnerabilities. The project aimed to answer the following research question: **What policies and practices are needed in the field of adult education to include young adults at risk of social exclusion in active participatory citizenship in Europe?** The research question endeavoured to address both the complex issues of social exclusion and the multi-dimensional concept of active citizenship, with a specific focus on young adults (16–30 years of age) facing different types of vulnerabilities.

In order to address the complex issues raised by the research question, both desk and empirical research were undertaken. This covered undertaking a review of the relevant literature, including research publications, policy papers and materials related to various educational initiatives to facilitate the inclusion of young adults in vulnerable positions. The desk study aimed to offer an overview of historical and contemporary developments in each of the EU28 countries. Qualitative analysis of existing research and policy reports as well as comparative qualitative content

analysis were exercised through the following phases in the desk research: (1) identification of the material relevant to the study; (2) interpretation of the nature of the policies; (3) comparative analyses of the policies; and (4) identification of the main drivers and patterns in EU 28 and Turkey. Broad categories (themes) identified through the desk research, contributed to better understanding of both effectiveness of adult education and identification of the main drivers, policies and practices. The themes and sub-themes provided a structure for considering relevant developments in country specific contexts, including: Lifelong Learning and Adult Education (historical developments, conceptions and national approaches, adult education and vulnerable young adults); Existing research in the field and policy documents at national level; Specific programmes related to adult education, such as basic skill and remedy programmes; second chance education; retraining; vocational programmes; informal learning; higher education (Kersh and Toiviainen 2017).

Field research was aimed at identifying and analysing examples of good practice (in form of specific programmes) and at mapping communicative ecologies within these programmes and with other small sample groups. Empirical fieldwork involved researching some 40 adult education programmes across 20 countries: Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with 814 participants in total: 482 young learners and 332 professionals (teachers and other practitioners and policy makers). In selecting the types of educational programmes and respondents, the sampling approach was employed to ensure both the diversity (e.g. in terms of different types of programmes and different cohorts of young adults) and focus on APC. Both formal and informal programmes in AE have been used increasingly to overcome social exclusion and facilitate the engagement of young adults. Specifically, in relation to facilitating inclusion and engagement, the following types of programmes were researched:

- Basic skills and remedy programmes
- Second-chance education
- Retraining
- Vocational programmes
- Informal and non-formal learning
- Selected higher education programmes

Even though focusing on adult education programmes listed above, we also included some higher education-related programmes that, from our desk research, have been identified as programmes that provide motivation and contribute to the inclusion and social mobility of young adults. The five types of programmes, listed above, and some selected higher education programmes contribute to a better understanding of AE developments and provide a framework for the presentation of country-specific cases. In the following chapters, the seven contributions provide insight into the developments in selected countries from the project overall sample: Austria, Germany, France, UK, Netherlands, Ireland, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Greece and Turkey.

Key Concepts, Target Groups and Theoretical Considerations

The theoretical framework of this book is informed by both the discourses of adult education and lifelong learning and the conceptualisation of active citizenship in relation to the social inclusion and participation of young adults in vulnerable positions. Emerging as a political goal in many countries around the world (Delanty 2000; Nicoll et al. 2013; Holford and Mleczo 2013; European Commission 1998), the notion of active citizenship has been linked to the development of the knowledge-based economy, employability and social cohesion. In the European policy discussion, adult education and lifelong learning have been increasingly recognised as means for promoting active citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion in Europe (European Commission 1998, European Commission 2000; European Commission 2016; European Commission 2015). However, in practice, the different national AE systems in the EU face serious challenges in meeting the educational needs of young people at risk of different vulnerabilities. The role of lifelong learning and social discourses, the notion of vulnerabilities and the concept of active citizenship provide thus a conceptual lens for the interpretation of the approaches towards the promotion of APC and social inclusion.

Discourses of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

Policies and practices that aim to tackle social exclusion became important items of the European Lifelong Learning agenda in the past decade, and their directions and priorities need to be considered in the wider landscape of the developments in adult education and lifelong learning. The findings of the EduMAP research suggests that the priorities in the development of approaches for AE and social inclusion have been defined, in many ways, by the political and social agendas of governments across the EU. (Kersh and Toiviainen 2017; Toiviainen et al. 2019). The relationship between lifelong learning, adult education and social inclusion, as well as the perceptions, definitions and interpretation of AE and LLL have been strongly influenced by different discourses, both contemporary and historical (Aspin et al. 2012; Schuller and Watson 2009; Evans 2009; Faure et al. 1972). As noted by Aspin et al. (2012), different cultures have their own discourses on learning throughout the life course, informed by their own traditions. Similarly, the EU's terminology around adult education and lifelong learning has not always been clearly defined. It included references to both broad forms of lifelong learning as education and training, 'from cradle to grave' and more specific interpretations, relating to particular types of education for adults.

Given that it is challenging to develop a unified definition of LLL and AE, the general approach of the EduMAP project was to conceptualise these notions in the context of different historical and contextual discourses. The research findings indicate that social and political discourses have contributed to context-specific

interpretations of the concepts of lifelong learning, adult education and inclusion. The interpretation of learning through the lifespan and approaches to adult education and inclusion have been both shaped and influenced by different social perspectives and discourses (Aspin et al. 2012; Evans 2009). Specifically, in the most recent decade, developments and policies related to adult education, inclusion and active citizenship have been strongly influenced by both the economic crisis and the influx of migrants across the EU and Turkey. These trends have resulted in the prevalence of market-oriented approaches and strategies to integrate refugees and migrants across adult education programmes. Therefore, these trends and related discourses, have played a prominent role in defining the vision and strategies for inclusion through adult education. One powerful discourse emphasises the economic justification of LLL, adult education and inclusion, where the value of learning and integration is in acquiring job-related skills and competences, i.e. skills that would enable individuals to succeed in the job market. This neo-liberal perspective has become dominant across a number of European countries.

Another significant discourse has been influenced by current social and demographic challenges, such as, migration and the influx of refugees across Europe (Evans and Niemeyer 2004; Hoskins et al. 2012; Kersh and Toiviainen 2017). The implications for AE have involved developing and re-developing AE programmes to respond to these challenges and the demands of these discourses, ensuring that the provision of training would enable adults to adapt to their new or existing environments and overcome political, economic or social challenges through social and economic inclusion (Toiviainen et al. 2019). This also reflects some of the findings from the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education III (GRALE III 2016): it was observed that more than half the countries taking part in the GRALE survey agreed that adult learning and education can have a moderate to strong effect on employability.

The findings of the EduMAP research indicate that the neo-liberal discourse provides a very powerful context and rationale for the development of LLL and AE across Europe. Moving young adults into work and enabling them to learn the skills required by the contemporary labour market has been considered to be one of the most significant prerequisites of the majority of AE courses across Europe and its neighbouring countries. In Chap. 8 Pata et al. (this volume) observe that in the Baltic States, neo-liberal trends resulted in the new developments in adult education, with a strong focus on employability and entrepreneurship. Other contributions have also underpinned the dominant role of neo-liberal discourses within the context of adult education programmes. The neo-liberal perspectives, however, may undermine the notion of social inclusion, specifically, for young adults at risk of vulnerability. In Chap. 4 Huegler and Kersh (this volume) argue that the context of adult education dominated by socio-economic perspectives involves somewhat narrow interpretation of participation, inclusion and citizenship of young adults, arising in the context of discourse shifts through neoliberalism, emphasising workfare over welfare and responsibilities over rights. Such considerations bring to the fore the role adult education which goes beyond than simply developing skills and competences required by the labour market. As Evans (2009) note, repositioning AE

within LLL requires a shared philosophy of the purposes and benefits of adult learning, which relates to a capability approach and the expansion of human capabilities rather than merely economic development. Such an approach presupposes that learning is rooted in interactions in the social and material environment as well as in the ways in which people connect new experiences to their prior learning (Illeris 2009, 2011). This approach extends beyond the economic dimension and emphasises the importance of social and political participation as well as the responsibilities of participation, developing capabilities and the rights to participate (Evans 2009). These aspects relate strongly to the notion of active citizenship, one of the most significant foci of this project.

The strong interdependency between civic values, learning and AE has been recognised increasingly, both in Europe and beyond. The GRALE III report has placed a specific emphasis on the role of AE for civic and citizenship skills, particularly observing that there is strong evidence that AE can help citizens become more active and resourceful members of their communities. It does this specifically through helping individuals improve their literacy, numeracy and practical skills, and also by fostering life skills such as resilience, confidence and problem-solving as well as encouraging people to become more tolerant of diversity and cultural heritage (GRALE III 2016). In line with GRALE III, the subsequent GRALE IV report has emphasized the untapped potential of adult education within the predominant economist approach. One of the key messages of the report has highlighted the problem of very low participation in adult education for active citizenship, ‘despite its important role in promoting and protecting freedom, equality, democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity’ (GRALE IV 2019, p.22).

Target Groups and Vulnerability

The main target group for the EduMap research was young adults at risk of vulnerabilities or in vulnerable positions. It was taken into account that the terms ‘vulnerable’ and ‘vulnerability’ are contested and debated concepts in both policy and research literature. Vulnerability has been defined in relation to a restriction of individual choices and capabilities. In this sense the concept relates to the notion of ‘disadvantaged people’ as such individuals are also held back as a result of having certain disadvantages or possibly lacking advantages and/or opportunities. The EduMAP research indicated that adult education systems differ regarding the recognition and identification of vulnerability of young people.

The interpretation of the concept of vulnerable young adults has also been strongly influenced by both historical and contemporary developments as well as national conceptions. The research findings largely suggest that vulnerable/disadvantaged young adults have been regarded as those who lack some essential capacities and/or are in need of being engaged or re-engaged in relation to social, political and economic involvement. Such young adults often require specific approaches in education and training. Specific target groups in each country/region are often

suggested by local or regional developments. In the UK and Ireland, for example, a high number of young people who are classed as NEET have been defined as a group with particular needs of being integrated into the world of work or education. In Turkey, political unrest and military conflict in neighboring countries has resulted in a high number of refugees and migrants, with the number of immigrants estimated to be over four million. The influx of refugees has characterised, to a greater or lesser extent, a range of other EU countries, and thus ‘refugees and migrants’ have been considered as a group of vulnerable people whose specific requirements need to be addressed in order to facilitate their social engagement, integration and inclusion. In the Baltic States, the historical development of being incorporated in the former Soviet Union left a legacy of a segregated society, with the current challenges related to the integration of ethnic Russians into society in all three countries.

It was noted that vulnerability can be seen both as a universal part of the human condition, and as particular in the sense that it is embodied and embedded, affecting individual people uniquely based on their personal and social situation (Abrisketa et al. 2015). The UN Development Programme’s Human Development Report (UNDP 2014) describes vulnerability as multidimensional, dynamic and relational, linking it to a restriction of people’s choices and capabilities which are critical to human development (e.g. in the areas of health, education, personal security or command over material resources). Therefore, vulnerable groups are interpreted as relating to individuals and communities who are at a considerably more significant risk of restriction, exclusion, and disadvantage.

Over the last decade unemployment and the social exclusion of young people have become important issues of concern across Europe and beyond. The term and meaning of ‘vulnerable young adults’ are open to interpretation and may vary from country to country and from context to context. Young adults in vulnerable positions are suffering from disengagement and disaffection, and, therefore, they are at risk of social exclusion. They often lack both skills and formal qualifications, specifically being held back by deficiencies in basic skills as well as wider personal skills. This often results in lack of self-confidence and motivation, leading to the disengagement of young people from education, training or employment as well as social exclusion. The political concern in many European countries is how to ensure that this group of young people, often categorised as disadvantaged or marginalised, is motivated towards social, political and economic participation. In conceptualising the notion of vulnerability, the EduMAP research team have taken into account that institutions as well as academic researchers who are in positions of power in societies may, by using categories such as ‘vulnerable groups’, inadvertently contribute to the very processes that have stigmatizing and labelling effects (EduMAP Concept Note 2017). The perspective taken by the EduMAP consortium on addressing vulnerability, was to see adult education as a possible means to contributing in different ways to help build resilience of young people (EduMAP Concept Note 2017). Therefore, while recognizing the sensitivity surrounding the concept of vulnerability, the project findings highlight the empowerment of young adults in different situations of vulnerability rather than using vulnerability as a label to define our target groups. Adult education was seen as addressing vulnerability through building

resilience of young people with the aim of facilitating their active participatory citizenship (Toiviainen et al. 2019).

Vulnerable positions, identified in the course of our research, included a range of potential situations at risk, such as unemployment, migrant or refugee status, lack of formal qualifications or basic skills, low confidence, physical or mental health problems. These situations may contribute to risks of social exclusion, disengagement and disaffection. The contributions in this book consider how the notion of vulnerability translates into specific national, regional and local settings, particularly reflecting on different perceptions and interpretations of vulnerability across various contexts of adult education. One common interpretation of being at risk of social exclusion has been identified as socio-economic vulnerability (i.e. risk of unemployment, lack of employability skills). Huegler and Kersh ([this volume](#)) for example, consider selected good practice cases targeting young people deemed not to be engaged in either education, training or employment, NEETs. Tóth et al. ([this volume](#)) reflect on the challenges of promoting the social inclusion and decision-making for people with disabilities, considering the issues of equal access to public services (e.g. education, training, employment, adult education, electoral rights), which is severely restricted for people with disabilities, in the context of Hungary. Thus this brings attention to the issue of multiple vulnerabilities, as highlighted by Endrizzi and Schmidt-Behlau's ([this volume](#)) contribution. They helpfully discuss the notion of multiple vulnerabilities, which contribute to a situation of social and economic exclusion. In their contribution, they underpin a range of multi-layered factors associated with multiple vulnerabilities (e.g. limited basic skills, poor health, low self-esteem and poverty). The interpretation and understanding of vulnerabilities and vulnerable situations have important implications for the conceptualisation of active participatory citizenship, as it varies according to the situation of vulnerability and related needs of young adults.

In addition to the above gender is a cross-cutting element which points to another layer and level of exposure to being vulnerable. Women, especially young single mothers with low educational background and difficult social and economic conditions are exposed to a specific situation of risk because of their child care responsibilities. Those who find themselves confronted with a refugee situation such as fleeing from a home country in war can become even more vulnerable when exposed to a new situation of risk starting a new life in a foreign host country.

Active Participatory Citizenship

The complexity surrounding the interpretation of the notion of active citizenship has been indicated by the ongoing discussion in both research and policy papers. Fresh perspectives on active citizenship bring attention to the broader social, political and economic dimensions of citizenship, which go beyond the conventional interpretation of legal status and political participation (see Marshall 1977). The focus on the notion of 'participation' suggests conceptualising citizenship not only as *active* but

also as *participatory*, thus emphasising that through social inclusion approaches young adults are encouraged to assume both active and participatory roles in their immediate and wider social contexts (Kalekin-Fishman, Tsitselikis and Pitkänen 2007). Addressing emerging social demands and overcoming contemporary challenges stemming from the unstable political, social and economic situation affecting Europe calls for a better understanding of the role and interpretation of the concept of APC in relation to the social inclusion of young adults in vulnerable positions. A broader European discourse on active citizenship (Milana 2008) stressed the significance of community participation, as well as the promotion of tolerance and diversity (GRALE III 2016). Community membership, both local and global, has been described as an element of social engagement and citizenship, whereby ‘an active or global citizen is understood to be a member of the wider community’ (Field and Schemmann 2017:172).

The specific focus on young adults in vulnerable positions highlights the importance of adult education for social justice tradition. The consideration of this tradition provides a rich context for a conceptual understanding of this notion and helps to develop the project’s approach towards AC for vulnerable groups, specifically taking into account how AC could be enhanced through AE. Such an approach further helps to advance the interpretation of the project’s original definition, which refers to AC as ‘membership of a politico-legal community that serves as a forum for *political, social and economic participation*’. In addition, the concept of citizenship has been linked to the socio-economic aspect of AC, dealing with engagement through employment and work-related training (Further Education Funding Council 2000:4). Such perspectives on AC bring to the fore the significance of individual or group participation, specifically through taking a more active role in the developments and processes by which decisions are made about their lives (Field and Schemmann 2017). This discussion underpins complex interdependencies between citizenship, inclusion and participation in both local and global communities. The recent policy discussion on AC has been driven by a concern that young people, in particular, are often not strongly embedded within their communities, and may lack the knowledge and skills to act effectively as citizens. In this discussion, education is seen as a key means for supporting AC and social cohesion (Brooks and Holford 2009; Boeren and Holford, 2016; Henn et al. 2005; Vromen 2003; de Weerd et al. 2005:1). With such an interpretation, learning for AC is seen as part of a lifelong activity in which a person constructs links between learning and societal action.

People can take an active part in diverse formal and informal learning processes at local, national and international levels. The contexts in which citizenship can be learned thus occur not only in educational organisations but in various areas of social life: civil society, work, and what is usually designated as the private sphere (Kalekin-Fishman et al. 2007). In this context, AC could be perceived, interpreted and exercised through its different configurations and dimensions. The findings of EduMAP suggest that with the exception of programmes for newly arrived migrants and/or refugees, the majority of AE courses do not demonstrate an explicit focus on citizenship education and/or skills. However, different dimensions of AC, such as economic, social and political dimensions, have characterised (often implicitly) AE

programmes and initiatives across all countries considered in this book. While some programmes are specifically focused on citizenship (e.g. programmes for migrants), often ‘citizenship’ is not used explicitly and/or may be embedded. AE programmes and initiatives across all countries are seen as related to the social, political or economic dimensions of AC. Therefore, through the different dimensions of AC, we trace the social, political and economic dimensions that have characterised AE programmes and initiatives, implicitly rather than explicitly, across the European countries. These include:

- the socio-cultural dimension, which focuses on the development of social competences and social capital
- the socio-economic dimension, which relates to employment (e.g. developing employability skills) including access to social benefits
- the political dimension, which encourages civic and political participation, for example, running for boards, neighbourhood and community activities

Findings from field research data across all cases in EduMAP suggests that the concept or term of active (participatory) citizenship does not seem to be relevant to young people in its *abstract* meaning, but when formulating the questions so that young people are prompted to talk about their interests, needs and aspirations as well as when methodology uses focus group discussions, an often more *implicit* understanding surfaces about how young people are aware of their rights and ways of feeling part of society and addressing social injustices that they have observed. In most interviews with the young people, they express either a feeling of being ‘hampered’ by certain individual disabilities (mental or physical, related to learning) or an experience of discrimination by the larger society because of their vulnerable position. This highlights the close connection between conditions of vulnerability and how these play out as barriers to active participatory citizenship in all its dimensions and on all levels. The implicit rather than explicit ways of the promotion of active participatory citizenship were highlighted by both the desk research and through the exploration of special cases of AE programmes across the EU and Turkey. The consideration of good practice cases in Austria, Germany and France by Endrizzi and Schmidt-Behlau ([this volume](#)) shows how the development and promotion of APC can be either explicit and ‘on the cover’, as a core objective pursued through an adopted education strategy, or more implicit and ‘under cover’. They conclude that despite the more or less direct vocation for APC, those AE programmes with a more participatory and learner-focused approach and pedagogical strategy are more suitable for conveying APC values and have a higher impact on young adults’ learning experiences and attitudes, an indication that AE enables individuals to become active and resourceful members of their communities. Huegler and Kersh’s exploration ([this volume](#)) of selected AE programmes in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands has indicated a strong focus on the socio-economic dimension, i.e. integration through entering employment, whereas active participatory citizenship is promoted implicitly rather than explicitly, through equipping young adults with employability skills, thus facilitating their chances to take a more active role in their social settings through their engagement into employment and paying taxes.

Cross-national considerations: challenges and strategies for the inclusion of young adults The cross-national consideration of the notions of vulnerability, inclusion and active citizenship (AC) underpins the complexity of translating these concepts into the national contexts of adult education (AE) programmes. The seven contributions, illustrating the configurations of inclusion and active participatory citizenship (APC) across selected European countries and Turkey, show that the notion of APC is a multidimensional concept, encompassing the complex interdependencies between economic, social and political participation. The theoretical research has suggested that the role of both national historical traditions in education and wider political, social and economic discourses affecting Europe and its bordering countries have shaped the approaches to inclusion through AE. Neoliberal discourse, justifying the economic value of lifelong learning, have contributed to the inclusion strategies focusing on employability and labour market skills. Migration and the influx of refugees across Europe have resulted in schemes and programmes aiming to integrate newcomers, such as refugees and migrants. A deeper empirical exploration of our cases in different cultural-historical contexts has indicated that the approaches towards inclusion and the promotion of APC have often been driven by national political priorities rather than by the multiple needs of vulnerable young adults.

What emerges from the cross-national consideration in EduMAP is a complex and interdependent relationship between learning, education, active citizenship and barriers that young people experience. More often than not these components are not clearly separate. Adult education and learning play an important role for fostering and enabling active citizenship and clearly practicing active citizenship is part of learning how to engage and overcome barriers, there is a mutual reinforcement. For women, especially from countries with stronger patriarchal norms, cultural values or the expected role of women to be the main family care giver can be a strong barrier that needs to be overcome. Experiences of difficult life situations and feeling vulnerable can turn into manifold barriers, starting with challenges accessing adult education.

The following individual chapters offer the consideration of particular challenges as well as examples of good practices from selected country contexts. The promotion of APC has been considered from the perspectives of both policies and practice. The implications for individual learners' perceptions of what AC means and how it could be exercised vary from context to context. The consideration of APC through the lens of different forms of participation and engagement (e.g. economic, social or political) contributes to an understanding of the ways that young adults exercise their agency through a more active engagement in a variety of contexts, including those of family, community, education and workplace. The complexity of the conceptual understanding of the key concepts underpins the discussion offered in the seven contributions within this book. The notion of vulnerability is particularly complex and multidimensional. It may be context dependent, i.e. what is considered vulnerable in one context may not necessarily be regarded in the same way in a different context.

The seven region-specific contributions (Chaps. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) shed light on particular challenges and strategies for the inclusion of young adults at risk of social exclusion across selected European countries and Turkey. In Chap. 2, Zarifis ([this volume](#)) focuses on the issues of participation and non-participation of unemployed young adults with low skills (including early school-leavers and NEETs) in educational activities that either focus or promote active citizenship in southern Europe (Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Italy, Spain and Portugal). The discussion uncovers the reasons behind low political, social and/or cultural participation rates among vulnerable young adults in the region, specially through demonstrating that South European countries are showing less favourable conditions for increasing the participation of low-skilled unemployed young adults in such programmes. By considering the diverse conceptualisation of active participatory citizenship (APC) and the educational strategies adopted in the different programmes in France, Austria in Germany, Endrizzi and Schmidt-Behlau's ([this volume](#)) chapter demonstrates how APC can either be explicit and 'on the cover', as core objective pursued through an adopted education or be exercised and perceived more implicitly and 'under cover'.

The contribution by Huegler and Kersh ([this volume](#)) considers the focus on the socio-economic dimensions of citizenship in the context of neoliberal welfare and education policies specifically demonstrating how these trends have influenced the adult education and lifelong learning scenes in the UK and in other countries in North-Western Europe. By discussing the implications of attempts to remedy social exclusion risks above all through a labour-market driven approach, and by contrasting this with alternative perspectives (from within the selected countries and beyond), Huegler and Kersh ([this volume](#)) aim to offer a critical view on contemporary debates regarding the potential roles of lifelong learning in promoting active participatory citizenship. Pata et al. ([this volume](#)) similarly draw attention to the emerging neo-liberal trends in the Baltic States, resulting from new developments in adult education, specifically highlighting the role of active citizenship in developing individual entrepreneurial skills.

Tóth et al. ([this volume](#)) consider the development in Hungary, specifically looking at Roma and young people with disabilities, and discuss the issues of access to AE, drawing attention to the ways that the national and European goals for reform, capacity-building projects and financial support remain isolated and incomplete. These factors, as they discuss further, minimise the chance for the creation of an independent, integrated, educated, democratically thinking and participating citizenship. The consideration of policies and practices from the three Scandinavian countries (Kuusipalo et al. [this volume](#)) offers an insight into the interplay between AE and the provision of equal opportunities for vulnerable groups, specifically highlighting how the lack of basic skills affect the issues of equality and life chances.

The shortcomings in the developments and implementation of integration strategies in Turkey, with respect to developing sustainable and gender-sensitive AE programmes, have been discussed in the contribution by Erdoğan et al. ([this volume](#)). Through the review of the major legal and institutional developments in Turkey since the first wave of refugees entering Turkey after the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, that chapter provides an analysis of how new AE programmes are designed

to target specific groups of refugees under pressure from multiple vulnerabilities. The strong thread that runs through the seven chapters underpins the complex interdependencies between the provision and implementation of AE strategies and the promotion of active participatory citizenship for young adults in vulnerable positions.

The final chapter (Toiviainen et al. [this volume](#)) presents overall conclusions, pulled from the seven chapters, specifically reflecting on country- and region-specific developments in relation to national approaches to the social inclusion of young adults at risk of vulnerability, in selected European countries and one non-EU country, Turkey.

The collection of chapters will provide illustrations and discussion of the issues related to the promotion of AC through AE programmes. The theoretical considerations, such as the influence of neo-liberal discourses and the interpretation of the concept of AC, will offer a basis for further analysis of empirical findings.

Finally, it's worth highlighting that research presented in this book has been undertaken by the EduMAP consortium between 2016 and 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of the COVID-19 crisis across Europe and beyond, have had a further profound impact on the role and perception active citizenship, its purposes, meanings and implications for the practice of adult education, social inclusion and lifelong learning across Europe and globally. The global crisis and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic call for further research on the future developments and role of adult education for the promotion of active citizenship and engagement of young adults. Future approaches to researching adult education and active citizenship need to take into account the significant challenge of the COVID-19 situation and its implications for social inclusion and life chances of young adults across Europe and beyond.

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