



SASSI
Later-life Careers

Transnational Piloting Report

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I INTRODUCTION

Total number of learning projects implemented	18
Duration of piloting 2 and 3 (start – end)	10 months (September 2023 - June 2024)
Number of C-VET professionals	28
Number of older people (50+)	99
Total number of people who took part in the SASSI LLC piloting phase	127

The core of the SASSI-Later-Life Careers piloting phase lasted from September 2023 - June 2024 (due to the extension of the project). Overall, the project piloting process consisted of 4 levels of piloting, in which learning was cascaded as follows:

-  **Pilot 1 – 16 staff members** of the project partner organisations took part in a dedicated short-term joint training event, which was conducted in Matosinhos, Portugal, to learn about, evaluate and help refine the produced methodologies.
-  **Pilot 2 – 28 C-VET professionals** (adult educators/trainers/career consultants) took part in the piloting learning projects organised by the partners in their countries.
-  **Pilot 3 – 99 end-user beneficiaries** (seniors/older workers/job seekers) were involved in the piloting projects, organised by the partners in their countries.
-  **Pilot 4 – 13 aspiring 'olderpreneurs'** were invited to participate in a short-term learning mobility experience for C-VET learners, which took place in Vienna, Austria.

Piloting timeline





The current report is focused only on **pilots 2 and 3**, while more information on the conduction and evaluation of pilots 1 and 4 can be found in the Evaluation reports, delivered by the partner in charge of Quality Assurance and Evaluation.

Piloting phases 2 and 3 were conducted in the form of **learning projects**. Each staff member who took part in the joint training event in Portugal had the opportunity to organise their own learning project in whatever form was suitable for their context. The dual purpose of this piloting approach was to:

- a) help staff members apply their new knowledge by embedding it into practice, whilst at the same time validate their competence via the LEVEL5 system;
- b) cascade their knowledge and test the new practices with the target groups (C-VET professionals, HR Managers, career coaches/counsellors and end-user beneficiaries of older people aged 50+).

Each learning project was described in a comprehensive, easy-to-use template (which can be found as **Annex 6** to this report), provided by CATRO. Then the project partners compiled the results from the piloting projects conducted in their countries in a summative **National Piloting Experience Report**, template for which was also provided by CATRO. All five national reports, which served as a basis for the current transnational report, can be found as **Annexes 1 to 5** to this report.

2 PILOTING PARTICIPANTS AND METHODOLOGY

A total of **127 representatives of the project target groups** took part in the learning projects, organised by the SASSI-LLC partners' staff members as follows:

- ✿ **14 people** in Austria – 8 older workers + 6 adult educators;
- ✿ **27 people** in Bulgaria – 16 end-beneficiaries + 11 career consultants;
- ✿ **64 people** in Germany – 53 older workers + 11 adult educators;
- ✿ **10 people** in Portugal – 10 older workers;
- ✿ **12 people** in Slovakia – 12 older people.

This slightly exceeds the expected minimum number of piloting participants from the proposal (98).

They were trained in the framework of **18 learning projects** in total, where 3 pilots were organized in Austria, 4 in Bulgaria, 6 in Germany, 2 in Portugal and 3 in Slovakia.

As far as the **profile of the pilot participants** is concerned, there were some differences between the type of people who were involved in the different partner countries, which eventually allowed for a bigger diversity of the pilot target groups.

Who were the C-VET professionals?

Austria piloted with trainers and counsellors who work with different target groups in the context of career counselling and career orientation in 1-1 coaching as well as group settings;

Bulgaria piloted with career consultants working for the National Employment Agency, private career consultants (one of whom was an HR Manager) and trainers from the CATRO team;

Germany piloted with adult educators - one adult educator from Neighborhood Centre of a disadvantaged area in the city of Göttingen and trainers from the blinc team;

Portugal and Slovakia didn't pilot the methodology with C-VET professionals but directly with the end-beneficiaries.

Who were the end-user beneficiaries?

Austria piloted with outplacement-clients, aged between 54 and 62 years old, who were looking for a new job and/or a new occupation field as well as with course participants and clients, who were following a course on job market integration and career orientation, aged between 51 and 68 years old;

Bulgaria piloted with long-term unemployed persons (mostly women, majority over 50 years old) with various backgrounds, coming from the north-west region of the country – they were registered in the Employment Agency as looking for a job and attending courses on career orientation; a retired former journalist and a working sporadically freelancer in the creative industries, at the time also acting as an informal carer of a family member - they were both above 55 years old and from Sofia;

Germany piloted with female older workers, interested in exploring potential business opportunities, older workers (55+) with various backgrounds (family carers, translators with a migrant background, a manager, Göttingens Weststadt-Konferenz, a diverse community of regular attendees not necessarily above 50 etc.);

Portugal piloted with older entrepreneurs aged 55+ looking for new careers or hobbies in pursue of their dreams and older workers (55+) in their last working years who wanted a positive transition to retirement;

Slovakia's piloting group consisted of people aged 50 and above who were employed, had lost their jobs, were made redundant due to different reasons, had experienced health problems which disabled them from working for longer or shorter period of time, had to overcome financial or legal difficulties and also people who ran a successful business previously but decided to completely shift their focus to acquire new competences and start with a new idea.

Regarding their **format and methodology**, the piloting learning projects also varied in the different countries. What is interesting to note is that all pilots, apart from one (which was done as a webinar), were implemented in a **face-to-face** format. In any case, all the piloting sessions with the end-beneficiaries took place in person. While some were conducted as one-on-one coaching sessions or individual/small-format meetings, others were organised as full-on group trainings or workshops with varying duration. A self-study element was included almost everywhere as a stage in the piloting process, where learners could also rely on the professionals' full support and guidance. In some cases, the SASSI LLC methodology (theoretical inputs and practical activities) was replicated entirely with slight adaptations towards the particular target group, while in others – variations of certain methods were used and further developed. In all cases the SASSI LLC resources and materials (or at least what was completed at the respective point of time of the pilots) were fully shared with the participants, who were able to provide their own suggestions and feedback (especially the C-VET professionals).

3 PILOTING RESULTS

3.1 Achievements and successes

The pilot trainings across partner countries yielded significant achievements, demonstrating the effectiveness of the methodologies and approaches developed. Participants, including older individuals contemplating career changes, entrepreneurial ventures, or social projects, along with career consultants and adult educators, reported substantial benefits from the sessions.

One key achievement was the expansion of perspectives among older individuals, who discovered new career opportunities, such as volunteering, education leave, or even international mobility. This broadened outlook fostered a new sense of purpose, crucial for emotional well-being and increased self-confidence. The coaching sessions, inspired by materials on the "value of older workers" and storytelling methods, helped participants shift from insecurity to proactivity, bolstering their self-belief and trust in their capabilities.

Participants considering entrepreneurial pathways particularly benefited from visualization methods, which were enhanced with guiding questions that helped concretely envision future projects. This method, along with discussions prompted by the CPD training course questions, facilitated a deeper understanding of the potential and benefits of transitioning from a retirement mindset to an "Olderpreneurship" mindset.

The pilots also saw success in using collaborative activities, such as brainstorming sessions, coaching consultations, and test events. These activities fostered creative idea generation, provided clarity on certain matters, and allowed for practical testing in a low-risk environment. Participants enjoyed group work, which was a new experience for many who were used to working individually. Exercises like persona development expanded participants' perspectives and empathy, while ideation and prototyping activities led to tangible outcomes and boosted team dynamics.

A significant achievement of one of the German pilots was the implementation of a mentoring model, which facilitated intergenerational learning. Older participants shared their wealth of knowledge with younger individuals, enriching the learning experience for both groups and promoting engagement in projects like the Weststadt Conference.

Moreover, the storytelling approach embedded in all SASSI results was particularly successful. It allowed participants to connect deeply with their strengths and past achievements, fostering a positive self-image. The Persona activity and Design Thinking exercises were also highlights, helping participants clearly identify their strengths and passions, while the collaborative nature of these exercises encouraged creative solutions and peer learning.




Participants' feedback indicated that hands-on activities and teamwork were highly appreciated, enhancing their confidence in career transition planning and retirement preparation. The practical approach helped to not only prepare a bit better for future retirement but also to explore new career opportunities and improve digital literacy.

Concrete successes included the initiation of self-employed activities by some participants from Slovakia (such as Milos starting as a locksmith and Livia launching a candle-making business). These ventures were supported by new skills in IT and business administration, showing (even remotely) the practical impact of the training. Participants also gained a broader understanding of their duties in running a business, from administration to taxation, and gained a realistic view of their career possibilities.



Overall, the pilot projects succeeded in providing older people with new perspectives on later-life career opportunities, often seen as the domain of younger people. For career counsellors, coaches, and trainers, the pilot offered new resources, methods, and tools to better support their clients in this age group. The pilots themselves were an achievement, made possible by strong networking and previous successful collaborations, and served as a valuable learning opportunity for all parties involved.

3.2 Challenges faced

The pilot implementation of the project across partner countries revealed several challenges, highlighting the complexities of working with older individuals and professionals in career transitions, entrepreneurial pursuits, and learning mobility. They can be grouped in the following categories:

-  **Generic materials and personalisation needs:** Some participants found the "Guide to Becoming an Olderpreneur" too generic, struggling to apply it to their specific situations. This feedback underscored the need for more personalized guidance, as self-study materials alone were insufficient for many.
-  **Encouraging entrepreneurship:** Encouraging older individuals to pursue entrepreneurship proved delicate. Entrepreneurship involves significant commitment, risk-taking, and uncertainty, which can be daunting for those accustomed to structured employment. Not all participants had the inherent entrepreneurial mindset required, making it challenging to foster interest in starting new businesses. Additionally, case studies used during the training were perceived as too abstract and not easily relatable, reducing their practical value.
-  **Logistical and technical issues:** Finding suitable and affordable venues for events was challenging for some partners, as was managing technical

aspects like software for music and lyric display. Marketing strategies also fell short of effectively reaching the target audience, indicating a need for better promotional efforts.

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Diverse expectations and group dynamics: Participants came with varying expectations, affecting their satisfaction levels. Inconsistent engagement and preparation levels, such as not studying the self-study materials beforehand, impacted group dynamics in some of the pilots. More time was needed to build cohesive group interactions, and public speaking exercises lacked realism as they weren't presented to real venture capitalists.
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Limited focus on entrepreneurship: This may contradict a bit the second challenge but groups were so diverse that their needs also varied a lot. While workshops fostered community participation, it seems they did not directly lead to new business creation. Active olderpreneurs were more interested in sharing experiences than starting new ventures. Additionally, logistical challenges and time constraints hindered workshop effectiveness in some pilots.
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Stereotypes and mind barriers: Breaking stereotypes about age and late careers was challenging, especially among long-term unemployed older individuals who appeared to have given up. Encouraging these participants to view entrepreneurship as a viable option was particularly difficult.
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Adaptation and relevance of materials: Applying methodologies like the Hero's Journey to olderpreneurs required additional effort to clarify its relevance. Some participants, particularly those uncomfortable with public speaking or new to storytelling, struggled with exercises aimed at expressing personal narratives.
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Technical and digital challenges: Advanced digital concepts posed a steep learning curve for some participants, necessitating more time and individualized support to adapt these concepts to personal contexts. There was also a notable need for more focus on digital literacy.
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Client perception and prioritisation: Older clients prioritized immediate needs, such as legal and financial aspects of starting a business, over soft skills development. Economic pressures further emphasized the urgency of practical concerns, leaving less room for long-term developmental skills. This was compounded by a lack of awareness about the importance of soft skills in business success.
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Institutional rigidity: Integrating new methodologies into the existing frameworks of state institutions like employment agencies, which was one of the cases in Bulgaria, proved challenging due to institutional rigidity and a lack of flexibility. However, some counsellors showed interest in the new approaches, awaiting more comprehensive resources.

These challenges highlight the need for tailored support, flexibility in methodology application, and a more profound understanding of the specific needs and barriers faced by older people in career transition.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

The experiences from the SASSI LLC project pilots highlighted several crucial aspects for supporting older adults in career transitions and entrepreneurial endeavors, which can be drawn as conclusions. To put it shortly, the piloting phase demonstrated that older workers benefit greatly from a supportive, collaborative environment that recognizes their unique strengths and challenges. Tailored support, practical preparation, and a focus on both individual and group dynamics are key to successfully helping older adults navigate career transitions and explore new opportunities. Below are some more detailed key learnings that partners shared in their national reports.

Addressing ageism and valuing experience is key

Overcoming ageism is essential for older workers to recognize their value. Drawing on their wealth of experience and skills is crucial for presenting them as valuable assets to potential employers. Storytelling emerged as a powerful tool for shaping career narratives and boosting confidence among older clients.

Differentiated and individualized support is needed

Supporting older workers requires a tailored approach that acknowledges their unique experiences and challenges. It's important to provide concrete tools to help them review their experiences, regain confidence, and broaden their perspectives on work and career opportunities. Self-employment and entrepreneurial activities are appealing but also challenging due to risks and the need for social security.

Provide broader career options beyond “olderpreneurship”

Not all older individuals may be inclined toward entrepreneurship. Therefore, it is essential to provide a broad understanding of career options, including less risky and fulfilling alternatives like legacy careers or encore careers.

Overcoming stereotypes and mind barriers is not so easy

Changing long-held stereotypes and mind barriers in older adults is a significant challenge. The SASSI resources serve as a starting point for this conversation, emphasising the need for age-specific counselling tools and methods but this is a longer process, which needs to take place beforehand.

Legal, technical, and practical preparation are important

Thorough legal and technical preparation is crucial for older workers considering new business ventures. Despite providing a disclaimer in the materials that this is subject to a different type of support, outside of the project scope, apparently this seems to be highlighted even more and steps in this direction are needed too. Practical, hands-on experience through pilot projects proved invaluable, enhancing participants' confidence and motivation.

Group dynamics and peer support are invaluable

While not surprising, our piloting experience reconfirmed that group work fosters a supportive environment, motivating individuals and providing visibility to career topics like no other. It helps break the stigma around later-life careers and encourages sharing of experiences among older workers. It is true that group work is not the primary approach of coaches and career counsellors but even they acknowledged this method's effective role.

Social impact and community engagement are a nice side effect

Our pilots showed one more thing that partners were aware of: social impact projects can unite older workers and society, helping break down prejudices and encourage a mindset shift towards inclusivity and respect for older workers' expertise. It is still nice to remind people that from time to time.

Intergenerational collaboration is enriching

Some partners piloted with a more heterogeneous group in terms of age, which turned out to be a beneficial experience as well. Cross-generational discourse and mentoring programs can significantly strengthen knowledge transfer and community bonds. Regular engagement and activities are crucial for promoting active aging and ensuring long-term involvement and empowerment.

Some parts of the methodology may be challenging

Some methods, like the Hero's Journey, required additional clarification and adaptation to fit the context of potential olderpreneurs. This highlights the need for credible communicators and relatable stories of struggle and success. Nevertheless, it is necessary to say that not all methods suggested are transversal and can be applied directly to older workers – some adaptation and in-depth preparation on the side of the C-VET professionals are always needed.

Comprehensive support should be holistic

Supporting older workers involves more than just job search assistance. A holistic approach is necessary, addressing emotional support, confidence-building, and work-life balance considerations. Networking and mentorship are also vital components in providing comprehensive support.

4.2 Recommendations

Taking into account the above conclusions, some concrete recommendations for changes/refinements of the SASSI LLC products or general considerations for their future use can be made.

Refinements of the current resources

Integrate national tools and resources:

Incorporate specific national resources like the entrepreneurial mindset test and video tutorials for business creation (some examples came from Austria). This will provide older adults with tailored, practical resources relevant to their local context.

Link the R3 Guide to comprehensive training resources:

Connect the "Guide for Becoming an Olderpreneur" with detailed training resources, already available such as funding options, risk management, social security considerations, project sustainability etc. Highlight (even better) the benefits of consulting a business coach for personalized advice and real-life scenarios.

Simplify navigation of SASSI-LLC materials:

Offer a clear, user-friendly overview of the SASSI-LLC materials to help both adult educators/counsellors and learners navigate the resources without feeling overwhelmed. This should include a streamlined guide to accessing specific products and tools.

Address everyday challenges for older adults:

Provide practical solutions and strategies for common challenges faced by older workers and potential Olderpreneurs. Include relatable case studies and examples to enhance engagement and relatability.

Develop supportive handouts for educators and coaches:

Create a comprehensive handout summarizing available resources and tools tailored for different settings. This will assist adult educators and coaches in selecting the most appropriate materials for their clients' specific needs.

Improve clarity and localization:

Ensure that the SASSI materials are accompanied by clear and understandable explanations. Address the abstract nature of some resources and provide guidance on their practical application. Consider creating localized content or intermediary resources to help users better understand and engage with the materials.

Recommendations for future use

Personalized coaching and support:

Enhance personalized coaching and one-on-one support to address the unique needs and challenges of older workers. This individualized approach will help them better understand and apply new concepts.

Enhanced digital literacy training:

If this need persists for your audience, develop and implement digital literacy training programs specifically designed for older adults. These programs could range from basic to advanced topics and should provide continuous support to help participants maintain and improve their skills.

Tailored career transition programs:

Using the developed materials, design career transition programs that cater specifically to the aspirations and needs of older adults. These programs should include practical support for navigating career changes and preparing for retirement.

Promote group interaction and peer support:

During your trainings/consultations encourage group interactions and peer support, as these are effective in achieving learning goals and maintaining motivation. Consider organizing training sessions in group formats and fostering an environment where peers can share experiences.

Address potential weaknesses early-on:

Identify and address potential weaknesses of your audiences in technical skills or public speaking early in the training process. This proactive approach will help participants overcome barriers and build confidence.

Focus on entrepreneurial mindset:

While entrepreneurship may not appeal to all, emphasize developing an entrepreneurial mindset and the value of staying active in later life. This focus can help older adults explore new opportunities and adapt to changing circumstances.

Utilize comprehensive SASSI materials:

Leverage the rich and comprehensive content of all SASSI materials available. Adapt these resources to local contexts where necessary and use simplified documents like the Ambassadors' fliers for examples for broader accessibility.

Increase the use of relatable case studies:

Expand the use of case studies, particularly in video format, to inspire and engage new learners. These case studies should reflect diverse experiences and practical examples. They can come from your own clients/trainees.

More details on the piloting experience in each of the five partner countries can be found in the annexed national reports.

5 ANNEXES

For the sake of compactness of this document annexes 1 to 5 are provided as separate files.

5.1 National piloting report – Austria

5.2 National piloting report – Bulgaria

5.3 National piloting report – Germany

5.4 National piloting report – Portugal

5.5 National piloting report – Slovakia

5.6 Learning project template

TEMPLATE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF THE SASSI-LATER LIFE CAREERS LEARNING PROJECT REPORT

On completion of your Learning Project, you have been asked to write up the experience as a Learning Project Report. To produce this report, and to provide a consistent approach across all the projects, please produce your report using this Learning Project Report template.

The reporting structure is designed to help you review and reflect on your experience of 'piloting' the concepts and techniques you learned about on the **SASSI-Later Life Career** C1 course, what worked, what didn't and what needs to be improved. We are also interested to know whether or not you feel that you will continue using some or all of the things you learnt about in your normal working life.

Learning Project Title			
Pilot Start Date		Pilot End Date	
Partner Organisation			
Name of the author			

Purpose, Objectives and Scope	
Target Group/s you piloted with	
1. Where did you start from and what did you want to achieve through this Learning Project?	
2. What happened? How did you approach your learning project?	
3. What did work well - how and why?	
4. What didn't work? Why?	
5. What did you learn?	
6. What competences do you feel you have developed through the SASSI LLC Programme i.e. what are you able to do now that you couldn't before? How did you assess this?	
7. What were the main results for your target group – what did they achieve?	
8. What conclusions have you come to about supporting older workers who are looking for a career change or a job in later life?	
9. How could we improve the tools & processes you tested with your target groups?	
10. What was the feedback from the people you worked with? (Please include quotes and/or short case studies/success stories if possible)	

