



2021 Valletta Conference Declaration

- 1) The participants in the European Basic Skills Network 2021 hybrid conference, held simultaneously in Malta and online owing to the prevalence of the COVID 19 pandemic, pledge to continue working to promote quality in national basic skills policies, cooperating to implement the current and future Agenda for Adult Learning and in particular the Upskilling Pathways recommendation. We hereby encourage all European stakeholders to recognize that basic skills are a central factor in all policy aiming at increasing sustainability, resilience, equity and inclusion.
- 2) The present Conference Declaration builds on and upholds all previous EBSN Conference Declarations ([Berlin 2018](#), [Tallinn 2019](#), and [Online 2020](#)), which reminded policy makers of their responsibility to develop coherent and adequately financed national policies for basic skills. These past declarations recommended also that governments move from project-based provision of basic skills to established national programs, that they foster and finance further research on basic skills related issues, that they develop frameworks for basic skills, and that they foster learner-centred delivery models.
- 3) The 2020 conference declaration noted the increased relevance of training in digital literacy created by the lockdowns, and the need for better digital tools, apps and models for basic skills learning provision, as well as for quality provision of professional development for teachers, focusing not only on their competent individual use of digital tools but also on all the didactic considerations that need to inform the use of such tools. As countries slowly emerge from the Covid crisis there is an urgent need for more research and development work aiming at meeting the need for further professional development that has been revealed by the crisis. Adult educators working in the field of basic skills need to be recognized, their status and working conditions enhanced, including their professional development needs.
- 4) Recent research shows that the COVID lockdown affected adult learners differently according to their previous level of basic skills. Adults from most vulnerable groups were left behind or were not reached. There is an urgent need for measures that can meet this challenge in the post-Covid era and in the event of future similar situations. Lessons learnt from positive experiences need to become the basis for future practice.
- 5) Although Adult Learning stakeholders welcome the possibility of going back to presential learning when the pandemic situation is over, it will be important hereafter to always consider the possibility of establishing different models of blended learning. Empowering both teachers and learners to combine presential and online learning will both increase the flexibility adult learners need, increase their digital skills, and provide the sector with sustainable and resilient methods of delivery should a new disruption arise. The enormous need for basic education in the area of digitization in the population at large is currently both a challenge and a new option for reaching target groups. Special efforts must be made to design and implement sustainable models adapted to the needs of adults with very low levels of basic skills.



- 6) The participants in the EBSN 2021 conference declare their interest in contributing to meet these needs and the general need for upskilling of basic skills teachers throughout Europe, by
- Considering the possibility of developing project applications aimed at such developments,
 - Contributing where possible to the current work for the creation of EBSN Professional Development Series, PDS,
 - Cooperating with the EBSN and with their national networks to adapt the PDS and the CBS (Capacity Building Series) to the needs of their respective countries,
 - Sharing within the frame of the EBSN network their examples of good practice regarding the establishment of sustainable models for blended learning in basic skills provision.
- 7) The participants in the EBSN 2021 conference recognize the global dimension of the challenges we currently face. They are keen to continue supporting the Unesco Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) and welcome the possibility to interact with basic skills stakeholders beyond Europe.

Endorsed by the participants at the EBSN's 2021 Valletta Conference
October 29th, 2021