

Writing for Europe

Advices and guidelines for writing articles about adult education to a European audience

Based on the experience of European InfoNet Adult Education 2005-2015; written by the Editorial Board of InfoNet.



Lifelong Learning Programme

Writing for Europe

Published as a part of the European InfoNet Adult Education, Period III. The project has been funded by the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme.

This website has been produced with the financial support of the European Commission, DG Education and Training, Lifelong Learning Programme / Grundtvig. Its content reflects the views of the authors only.

Written by the Editorial Board of InfoNet (Michael Voss).

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2015

The brochure is available online at:

- InfoNet webpage: www.infonet-ae.eu
- ELM* webpage: www.elmmagazine.eu

* ELM is a European online web magazine on adult education. It was established in 2015 as a merger between InfoNet and LLinE (Lifelong Learning in Europe).

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Introduction - Why this publication?

Nowadays we experience increased cooperation across borders in Europe between adult educators, adult education institutions and adult education researchers. This is often supported by the European Union.

There is no doubt that actors and communities in the adult education field the Adult education individual actors and communities can learn a lot from each other – making possible an increased quality and a higher number of adult learners.

Wanting to share with people from other countries and actually being able to do it is not the same, though. The barriers are many and sometimes high: language, cultural and knowledge differences, shortfalls in communication skills and methods, etc. To overcome these barriers and gradually create a European community of adult education, the adult education actors must improve their competencies in communication with the actors of other countries, backgrounds and cultures. Therefore we also need the assistance of communication professionals.

For more than 10 years “The European InfoNet Adult Education” (read more in Chapter 9) has produced articles on adult education from most European countries and on European Adult Education developments of the sector. We have published them on a European platform and in (inter) national magazines and websites. From this experience we have realised that very few journalists specialise in adult education, and even fewer jour-

nalists regularly write about adult education for readers outside their own country. At the same time a high number of adult education actors want to communicate about their work, their particular experiences, their innovative methods and their projects with fellow Europeans. But – often for apparent reasons - they lack both basic journalist training and competencies in communication with people of other nationalities.

The aim of this publication is to help both journalists and journalistically untrained adult education actors to write articles for print or for online media – to be read by interested citizens of other European countries.

This includes:

- The task of defining and understanding such target groups, especially target groups living in an another geographical, cultural, political and educational environment
- The task of writing articles that are relevant and even necessary for the target groups
- The task of writing articles that are understandable for the target groups.

Even though our background is adult education, we think that much of this text may be relevant for authors in other fields and especially for writers who write for a European audience about other topics. This publication focuses on the journalist type of article, but we do think that some pieces of advice could be useful when writing press releases, project reports, social media texts and maybe

We have very much enjoyed participating in InfoNet. Doing that, we have enhanced our own understanding of writing for a European audience. We are very pleased to share these competencies, and we hope that it will be useful to other journalists and adult education actors in Europe. All of us will continue these efforts in other frameworks after the project phase. It is our intention to find ways to develop and improve this concept of Writing for Europe, hopefully resulting in a new and more comprehensive publication later. We invite all readers to help us in that by sending comments and inputs to Michael Voss (mv@dfs.dk) or Michael Sommer (sommer@akademie-klausenhof.de).

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Know your target group

Before you start writing, find out who your audience is and what kind of information they need from you:

- Are you writing for a media? Ask the editors about the target group of that media and about the basic concept of the magazine/website/journal you are writing for! Who are the readers? What is the mission of the media, and how do the editors see your article in fulfilling that mission?
- Are you writing for an online forum like EPALE? Think about who might end up reading your article. Who would you like to have as a reader?
- Is there an interesting national or even local piece of news/phenomenon that caught your attention? Think of how it might be interesting for the European reader. Is it a practice that could be generalized and transplanted to other European contexts? Is it a news item that might have European consequences? Is it a national manifestation of a European/global phenomenon? Or is it so quintessentially national that it could not happen anywhere else – thus making it very interesting!

In the European adult education context, typical target groups include:

- Adult educators i.e. teachers and pedagogues
- Other practitioners and advocates such as people working in adult education associations, umbrella organizations, NGOs and such. They may not be in direct touch with the learner but may be involved in project coordination, development and upskilling the field, advocacy and lobbying for funding etc.
- Education policy makers and civil servants on the national and EU level
- Adult learners themselves
- Adult education researchers
- Identify the group you are writing to and think about what content they would benefit or even need from you. Remember that you cannot please everyone! For example:
 - Educators might be especially interested in descriptions of good didactic practices, interviews of European colleagues, interviews of European learners etc.
 - Advocates and NGO people might be especially interested in policy news, funding opportunities and project experiences.
 - Policy makers, with their scarce time, may value short news items, and concise stories about the positive effects of learning (a return on the investment into education!)
 - Adult learners are a huge target group: potentially every adult! Adult education media in Europe rarely cater for the learner but if you find yourself writing for this target group, remember that a person and his/her story are universally interesting.
 - Researchers communicate through scientific journals but could well be interested in how some theory is applied in practice or how policy affects science funding.



This list above is a very crude generalisation but it is an example of how you might go about thinking which topic suits which target group. Remember that, regardless of target group, everybody is always interested in a good story, in another person, something that evokes emotion. (See also Chapter 5)

Build a fictional reader

One helpful way of working with target groups is to build “model readers”. This means imagining a fictitious person that has the characteristics and needs of your target reader. Do not just list some basic details about profession and gender, give this imaginary person a character so that (s)he feels like a real person! It is a good idea to come up with a model reader for every target group, or even several different ones for each group.

Example

Mario, 40, Bologna, Italy

Mario is trained at university as a teacher. He has spent 15 years teaching youngsters in basic education and 5 years teaching languages to adults. Four years ago he started working on the side as head of a small local adult education association trying to get funding for adult courses.

What are his professional goals?

He wants to quit teaching to be full-time manager of his association. He wants to develop his organization: he wants to enlarge it and to have more outreach to potential adult learners. He also wants to professionalize his staff through more training.

Personally, his ambition is to become regional coordinator for adult education.



What are his most important values?

Mario is conservative, family-centred, but not totally closed to new ideas. For him learning has value in itself. He also believes that all hard work should pay off somehow and that learning should have concrete effect on people's lives. He does not trust politicians.

What kind of life does he lead outside of work?

Mario is married with 2 children. He is passionate about football and actually is a trainer for a kids' team. Food is another passion: Mario prepares some home-made Mozzarella from his mother's goat. He reads the national and local newspapers on his tablet during breakfast. At work he has little time to read. For relaxation, detective stories are the best.

What kind of AE journalistic content does he want/need to read?

He needs ideas for strategies to get funding, good practices to get funded and ideas for creating new partnerships. He's interested in analyses about the content of different educational offers. Stories about companies' social responsibility strategy are of special interest.

What new knowledge would change his life?

An article about participatory democratic values in management might give him new ideas and shake him a bit. Now that you know Mario, write directly to him!

Chapter 3

Article types

Example:

You can use a model reader also if you want to attract potential new readers. Just build a model reader to resemble the new audience you want to reach.

- It is important to get empirical data on who actually reads your content. Ask the editors if you are writing for a media! If your writing appears online, web analytic tools should give much of this information. Is the target group reached? If not, what needs to change?
- Lastly, one final realistic target group for you to consider is the professional mainstream journalist! If you write a good, interesting article with a clear argument and a catchy title and it is published in an adult education media or perhaps in your organization's newsfeed or as a press release, there is a chance that a journalist from a mainstream national or European media might pick up on it and possibly even follow up on it, dramatically increasing visibility for adult education. Press release writing for example, does not fundamentally differ from article writing (a press release is in fact a short article) and all of the tips we present in this booklet can be used in writing press releases too!

Article types are the different genres of text that journalistic writers use to convey their message. Article types can be placed on a continuum between two extremes: fact-based articles and literary articles.

All genres fall somewhere along this continuum (see below) although all genres contain some elements of both of these extremes. As we move right towards the literary extreme, the writer's voice may be heard more in the text and the article can explicitly argue a point.

Thus article types serve as guides both to the reader and the writer. The reader expects different things from a news item than from a column, and the writer works according to the requirement of the genre in question.

Article types are also a tool for an editor to commission an article from a writer: a detailed article type description serves as a guideline to writing. Established media may have detailed article types that are well-known "trademarks" of the media

News - Popularisation of research - How-to - Phenomenon - Portrait - Interview - Reportage - Personal commentary

Fact (objective)

Literary (subjective)

Continuum of genres

Here is an example of a possible brief for a news

News story

Length: 500-800 words

Illustration: photo related to the news event, a person

Elements: catchy title (not exceeding 50 letters!), intro, text, subtitles

Aim: Provides information and/or commentary from an AE angle on a topical event, phenomenon, trend (something that is happening right now or something passed but which still has impact). “Inverted pyramid”-structure. Start with what has happened, why you are telling the story. Make sure you answer basic questions: What, where, how and most importantly why. Put background information to the end of the story. National or European scope but national events must be relevant for the European reader.

and evoke a sense of familiarity and brand recognition from the reader.

Typical journalistic article types you would encounter in the European adult education context include:

- News: the aim is to impart objective, checked (and rechecked from at least another impartial source) information on a topical event.
- Phenomenon/Feature: the aim is to give more in-depth information on a topical trend/ phenomenon. The writer may develop an own viewpoint to the matter but gives the floor to opposing views by e.g. interviewing two opposing opinions.

- Reportage is a journalist’s account of a phenomenon/event with the journalist somehow participating in the described event, e.g. a conference or an adult education class. The aim is to give the reader the feeling of “being there” with the writer.
- Interview: the aim is to cover a certain topic through a particular person’s (the interviewee) viewpoint or expertise. The interviewee may be an expert or an “everyman”, for example a learner. Remember that a one-person interview always presents matters from one viewpoint – the interviewees’ (or actually two, because the interviewer’s choice of questions reflects his/her viewpoint). The interviewee is often also unlikely to say anything critical of their own actions or the organization they represent. This is particularly true when interviewing politicians or civil servants. You can always improve an interview by introducing more interviewees, preferably from opposing viewpoints or ask an objective party for a commentary.
- The interview (as a method of inquiry) should not be confused with a portrait. This is a story type that introduces a particular person to the reader, often including elements of his/her life story, values, work etc.
- Popularisation of research. Many adult education professionals are in touch with new research publications and other events in academia. Many may be researchers themselves. If you are asked to write about research to a journalistic media, bear in mind that your reader is not academic. You need to forget the conventions of academic writing. You must “translate” the content of a particular piece of research to the greater public. The most straightforward way to

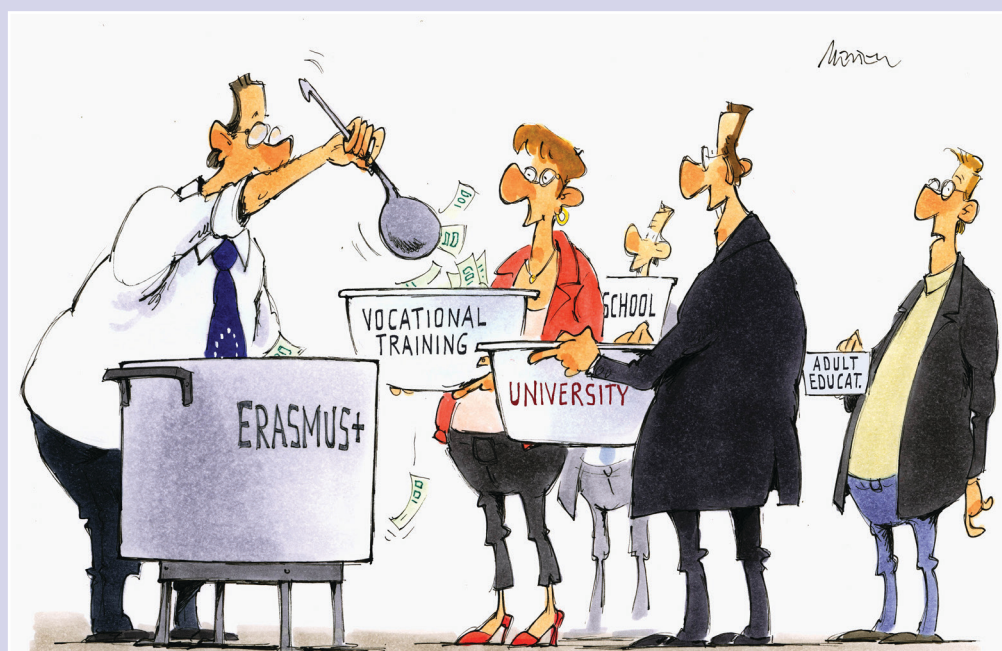
do this might be interviewing the researcher and asking him/her about the most interesting results of a particular research, what new information this brings to the field and how might this new knowledge affect the practice of adult education. You will then write an article based on this information. Note that you might not even use one sentence from the academic research paper you are covering in the finished article. Do not assume that the reader has previous knowledge of the topic, remember to explain central concepts and avoid jargon.

- The how-to article is a genre which aims to explicitly educate or help the reader in some issue. It presents a problem and then suggests a very concrete solution to it. Sharing of good

practices is very important in the European adult education field, and although good practices may feature in any article genre, there is always a “how-to” element involved when writing about them. (More of this in the special info box on writing about projects.)

- Personal commentary is content such as columns and blogs. In this genre you can freely express your own ideas, experience and personality, often also humour!

Some general rules of thumb when you are writing in any of these genres for online publications: write concisely, keep it as short as possible, use subtitles, insert links where relevant and catch the reader's attention with catchy headlines and text beginnings.



Articles about projects

Almost everyone working in the adult education sector today has sometime been involved with project work, often funded by EU instruments such as Grundtvig and – currently – Erasmus+. Funding increasingly comes from projects.

Project partners have both a need and an obligation to disseminate their project activities and results to ensure that the work done by the project makes an impact beyond its immediate target group. Projects often generate good practices, new knowledge or even concrete new tools that European colleagues can benefit from.

For these reasons writing about your project for any media is very important. Here are some tips to guide you to successful dissemination of your project:

- Writing about a project is not fundamentally different from writing on any other topic. You must understand your target group and the media you are writing for, and decide what information is most interesting and relevant for that target group. Often most relevant are the results of the project. Are there any new innovations, concrete tools, practices or experiences other colleagues could learn from? If yes, make this the core of the article.
- The fact that there has been a project producing these results is actually much less interesting than the results themselves. Think hard what the reader needs to know about the project details and what s/he does not need!

For instance, does the reader need to know that “the kick off meeting was held in Vienna in September, it lasted for three days and the budget was discussed on the first day”? No, s/he does not need to know that. Leave it out. UNLESS you found out that having a three-day meeting as opposed to a more common two-day meeting greatly improved project management and you would actually like to recommend the same to other colleagues. Then include it.

- If you think that some of the technical details of the project are relevant (e.g. list of project partners, internal structure etc.) you could list this information separately from the main text, so as to get to the point more quickly in the main text. It is likely that the editor will then place this information into a separate box. This is where you can also include the required details about the funder, their logo and such other details.
- When you describe the project results, be very concrete. If possible, explain with real-life examples!
- Finally, never confuse a journalistic article about a project with a project report and never copy paste a report and offer it as an article about the project! A report is sure to contain a wealth of irrelevant information for the reader.

Make the article attractive

There is a fierce competition prevailing in printed publications, in TV and radio and in electronic and social media – the competition for the attention of readers, listeners, viewers and users. We are all flooded with news, information, viewpoints and other kind of input. Each of us is engaged in a daily fight, hour by hour, second by second, to sort and choose, which communicative input we actually will engage ourselves in.

Even though the amount of articles, TV-programs and social media postings about adult education is limited, the competition for the time of the potential reader is still extremely hard. Adult education actors also want and need input about other topics, and inputs are offered to them all the time.

When we write an article, we want to get the message across to as many relevant readers as possible. This makes it necessary to give some thought to the question, how can I – writing the article – make the article attractive and in that way, maximise the number of people who will at least begin reading the article? Which leads us to the question: on what basis does the reader decide if s/he will actually start reading the article?

The first decision about reading or not reading an article is mostly taken in a split second while the potential reader casts a glimpse on the printed page or webpage, before s/he rushes on to another corner of the page or to another page or another website. In that glimpse the reader may read and understand the headline, a highlighted introductory paragraph, an illustration, the subtext of the illus-

tration or the subtitles in the article. S/he may not be able to consume all these elements in a split second, but they will be next-in-line and constitute the basis for the decision about actually reading the article.

Of course the topic must be of interest to the potential reader. So, the before-mentioned elements (headline, introduction, illustration and subtitles) must communicate clearly:

- What is the topic of the article?
- But this is not enough. With equal importance, the author must here clearly communicate:
- What is the special view of this article on the topic?
- What is the novelty of the article? (Can it make the reader say “Oh, I did not know that”?)
- What the added value that I, the potential reader, will get for spending some of my extremely precious time reading this article? What stimulates curiosity? What is new and surprising? Can I use it for my job or for other activities?
- Writing articles for a European audience, you must expect the potential reader to ask: Why should I bother reading about something going on in another country? And you must convince him/her immediately.

This is the rational basis of choosing the article. But also more “irrational” factors come into play, even for the most serious adult education expert or teacher:

- Can I identify with someone in the article? Can I find human beings and not only numbers and categories in the article?
- Will it be easy or hard to read? This is extra important when you write for a foreign readership. They might expect it to be complicated to understand what goes on in another country.
- Will I be somehow entertained?

All this lead us to some basic advice for the first parts of a journalistic article on adult education:

- It is worthwhile to allocate an important part of your time and of your creative thinking for writing these introductory elements of your article.
- The headline and the introductory paragraph must clearly communicate the topic, the special view on the topic and most important: something new and surprising.
- Introducing a human being, for example by a brief quote, will help to make the article attractive. A portrait illustration with supporting text may do the trick.
- You may or you may not start the work process by writing the headline and intro. If you do that, you will have to get back to it addition: after writing the article and possible change something to make it actually meet the above mentioned criteria.
- Leave out facts and numbers from this part of the article unless there is one easily read number (Five thousand instead of 5.123) that comprises the news or the surprise factor.
- Leave out background information from this part of the article.
- Do not start with what was first chronologically.

If you have convinced the reader to go on after reading the headline and the introductory paragraph, you have won the first and most important battle. Your reader has chosen your article out of thousands.

But you will have to keep fighting until the end – meaning that you have to continuously convince the reader to go on reading. This, of course, has much to do with content and relevance (Chapter 5), but it is also wise to structure the article in a way that makes the first parts of the text useful even if the reader stops reading somewhere along the way.

Here are some advices for that, but this may differ from one article genre (Chapter 3) to another:

- If there is no quote of a central source or actor of the story in the introductory paragraph, place that in the paragraphs immediately after.
- Then introduce a few facts if they are absolutely necessary to comprehend the story.
- Then tell the story. (Chapter 5)
- Later in the article, you can present more background information, more facts and numbers and even a side story or two.
- In an article for a European audience more facts and more background is often necessary. You may present special boxes with this information.

Examples

Learning makes you healthy: Reaching low-skilled adults through health care

Adults with low reading and writing skills rarely take the step to attend a course. They have often managed to get through life without any continuing education courses and are ashamed to speak out about their need to make changes and learn. A confidant, such as a doctor, can support them in taking the step to take part in educational offers. ...

www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-projects-49/2224-learning-makes-you-healthy-reaching-low-skilled-adults-through-health-care

Comment: Topic and the special view on learning, health care, is clearly communicated. Introducing a doctor as agent for learning is surprising.

Can gamification help us to create a more engaging further education?

Do you remember these hours and hours that maybe you, your colleges or friends spent voluntarily on playing World of Warcraft, Minecraft, Farmville or playing football or weekly poker events? Do you realize how deeply engaged they were, when playing their favorite game? Would it not be great if our adult learners could be as engaged as the World of Warcraft players, or as concentrated as a players of chess? ...

www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-projects-49/2127-can-gamification-help-us-to-create-a-more-engaging-further-education

Comment: Topic clearly communicated. Games and learning is somewhat surprising. Instead of introducing a human being the intro appeals directly to the reader and to his/her personal memory.

Professionalism and ethics are important for quality counsellors

„I am the one who give an example, initiatives and incentives to others, how to take care of the quality of their own work.“ These words of a Slovenian quality counsellor in adult education point out the importance of identity, values, personal and professional responsibility and the development of adult educators. ...

www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-practice-63/2181-professionalism-and-ethics-are-important-for-quality-counsellors

Comment: Topic communicated in headline. A human being tells about her personal understanding of the subject in the intro paragraph. Then further details on the subject of the article is communicated in the last sentence of the intro paragraph.

Make the article relevant and interesting

Surely, you should not make a lot of effort to attract the reader to the article (Chapter 4), if you do not have anything relevant and interesting to tell. If not, the reader will be fooled and disappointed, and s/he will not return to your articles another time, maybe not even to the publication.

What is relevant and interesting differs from person to person, from one type of reader to another. That is why it is important to understand your target group (Chapter 2) and keep that in mind all the way through reading and editing.

First you have to consider the timeliness of the specific topic you intend to write about.

- Is this part of adult education that involves actors in Europe these years?
- Is it a rising trend among up among adult education activities
- Is this a topic which is eagerly debated in society as a whole?
- Is it a topic which is debated in adult education circles?

If so, the chances that the potential reader will find it interesting and relevant are much higher. On the other hand, a completely new area of work or a completely new method may also be of great interest for a number of readers. But in these cases, you will need to argue much more for the relevance of the content in the article.

Even if you want to write about a really hot topic, commonly debated in the European adult education community, you have not made it yet. Your case or information, your analysis or special view on the

topic must add something extra to the knowledge, understanding and motivation of your reader. You may even demand of yourself and your article that each paragraph will have some added value for most readers.

Again you have to imagine your target group. For any author it is a challenge to really know what the potential reader needs to read and wants to read. Writing to be read all over Europe makes it even more complicated.

New experiences, new knowledge and cases with surprising outcomes will often do the job, not necessarily good/best practice and successful tests. That which went wrong may also change the perspective of the reader.

When you are going to address readers in other countries, you should beware that what is old and well known in your own country may be completely surprising and fascinating for readers in other countries. And the other way around: Be careful not to make the assumption that this is “a new type of course” or that this method is being “applied for the first time”.

To solve this you may ask a colleague or two in other countries, a colleague with international connections or someone who have done some scientific research in this field. (More about this in Chapter 7)

Based on all this you must ask yourself questions like these, depending on target group:

- Will my article help the reader to develop his adult education practice?

- Will my article make the reader reconsider his views on adult education?
- Will my article help motivate the citizen for adult education?
- Will my article make the decision maker change his attitude towards adult education?

When you have answered in the affirmative to one of these questions or a similar one, you may conclude that you have something relevant to communicate. But being relevant is not the same as being interesting. We all know the feeling when we come across an article or a book that we “ought to” read, because it covers a topic that we are working with or will be working with. But we keep on postponing it, because it somehow seems tedious. You are sure that reading the text will be hard work.

To avoid that reaction from the reader or to counteract it, it is important that you focus on the story. Facts, background, generalisations, analysis, chronology may be necessary elements of an article, but it does not make up an interesting article. You must have a story to tell. In most text genres you must concentrate on only one story while the feature or the web theme may give you other options. Somehow we all know, when we have read a good story. But how do we create a good story as a tool to communicate our knowledge and analysis in a special field?

The crux of a good story is the flow. One part must lead on to the next part of the text. They must be related. The matrix of such a story may be like this: Something happened or someone (individual or group) had a problem. Someone got an idea. Someone did something. Something new evolved. Something/someone changed.

Onto this structure you can then add facts, background information, quotes, analysis, etc. Because

of the story the reader will be able to place the information in a context that s/he can relate to – or be in opposition to, which is just as good.

An important element of a story is human beings, real live persons. Again most readers will rather identify with – or oppose – a human being in an article than an idea, a concept or a theory. This does not mean that you cannot write about ideas, con-

Example

In the camp: refugee camps and adult education

(Second paragraph of article:) The off-roader's tyres struggle to plough their way through the sand. In front of us is our escort vehicle; cheerful lads sporting a range of weapons, behind us a second car with the same happy aim of bringing their visitors safe and sound back to the UN compound at the end of the day. Visibility is zero: the dust we are stirring up is everywhere.

I am on my way to Dadaab, the largest refugee 'camp' in the world, in northeast Kenya.

www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-practice-63/1375-in-the-camp-refugee-camps-and-adult-education

Comments: This is the basic format of a story. The author appears as an “I” who travels to a place and report what he experiences. If you open the article, you can read how the author takes you with him on his journey and – at the same time – puts experiences into perspective.

cepts and theories. But you will find more readers if you relate these elements to human beings, because stories evoke emotions.

There are lots of ways to introduce human beings to an article on adult education:

- A learner
- A non-learner
- A relative of a learner
- An educator
- An organiser or director
- A decision maker
- An academic researcher

They can appear in the article with their experience, their personal story, their ideas, their actions, their analysis, their research, their special viewpoint or something else. An article about how a lecturer deals with a new method and the opportunities and difficulties, that (s)he faces personally, will be read and enjoyed much more than purely factual presentation of a new teaching method.

You can insert human beings in the article by telling about them and describing them and/or by direct quotes.

Critical elements in an article will increase the likelihood that it is read. A critical opinion such as a quote or a particular challenge and difficulties should be included in any article. Critical questions in an interview will help the interviewee explain about his/her case or his position much more convincingly.

Facts are necessary for the reader to increase their knowledge and to act consistently and wisely. We often want to communicate facts to others when we write an article. But facts are also stumbling blocks for the reader. So we have to be very aware about exactly how much facts and numbers we introduce into an article.

Examples

New groups, new friendships, new social networks

"It is important to me that I do not remain closed at home, that I remain wide, that I do not limit myself," says Danica Vinšek in this interview about her experiences with non-formal adult education. She is a retired sociologist from Slovenia.

Danica is 62 years old and lives in an elegant private suburban house with a magnificent view to the Karavanke mountains in the northern Slovenia. She lives together with her husband who still works.

www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-practice-63/2146-new-groups-new-friendships-new-social-networks

Comments: The benefits of lifelong learning into retirement are explained by way of a personal story. If you open the article, you will see that the personal story is the backbone of the article, and relevant background information is placed at the end of the article.

Migrants are doing it by themselves

We are better at motivating other migrants for learning, and we are better at explaining the informal rules and habits of Danish society. Alma Bekturganova Andersen and Rose Anne Valera are organising learning activities for other migrants in Denmark.

www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-practice-63/1362-migrants-are-doing-it-by-themselves

Comments: The article combines two very different stories about two migrants. If you open the article, you will see that basic facts of the women are explained right after the intro paragraph. After that quotes and background information is interwoven in the text.

Make the article readable

What is relevant for the reader? This may be difficult to know when you write to foreign audience. Some facts are absolutely necessary for a foreign reader to understand what goes on in another country. But a lot of facts and numbers will stand in the way of the central message of the article. Again, conferring with a colleague or an expert may help you to know what is necessary and what is not. Last but not least, something very basic but often forgotten: The facts must be accurate and correct. If they are not, you let the reader down, especially the reader in another country who will have trouble checking the facts himself. As a side effect of letting the reader down you risk destroying your own credibility and that of the publication.

You have attracted the potential reader, and you even convinced him/her to go further into the text, because the topic is relevant, and because you present your information in an interesting way (Chapter 4 and 5).

Still, you don't want to make the reading of your article more complicated and strenuous than necessary. While reading an article most of us continuously make a cost-benefit analysis: Is reading this article worth the effort – compared to all my other tasks? That is why an author should try to minimize the barriers to reading. (S)he should attempt to make the process of reading and understanding as smooth as possible.

Of course, this can be overdone. We are not writing for children. Dealing with adult education we will mostly be writing for professionals and specialists. But, authors and correspondents are much more likely to write in a too complicated way than the opposite. This is especially true for writers that are not professional educated journalists.

First we will give you a small list of very simple tricks that makes reading easier.

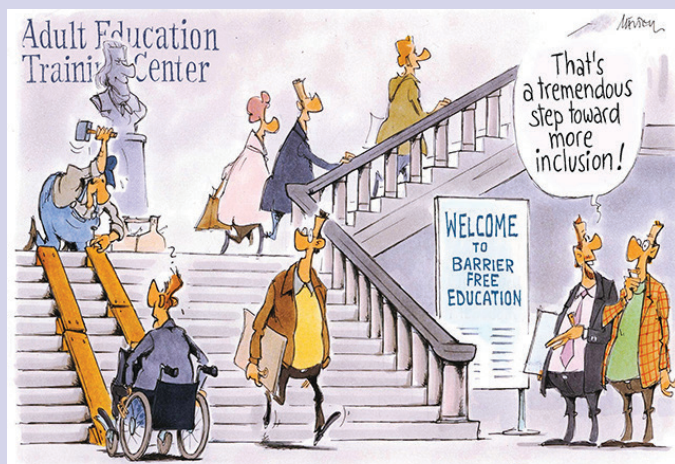
- Be careful not to write many very long sentences, especially with interposed sentences. Such sentences will quickly turn into riddles that force the reader to analyse the sentence, go back and start all over again. Break them up into shorter sentences. Not only will this help the reading process, it will often make your points stand out more clearly.



- Alternate between long (not very long) and short sentences. The other extreme are all very brief sentences like: "The institution developed a new course. They used a special method for the course. The method was developed by the innovation team." This kind of text may be easier to read than long sentences, but it is boring, and there is no natural flow in the text.
- Avoid very long paragraphs. An article with long paragraphs graphically sends a very uninviting signal. It makes it difficult for the reader to separate the different elements of the text. There is no natural pause for the reader. You should separate into a new paragraph when you introduce a new piece of information or a new point. Anyway, it is helpful to consider a new paragraph after two or three sentences.
- If possible, use active rather than passive voice, and make human beings the agent of the sentence:
Rather: "The teacher explained how to..."
Than: "The participant was taught how to..."
Rather: "Professor XX made an empirical study on this type of institution"
Than: "an empirical study came out on this type of institution"
- "Translate" scientific or other kind of expert language into more everyday language if possible. Very often an author will work on the basis of expert material or expert interviews. Authors may even become experts in the field of adult education. Then the expert language tends to "infect" the reporting language. Still without falling in to the trap of "baby language", it is useful to consider if your point can be told without out too much "insider lingo".
- Use 2-4 subheadings of 4-5 words in an ordinary length article. Subheadings should also be

catchy and interesting. Subheadings can be used to move the story forward with the use of only a few words.

- Some types of articles (See Chapter 3) can be composed of facts, direct quotes or indirect quotes, the viewpoint of the persons quoted (experts, politicians, participants etc.) and sometimes even the viewpoint of the author. Such a mixture can work very well. BUT: you must show very clearly what-is-what. The reader will be confused and has to stop reading in order to analyse, if it is not very obvious when there is a quote and when it is the author of the article that explains something.
- Names of institutions, book titles, titles and grades of individuals, figures and abbreviations can all be necessary and useful information. But it puts a brake on the reading flow. Whenever possible, you should remove this kind of information from the article proper and place it in special boxes.



Writing for a European audience

Role play as a democratic process

They chase each other. Dash quickly across the road like aliens on the lookout. Creep along the walls like fleeting shadows. Mysterious, disguised and carefully planned. The scene is Stockholm in Sweden.

www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-practice-63/2173-role-play-as-a-democratic-process

Comments: The author has been very careful to avoid long sentences in this article – even using half sentences in the intro. There are many paragraph breaks and a couple of sub-headings. There is lots of expert knowledge in the article, but presented in accessible spoken word via the interview.

Two-legged support for hearing dogs

Miniature poodle Pinja is a hearing dog with equal access to the coffee shop or the hairdresser's salon. More volunteers are needed as independent assistance persons for the owners of hearing and aid dogs.

www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-national-affairs/1144-two-legged-support-for-hearing-dogs

Comments: The article is easily read with long and difficult words only when necessary. The facts and the background is mixed with the quotes in small doses.

These are only a few advices from the journalist text-book. Others you can find in educational literature for journalists. A lot of it you can figure out yourself by looking at the article with the eyes of a reader that are not familiar with the topic.

The focus on readability and comprehensibility is important for any writer, but it is doubly important when you write for a European audience, for readers in other countries.

A heterogeneous target group that don't know your country

Writing to a foreign, European audience may seem a daunting task. You are writing to a group of individuals who may differ from each other based on their educational and job background, cultural or ethnic identity, age, language competencies and level of exposure to European cooperation.

Each country has its specific circumstances in culture, history and political life. This also goes for adult education. From country to country the historical roots of adult education differ. So does the relationship between state organised education, commercially run education and education based on volunteers and civil society organisations. The lines between vocational training, general adult education, political education and education for leisure are also drawn in different ways from country to country.

Most of your readers will not be familiar with the situation in other European countries, and one tends to expect things to be organised in the rest of Europe like in your own country. Very few things can be taken for granted. So, how to address such a heterogeneous bunch that don't even know the most basic facts about your country?

Some common ground

This is a huge challenge to any author. But it is not impossible, at all.

Consider this: regardless of the many differences between you and your target group, there are as many similarities. In fact your similarities probably outweigh the differences. You both work in adult education which means that you deal with the same kind of problems in your working life: where to get funding? How to get adults excited about learning? What didactic methods to use? How to network with local or European NGOs?

You may have gone through similar education or training for the job. You share a set of common concepts and professional language. And what is most important: it is likely that you share a set of common values, at least to a degree. You probably believe that lifelong learning is important and that learning has a transformative effect in people's lives.

All this leads to the following important conclusions:

- You are not writing to a group of unknown foreigners, you are writing to colleagues. Write as if talking to a colleague, about themes you would talk to a colleague.
- What you write about and how you write about it reflects your values. One important task of writing about AE themes for Europe is to make these common values visible. This strengthens our European professional identity and is also good for advocacy for European lifelong learning: We have a common cause.
- Writing to colleagues is somewhat different from general journalism. This kind of writing has a strong problem-solving dimension. Colleagues want to know what innovations and good prac-

tices are used in other countries and whether they could be adapted to their country. More on this in chapter 3 about article types.

- Writing to colleagues has another important aspect: networking. Every article not only transmits a piece of information or an experience but also reaches out to colleagues, stating "This is my work/my organization, these are our aims". This may be a trigger for partnering in projects or informal networking. Bear this in mind when you write!

Summing up, even though your reader does not know that much about your country, you share some basic concepts, values and aims. You will often find him/her eager to know about or learn from adult education in other countries. You just have to help her or him a bit.

Learn to know your reader

How do you help your reader from another country understand your article? Here we give you five steps to give yourself an idea about how much help s/he needs:

1) The first rule in this context is that you cannot just translate an article that you already wrote for your own native readers. When you write an article to be published in your language and your own country, you are allowed to expect from the reader some basic knowledge about your country and about adult education in your country. Actually, you risk offending your reader if you explain very basic knowledge about your country in the article. But these details may be necessary for a foreigner to understand your article.

When writing an article for a European audience on a matter that you already dealt with in an article for your own country, you don't have to go

through the phase of defining the content of your article and of collecting information all over again. But, you probably will have to start writing from scratch to make the article attractive, relevant, interesting and readable for a foreign reader.

2) You can think of the reader as a colleague from another country, and you can draw on your own experiences: What kind of information and explanation do you miss when you read about adult education in other countries? Did you ever meet and talk to people of other countries about adult educations? What did they ask about? What did they tell about their own country? How exactly does adult education in your country differ from other countries?

3) Make use of your colleagues. In your organisation, there may be colleagues who are involved in international cooperation, who participated in European seminars. Ask them for an opinion on what you need to explain most carefully in your article and have one of them read your draft.

4) You may even give a colleague in another country a call or send a passage of the article to him or her, and ask if it needs more detailed explanation.

5) Lastly but importantly, to recognize a story idea in European AE, you need to have some kind of a “big picture” of what is happening in the field, what trends are there and what “people are talking about”. You can gain this kind of insight by reading general media and follow specialized European adult education media such as Elm (previously LLinE) and EPAL. Order newsletters from big AE organizations such as EUCIS-LLL and EAEA and perhaps order news digests from media agencies. (See links in Chapter 9)

Keep it simple!



These efforts will often create a dilemma:

- Either you make it a priority to include all the necessary background information about the special circumstances in your country. Then you risk using up all the available space before you get to the point, and you have written an article that is so burdened by facts that it has become boring.
- Or you focus entirely on the interesting information and the message of your case or your topic. Then you risk that readers in another country do not get the point or misunderstand your message because there are too many unsaid assumptions.

Unfortunately there is no manual or text book to lead you through this dilemma. You have to experiment, you have to take chances, and you have to make the necessary balances.

A simple advice is to be even more clear on the subject and the topic than you would in an article for native readers. Unambiguity is the key word. Keep it simple, even if it means that you must drop some of the details and nuances.

There is another method that may help you stay clear of boring fact recitation and still make the

article useful for the foreign reader. You report on the subject and development from a classifying and comparative perspective. By this, we do not mean articles comparing three different countries in Europe. That is a genre in itself. But at some point of the article, you can explain traditions, self-images, dialogues, institutional forms, stakeholders, financing methods in your country by comparing with another country. At best, this help the reader understand the specific reality of your country better. Conventional online or print formats go a long way in communicating effectively with your reader.

Chapter 8

Using social media

However, publishing content through social media channels has many advantages: social media provides immediate feedback on content that you are able to convey directly to a specific network of readers. Social media channels such as facebook or twitter also provide easy options for adding videos and photos to your content, even to the inexperienced online communicator.

Fundamentally, social media encourages the reader to interaction and “cooperation” with the writer through commenting and sharing options. The rise of user-generated content is making “producers” (producers-users) of us all. For example in the InfoNet project, we enticed readers to be producers by dedicating an area on the InfoNet website (called My Article) for user-written content.

What social media tools to use for which process?

Selecting the most appropriate tool to send a certain message is crucial. Some very general rules of thumb:

- Use twitter if your message is very short, topical, contains a personal opinion and is meant to influence or mobilize readers on a particular subject.
- Set up a YouTube or other video channel if you often have video content to share. Subtitles in a video can enhance and highlight particularly relevant aspects.
- Facebook is the most widely used social media channel, the King, if you will. Use it for sharing your own content, stirring reactions and commenting on the debates you are interested in.
- Use LinkedIn when a subject has a particularly professional, working-life relevance and approach. LinkedIn allows a very specialized focus.



What was InfoNet?

“European InfoNet Adult Education” was a network of journalists and communication professionals who took on the task of publishing journalistic articles and prepared information on adult education in Europe. The members included international and European organisations, national umbrella organisations, universities and educational institutions.

Until the end of September 2015 – when funding came to an end on the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme – the network operated an online platform where its reports were published. At the same time, the network launched the new “European Lifelong Learning Magazine – ELM”; an online publication supported by several network partners and published by the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (KVS). ELM is a fusion between InfoNet and the well-known KVS magazine “Lifelong Learning in Europe” (LLinE).

Nine years of EU funding

The first stage of funding (2005–2008) was all about establishing the network, creating structures and an article service for the publications of the network partners. The second stage (2008–2011) involved the online platform being developed and made available to all those interested. The focuses of the third stage of the project (2012–2015) were modernising the online platform, extending its contents to provide more in-depth reporting and creating long-term structures which would last beyond the funding phase. Articles were written and

edited in line with specific journalistic criteria. The quality criteria were developed to match journalist ambitions, and network partners were given training. Until the end of the project, InfoNet published roughly one specialist article a week.

Independent and in a spirit of partnership InfoNet saw itself as an independent journalistic network supported by actors from civil society working as partners. Most of the 30 partners on the InfoNet III project were correspondents reporting on their country or a certain topic, divided into smaller subgroups which were each monitored by a member of the editorial team. In addition to this, there was a group for academic reporting. The partners were able to take part in special working groups to further the network’s development.

Readers

Readers of InfoNet were for example:

- Project managers experts, professionals
- National agencies of adult learning
- Umbrella organisations
- European direct centres
- Adult learning centres / providers
- Scientists and editors

Content

InfoNet offered versatile content:

- Interviews with leading personalities on adult education
- Current background reports on European education policy
- Adult education systems in different countries
- Best-practice reports and articles on projects
- Coverage of various topics such as such as gender, unemployment or migration
- New research results and book reviews
- Comments and cartoons

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Lifelong
Learning
Programme



EUROPEAN INFONET
ADULT EDUCATION

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission (Lifelong Learning Programme / Grundtvig). This publication reflects the views only of the author.

New magazine: ELM

The new publication titled ELM (European Life-long Learning Magazine) is a unique open access magazine that will be the only journalistic media in Europe on adult learning with a continent-wide network of correspondents and authors. It is based on the experience that has been gathered over many years of activities by European InfoNet Adult Education (InfoNet) and the magazine "Lifelong Learning in Europe" (LLinE). The new magazine ELM is based on a website presenting new content every two weeks and a quarterly thematic issue. A print-version is available on demand; it is based on the quarterly issue. The content consists of: news, interviews, reporting, background and in-depth articles, book reviews, personal columns, blogs, multi-media casts, etc. ELM covers all aspects of adult education.

www.elmmagazine.eu

Links

- InfoNet (not to be updated, succeed by ELM) <http://www.infonet-ae.eu>
- LLinE (not to be updated, succeed by ELM) <http://www.lline.fi>
- ELM (European lifelong Learning Magazine) <http://www.elmmagazine.eu>
- EPALE <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/home-page>
- EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults) <http://www.eaea.org>