

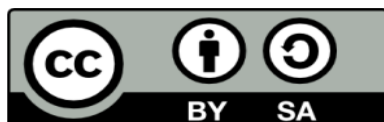


*SASSI*  
Later-life Careers

# **Trainers' Case Studies**

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## I INTRODUCTION

The core of the SASSI-Later-Life Careers piloting phase lasted from September 2023 - June 2024. A total of 127 representatives of the project target groups took part in the 18 learning projects in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Portugal and Slovakia. The participants in the pilots included trainers and counsellors working with different target groups in the context of career counselling and career orientation, adult educators, as well as workers aged 55+.

Regarding their format and methodology, the piloting learning projects varied in the different countries. 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).

The current collection of 11 case studies from a trainer's perspective is meant to illustrate the variety of possibilities for making use of the SASSI LLC approach and training materials.

## 2 CASE STUDIES FROM TRAINERS

### 2.1. H.F.'s Journey (Austria)

#### **Introduction**

H.F., an experienced career counselor from Lower Austria, has worked for over 20 years supporting individuals navigating the labor market. When H.F. joined the SASSI LLC project, he was eager to expand his understanding of older workers' needs, particularly those looking to re-enter the workforce or shift into entrepreneurial roles. The SASSI project's focus on olderpreneurship provided a new perspective for H.F., who had previously concentrated on traditional employment counseling.

#### **The SASSI Learning Project**

As part of the SASSI LLC project, H.F. engaged in training workshops designed to support career counselors in facilitating the entrepreneurial ambitions of older adults. The program introduced innovative approaches, such as Design Thinking, Persona Development, and Storytelling, which were specifically tailored to meet the emotional and practical needs of seniors contemplating a career shift.

H.F. applied these new tools in his work with a group of older adults in Lower Austria, many of whom were between 50 and 65 years old and facing career uncertainty. The participants were diverse, ranging from those who had been laid off after decades of service to those who were voluntarily stepping away from long-term careers in hopes of finding more meaningful work.

## Professional Growth and Competence Development

For H.F., the SASSI LLC project offered an opportunity for professional growth. Before SASSI, H.F.'s career guidance largely centered around job placement and skill assessment. The entrepreneurial focus of the project challenged him to think beyond conventional employment pathways and consider how seniors could create new opportunities for themselves through self-employment.

The training H.F. received helped him develop several key competencies. Firstly, he became more adept at using creative methodologies, such as Design Thinking, to help clients brainstorm business ideas and identify their unique strengths. These methodologies were especially useful in working with older clients who may not have seen themselves as potential entrepreneurs. H.F. also improved his ability to engage clients on a deeper emotional level, addressing their fears and insecurities about making late-career changes.

Through Storytelling techniques, H.F. learned how to help clients articulate their life experiences and turn those narratives into powerful personal brands that could be used to market themselves in new ways. This was particularly impactful for the older adults, who found meaning in reframing their past experiences as assets rather than outdated skills.

H.F. now feels more confident in facilitating career transitions for older workers, especially in helping them explore less traditional paths, such as starting small businesses or becoming self-employed. His role as a mentor shifted from offering practical advice to fostering personal transformation in his clients.

## Challenges Faced

Working with older adults in Lower Austria presented several challenges:

- **Skepticism Toward Entrepreneurship:** Many clients were initially resistant to the idea of entrepreneurship, viewing it as too risky.
- **Outdated Skills:** Clients often felt their skills were no longer relevant, which led to low self-confidence.
- **Mindset Shift:** H.F. had to work extensively on changing clients' perspectives from seeing themselves as "too old" to realizing their unique strengths.

## Impact on the Target Group

The SASSI project had a tangible impact on the participants in Lower Austria:

- **New Venture Ideas:** Several participants developed business ideas with social impact that could be brought to life as a voluntary practice.

- **Confidence Boost:** Clients reported feeling more confident and motivated to pursue new professional identities.
- **Entrepreneurial Success:** A 62-year-old participant successfully transitioned from manufacturing to freelance consulting with H.F.'s guidance.
- **Community Support:** The workshops fostered a supportive environment where participants encouraged one another in their entrepreneurial journeys.

## Final Thoughts

H.F.'s involvement in the SASSI LLC project transformed both his professional approach and the lives of the older adults he counseled. By introducing new methods and fostering entrepreneurial thinking, he empowered participants to pursue meaningful new careers. Going forward, H.F. is committed to using these tools to continue supporting older adults in Lower Austria as they redefine their professional futures.

## 2.2. V's Journey (Bulgaria)

### Introduction

Hi, I'm V., a project manager and trainer at CATRO Bulgaria. Recently, I had the incredible opportunity to pilot the SASSI LLC methodology, focusing on later-life career counselling for individuals aged 55 and older. Through this project, I aimed to support older adults in revitalising their professional roles and to provide career counsellors with effective tools to assist them. Here's my story of the journey and the experiences that unfolded.

### Beginning

When I embarked on this learning project in October 2023, my goal was clear: to popularise and test the SASSI training materials with two distinct target groups. The first group comprised older people who were currently unemployed and out of the job market for various reasons. The second group consisted of HR counsellors and trainers working with adults, including older individuals in search of jobs or internships.

### Launching the first group workshop

Our first workshop took place in the north-western region of Bulgaria, known to be the poorest in the EU. With the help of the Employment Agency and its local structure in Montana, we gathered a group of 14 long-term unemployed individuals, 9 of whom were over 50 years old. My colleague and I designed a full-day training session using activities from the SASSI Guide to Olderpreneurship and Ambassadors for mobilities in later-life that we had tried out during the training in Portugal. The concept of "olderpreneurship" was quite new to the participants, given the specific mentality of this age group living in a smaller town-area, but it was fascinating to see how inspired they were by the idea and existing possibilities.

## **Engaging diverse perspectives**

For the second wave of piloting, I invited two individuals to attend the design thinking workshop in Austria, which we were planning. One was a retired journalist, and the other was a freelancer in the creative industries, currently acting as an informal carer. I held preparatory meetings with them to familiarise them with the project materials before the training.

The final stage of my learning project involved a mini-workshop with members of a newly founded organisation with a mission that closely aligns with ours in SASSI - to provide career counselling and mentorship for people aged 50 and above. I presented the project and the various resources we have been working on and we had the chance to discuss how they could utilise the SASSI project products with their clients. We also explored potential synergies and future cooperation opportunities.

## **Reflecting on successes and challenges**

Meeting the people who would potentially benefit from our resources was immensely rewarding. Their interest in the project and its developments was encouraging. While it's challenging to ensure the materials are practical and applicable in every context, particularly given the Bulgarian setting where counselling sessions are typically one-on-one, the enthusiasm the participants showed was a positive sign.

I learned that changing the perspective of life for someone already in their later years is not easy. Many older adults found the SASSI project inspiring, but whether they would actually apply it to their own lives remained uncertain. Nonetheless, my interactions with the counsellors gave me hope that ageism and age discrimination in job search is becoming a visible problem and there are individuals who are motivated to tackle it and work closely with this group of people.

## **Personal growth and professional development**

Through the SASSI LLC Programme, I gained new insights into the sensitivities of working with older adults, a demographic I had never engaged with before. This experience broadened my understanding of the challenges they face and equipped me with new ideas and tools about how to support them.

## **Concluding thoughts**

Overall, we received positive feedback from all participants. They felt inspired and were keen to delve deeper into the materials. Although some resources may need adjustments to fit the Bulgarian context better, the project's potential to ignite change is undeniable. If we manage to inspire even one person to start their venture, pursue mobility, or simply change their perspective on life after 50, I would consider it a success. Supporting older workers in seeking career changes or new jobs in later life is a complex process with its own set of challenges. However, the positive feedback we received and the spark of inspiration we might have lighted in even one person make the effort worthwhile. I remain optimistic that the SASSI mission will continue to make a difference.

## 2.3 S.W.'s Pilot Project: DänSing – Dance & Sing (Germany)

**Introduction** S.W. embarked on a transformative learning journey through the SASSI LLC Project with her pilot project, "DänSing – Dance & Sing." This initiative aimed to blend leisure interests with business opportunities, focusing on older workers (55+) and intergenerational learning. The project was piloted from December 16, 2023, to May 4, 2024, in collaboration with BUPNET.

**Background** Sabine and her team began with a simple yet ambitious idea: to create a business model centered around organizing dancing and singing events for older adults. Initially, they brainstormed with a group of three women aged 55+, aiming to develop a concept that would not only entertain but also foster community and personal growth among participants.

**Engagement with the Project** The project unfolded in several key stages:

- **Idea Development:** The team refined their concept through brainstorming sessions, focusing on synchronized dance moves and group singing.
- **Legal and Technical Consultation:** They sought legal advice to address music licensing issues and selected appropriate software for playing music with synchronized lyrics.
- **Market Research and Branding:** They explored various venues and event types, developed a logo, and created promotional materials.
- **Pilot Testing:** A test event was held with family and friends to ensure the concept worked in practice and to gather initial feedback.

**Experience and Outcomes Successful Strategies:**

- **Brainstorming Sessions:** These sessions were instrumental in refining the concept and generating creative ideas. The diverse input helped shape a well-rounded business model.
- **Legal Consultation:** Expert advice clarified legal requirements, ensuring compliance and reducing potential risks.
- **Test Event:** Testing the concept in a familiar setting allowed the team to identify and address issues effectively before launching to a broader audience.

**Challenges Encountered:**

- **Venue Issues:** Finding an affordable and suitable venue posed a significant challenge.
- **Technical Difficulties:** There were initial problems with integrating the music playback system and lyric display.
- **Marketing:** Attracting the target audience proved more difficult than expected, highlighting the need for more robust marketing strategies.

## Key Learnings:

- **Preparation:** Thorough legal and technical preparation is crucial for successful event planning.
- **Collaboration:** Effective teamwork and clear role definitions contribute significantly to project success.
- **Feedback:** Iterative testing and feedback collection are essential for refining the business model and improving event execution.

## Developed Competencies:

- **Project Management:** Enhanced skills in planning and managing projects.
- **Legal Knowledge:** Improved understanding of legal aspects related to music events.
- **Promotional Design:** Better ability to create effective promotional materials.
- **Event Organization:** Increased confidence and skills in organizing and hosting events.

## Results for the Target Group:

- **Business Development:** A comprehensive business plan for organizing dance and singing events was successfully created.
- **Pilot Success:** The test event provided valuable insights and helped refine the concept.
- **Brand Identity:** A strong brand identity was established with a professional logo and promotional materials.
- **Skill Building:** Participants gained confidence and skills in event organization and management.

**Conclusions:** Supporting older workers in career transitions involves leveraging collaborative brainstorming, obtaining legal and technical guidance, and providing hands-on experience through pilot projects. Continuous learning and adaptation are vital for success in new ventures.

## Feedback from Participants:

- **Positive Comments:**
  - “The event was so much fun and well-organized. It was great to see everyone enjoying themselves and participating.”
  - “I loved the group singing with the lyrics on the wall; it made it easy to follow along and join in.”
- **Case Studies:**
  - **Tina:** Tina, one of the participants, shared that the event reignited her passion for singing and dancing, leading her to consider joining a local choir.



- **Sandra:** Sandra overcame her fear of public performance through the event, which boosted her confidence in participating in social activities.

**Conclusion** S.W.'s "DänSing – Dance & Sing" project exemplifies how integrating personal interests with professional goals can create meaningful and impactful experiences. The pilot's successes and challenges offer valuable insights for future initiatives aimed at revitalizing later-life careers and fostering community engagement.

## 2.4 D. Z.'s Learning Project: Design Thinking for a Later-Life Career (Germany)

**Introduction** D. Z.'s pilot project, "Design Thinking for a Later-Life Career," aimed to harness the principles of design thinking to support career revitalization for older workers. Running from October 2023 to December 2023 in collaboration with BUPNET, the project focused on helping eight older workers discover their career aspirations and work collaboratively on a joint project.

**Background** D.Z. gathered a diverse group of participants, including family carers, translators with migrant backgrounds, and a manager, to explore personal development and collaborative project work. The objective was to facilitate both individual career discovery and group-based innovation through design thinking techniques.

**Engagement with the Project** The approach involved several phases:

- **Initial Familiarization:** Participants were introduced to the project goals and received the Guide for Olderpreneurs as self-study material.
- **Workshop Structure:**
  - **Day 1:** Focused on introduction, team-building, and problem clarification.
  - **Day 2:** Covered personas, user understanding, and problem redefinition.
  - **Day 3:** Emphasized idea generation, ranking, and selection.
  - **Day 4:** Involved preparing a prototype.
  - **Day 5:** Included a review of the work done.
  - **Support:** Days 1, 2, and 5 were supported by a trainer, while Days 3 and 4 involved independent group work.

**Experience and Outcomes Successful Strategies:**

- **Group Work:** Participants valued working in groups, which contrasted with their usual individual work environments. This collaborative approach led to effective problem-solving and creative exchanges.
- **Personas Exercise:** This activity broadened participants' perspectives and enhanced their empathy towards different user needs.

- **Prototyping:** The hands-on approach of creating a prototype, culminating in a roleplay, was highly engaging and resulted in a tangible outcome.

### Challenges Encountered:

- **Expectations:** Participants had varied expectations, leading to differing levels of satisfaction with the workshop outcomes. Not all participants had thoroughly studied the self-study materials, impacting their performance.
- **Group Dynamics:** Imbalances in group dynamics arose, with some participants being more active than others, particularly affecting independent work phases.

### Key Learnings:

- **Clarify Expectations:** It is crucial to ensure participants understand and align with the project's goals and processes. Regular check-ins can help clarify any misunderstandings.
- **Support Self-Study:** Incorporating tasks to ensure thorough engagement with self-study materials can improve preparedness and participation.
- **Consistent Facilitation:** Continuous facilitation is beneficial unless participants are highly experienced with group work.

### Developed Competencies:

- **Enhanced Understanding:** Gained a deeper insight into the challenges and aspirations of older workers.
- **Improved Facilitation:** Developed stronger group facilitation skills and learned to better manage diverse group dynamics.
- **Practical Application:** Acquired practical skills in applying design thinking methodologies and materials to real-world projects.

### Results for the Target Group:

- **Increased Motivation:** Participants recognized the value of training and re-training, which boosted their motivation for upskilling.
- **Confidence and Skills:** Many participants felt more confident and engaged with their peers by the end of the workshop.
- **Ongoing Projects:** Some participants continued working on their collaborative project ideas beyond the workshop, demonstrating the program's impact.

**Conclusions:** Supporting older workers in career transitions requires personalized approaches, as there is no universal solution. Group interaction is vital for motivation and empowerment, providing a sense of community and shared experience. Encouraging older workers to share their knowledge can help reduce the stigma around later-life careers.

## Improvements:

- **Expectation Management:** Better clarification of expectations is needed at the outset.
- **Self-Study Support:** Implement tasks to ensure engagement with self-study materials.
- **Facilitation:** Ensure that facilitation is present throughout all phases of the workshop.

## Feedback from Participants:

- **Quotes:**
  - “The design thinking methodology was eye-opening. Working in a group helped us overcome our individual limitations and achieve great results.”
  - “I enjoyed the challenge of working collaboratively on a project. It was refreshing and motivating.”
- **Case Studies:**
  - **Case Study 1:** Anna, a translator, found the group work particularly beneficial. She noted that the collaborative environment helped her refine her career goals and explore new ideas.
  - **Case Study 2:** George, a former manager, felt that the design thinking process provided valuable insights and boosted his confidence in pursuing new ventures.

**Conclusion** D.Z.’s project demonstrated the effectiveness of design thinking in facilitating career revitalization for older workers. The combination of personal and collaborative work fostered significant growth and motivation among participants, highlighting the value of innovative methodologies in later-life career development.

## 2.5 O.M.’s Project: Introducing Older Workers into the Design Thinking Methodology (Germany)

**Introduction** O.M.’s pilot project, “Introducing Older Workers into the Design Thinking Methodology,” was conducted from October 15, 2023, to December 10, 2023, in collaboration with blinc eG. The project aimed to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among older workers (55+) from Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, while also promoting intercultural exchange and empowering participants to experiment with and optimize their ideas.

**Background** The project began with the objective of adapting the design thinking methodology for older workers, leveraging insights gained from the SASSI LLC training. The goal was to encourage entrepreneurial thinking, reduce resistance to change, and motivate participants to start new business or social endeavors.

**Engagement with the Project** The approach to the project involved:

- **Design Thinking Methodology:** Implemented through four main phases—Understanding, Empathize, Define, and Prototyping.
- **Dual Learning Focus:** Addressed both entrepreneurial and experiential learning, empowering participants to use design thinking in their future endeavors.
- **Relapse Prevention Method:** Encouraged participants to openly share potential challenges and barriers to implementing their ideas.
- **Pitching:** Included pre- and post-process pitches to refine and present business ideas.

### **Experience and Outcomes Successful Strategies:**

- **Trusting the Process:** Both participants and the facilitator embraced the design thinking process, which contributed to a productive and engaging workshop environment.
- **Effective Team Dynamics:** Despite language barriers, the facilitator successfully managed to foster a strong team dynamic. Participants effectively utilized their individual strengths, such as introverted members contributing to visual elements and more extroverted members taking on roles in pitching and scenario acting.
- **Focus on Social Impact:** The workshop emphasized the social impact of the participants' ideas, helping them recognize how their expertise could contribute positively to society.
- **Real-Life Potential:** The ideas generated during the workshop had significant potential for real-world application, demonstrating the practical value of the design thinking methodology.

### **Challenges Encountered:**

- **Time Management:** More time was needed to fully build and enhance group dynamics. The initial phases of the workshop required additional time to solidify teamwork.
- **Realism in Pitching:** Presenting ideas to a mixed audience of older workers rather than real venture capitalists made the public speaking experience less realistic. This could affect the authenticity of the feedback and experience.

### **Key Learnings:**

- **Social Impact as a Unifying Force:** Highlighted the power of social impact in bringing people together and fostering a collaborative environment.
- **Expertise and Confidence:** Demonstrated that older workers possess valuable expertise that, when provided with the right framework, can boost their confidence and willingness to share their knowledge.

### **Developed Competencies:**

- **Understanding of Older Workers:** Gained a deeper appreciation of the value older individuals bring to economic and social spheres.
- **Enhanced Skills:** Improved skills in offering career support to older workers and increased confidence in facilitating later-life career development.
- **New Knowledge:** Acquired insights into “olderpreneurship” and developed strategies for mindset shifts within social environments and organizations.
- **Intercultural Experience:** Gained satisfaction and experience from working in a diverse, intercultural setting with a group of experienced older workers.

### Results for the Target Group:

- **Increased Confidence:** Participants gained confidence in their talents and abilities, particularly in an intercultural context.
- **Design Thinking Knowledge:** Acquired new knowledge and skills in design thinking methodology.
- **Business Idea Development:** Received valuable feedback on their business and social ideas, with some participants continuing to develop their ideas after the workshop.
- **Public Speaking Experience:** Gained experience in pitching and public speaking, enhancing their confidence and presentation skills.
- **Mindset Shift:** Experienced a shift in mindset from viewing aging as a final stage to embracing the concept of “olderpreneur” as an opportunity for new experiences and ventures.

**Conclusions:** Supporting older workers in career transitions requires addressing both societal and individual mindset shifts. Society needs to reduce prejudices and be more inclusive of older workers, while older individuals should become more aware of their strengths and be open to change. Social impact initiatives can serve as effective bridges to facilitate these shifts, uniting older workers with broader societal goals.

### Improvements:

- **Follow-Up Mentorship:** Introducing mentorship by real-life investors or entrepreneurs could enhance the impact of the workshop and provide ongoing support for idea development.
- **Video Testimonials:** Including more video testimonials from older entrepreneurs could serve as role models and inspiration for participants.

### Feedback from Participants:

- **Quotes:**
  - “It is never too late to start again”—a sentiment shared by participants after experiencing the workshop.

- “I am happy I had the opportunity to share experiences with all these people.”
- “I was curious to share experiences with other people.”
- **Case Studies:**
  - **Case Study 1:** Maria, a participant from Bulgaria, found the workshop inspiring and was motivated to explore new business ideas that address social issues.
  - **Case Study 2:** Stefan, from Slovakia, gained confidence in public speaking and has since continued to work on his business pitch, aiming to implement his idea in the local community.

**Conclusion** O.M.’s project successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of design thinking in empowering older workers. The combination of practical methodology, intercultural exchange, and focus on social impact resulted in significant personal and professional growth for participants, highlighting the potential for integrating older workers into entrepreneurial and social initiatives.

## 2.6 S.T.’s Project: Empowering an Adult Educator through SASSI Methods (Germany)

### **Background:**

S. T. from blinc eG conducted a preparatory and empowerment project for a 49-year-old adult educator from the Neighborhood Centre (NBZ) in Göttingen. This individual, who was set to participate in the upcoming SASSI LLC in Peniche, had no prior experience with SASSI methods and was in a disadvantaged situation. The goal was to provide reassurance and prepare him for the program.

### **Objective:**

To empower the adult educator by introducing him to SASSI methods and fostering a reflective and positive mindset about age and career transitions. The preparatory work aimed to build his confidence and readiness for the SASSI LLC program.

### **Approach:**

- **Method Selection and Adaptation:** Selected and adapted several SASSI methods, translating them into a PowerPoint presentation. This was complemented by an introductory personal talk and a detailed remote follow-up call.
- **Empowerment Techniques:** Utilized systemic coaching methods to boost the educator’s confidence, focusing on his strengths and positive attributes.

### **Implementation:**

The educator engaged with various SASSI methods, including reflective exercises on career paths and personal strengths. Key activities included:

- **Reflective Questions:** Prompted reflections on career steps and personal qualities, helping the educator to focus on his resources and strengths.
- **“Tree of Life” Exercise:** Found particularly valuable by the educator for highlighting his positive developments and strengths.

### Outcomes:

- **Increased Confidence:** The educator reported feeling more prepared and empowered for the SASSI LLC program. The reflective exercises helped him gain new perspectives on his career and age-related issues.
- **Enhanced Preparedness:** He felt well-equipped to participate in the SASSI program and to apply the methods in his role at the Neighborhood Centre.
- **Positive Feedback:** The educator appreciated the preparatory exercises and found them beneficial for understanding his strengths and preparing for the upcoming program.

### Feedback:

- **Empowerment:** “The exercises made me feel more prepared and confident about participating in SASSI Peniche.”
- **New Insights:** “I gained new perspectives on my career and age-related issues, which I find valuable for my role at the Neighborhood Centre.”
- **Enjoyment:** “I enjoyed the exercises and feel that they have equipped me well for the upcoming program.”

### Conclusion:

The preparatory and empowerment project successfully equipped the adult educator with confidence and insights, preparing him for the SASSI LLC program. The use of SASSI methods and empowerment techniques proved effective in enhancing his readiness and self-assurance.

## 2.7 D.Z.’s Project: Enhancing Communication Through Storytelling for Later Life Careers (Germany)

### Background:

In October 2023, D.Z. from BUPNET embarked on a project aimed at refining the communication of SASSI LLC resources to better resonate with the target audience of older workers. The focus was to explore how storytelling could enhance the presentation and perception of the SASSI methodology and resources, with a specific goal of making them more engaging and impactful.

### Objectives:

1. **Acquire New Methodology:** Integrate storytelling techniques to communicate SASSI LLC resources effectively.

2. **Link Communication Approaches:** Apply storytelling within the framework of the SASSI LLC project.
3. **Apply Methodology in Practice:** Implement storytelling techniques to enhance resource delivery.

### Approach:

Dimitar and his team initiated the project by conducting a training session with a professional storyteller. This session aimed to dissect the components of compelling stories and understand their application in various contexts. The team was then divided into smaller groups to explore how to incorporate storytelling into SASSI LLC resources.

One group focused on creating credible user stories in both video and text formats, emphasizing the importance of authentic narratives delivered by actual users. Another group concentrated on compiling empowering stories from existing resources, aiming to support the target group effectively.

### Outcomes:

1. **Effective Storytelling Integration:** The storytelling approach proved successful in embedding the SASSI methodology within the content. The team enjoyed the collaborative process and produced tangible results, including impactful videos, case studies, and resource collections.
2. **Enhanced Group Cooperation:** The team appreciated the process of stepping into the shoes of the target audience, which enriched their understanding and improved the storytelling approach.

### Challenges:

1. **Methodology Application Issues:** There were initial difficulties in aligning the storytelling methodology with specific content, such as how to adapt the Hero's Journey framework to the concept of olderpreneurs. This required additional time and clarification.

### Learnings:

1. **Advance Planning and Recruitment:** Effective project communication requires thorough planning and the inclusion of Ambassadors—representatives of the target group. Their involvement should extend throughout all project phases, not just during mobilities.
2. **Enhanced Storytelling Skills:** The team gained significant insights into storytelling, learning to apply these techniques in new contexts to better engage and connect with learners.

### Results for the Target Group:

The primary beneficiaries of the project were the team members themselves, who became more adept storytellers. They developed a deeper understanding of their



learners and discovered novel ways to communicate SASSI LLC resources. This enhanced their ability to connect emotionally with the target audience.

### Conclusions:

1. **Importance of Credible Communicators:** To effectively support older workers in career transitions, it is crucial to involve credible communicators—members of the target group who can share authentic stories of struggle and success.
2. **Emotional Connection:** Establishing an emotional connection through storytelling is essential to fostering motivation and engagement among older workers.

### Improvements Suggested:

1. **Expand Storytelling Use:** While the SASSI LLC materials are valuable, there is a need to integrate storytelling more deeply into all aspects of communication to ensure the messages resonate with the final beneficiaries.

### Feedback:

While specific quotes or case studies from participants are not included in this report, the general feedback highlighted that the team felt empowered and better equipped to use storytelling techniques. They expressed appreciation for the deeper understanding of their learners and the innovative approaches to communication that storytelling facilitated.

This case study illustrates the journey of integrating storytelling into the SASSI LLC project, showcasing both successes and areas for improvement, while emphasizing the enhanced communication skills and insights gained by the team.

## 2.8 S.S.'s and J.L.'s Project: Empowering Older Adults Through Intergenerational Collaboration (Germany)

### Background:

In September 2023, trainers S.S. and J.L. from blinc eG launched an innovative project aimed at empowering older adults in Göttingen to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The project was designed to harness the extensive experience of older adults, fostering intergenerational cooperation and enhancing social engagement within the community.

### Objectives:

1. **Empower Older Adults:** Engage older adults in entrepreneurial activities, utilizing their experience to contribute to new ideas and actions.
2. **Promote Intergenerational Cooperation:** Strengthen social engagement through collaboration between different generations.

3. **Enhance Social Engagement:** Leverage older adults' skills to benefit community development and promote active ageing.

### Approach:

S.S. and J.L. worked in partnership with local organizations such as Weststadtzentrum, Musa, the boat-people-project, and the Brockensammlung. They organized regular workshops and meetings every four weeks, engaging a diverse group of participants from different generations and communities.

The project utilized elements of the design thinking approach, though a formal procedure was not strictly followed. Instead, the methodology was adapted to suit the participants' needs. The project saw the emergence of two notable groups:

- **The "Flause" Group:** Leveraged the experience of older generations to provide insights on legal and financial structures.
- **Women's Equal Rights Group:** Developed activities aimed at strengthening gender equality.

### Outcomes:

1. **Effective Mentoring Model:** The mentoring model implemented by S. S. and J.L. proved highly successful. Older generations shared valuable insights with younger participants, fostering intergenerational learning and engagement within the Weststadt Conference.
2. **Increased Engagement:** The project led to a noticeable increase in knowledge sharing and skill development, strengthening the role of older adults in society and enhancing cross-generational cooperation.

### Challenges:

1. **Limited Focus on Entrepreneurship:** Despite encouraging community participation, the workshops did not directly lead to the creation of new businesses. Logistical challenges and time constraints impacted the overall effectiveness of some workshops.
2. **Active Olderpreneurs' Preferences:** Many older participants preferred sharing their experiences rather than pursuing new entrepreneurial ventures, shifting the focus away from direct business creation.

### Learnings:

1. **Value of Intergenerational Cooperation:** The project demonstrated the significant benefits of intergenerational cooperation. Older adults provided valuable knowledge and experience, which was beneficial to younger generations.
2. **Need for Flexible Facilitation:** Effective communication and facilitation are essential. S.S. and J-M. Lohse found that adapting the design thinking approach to the specific needs of the group was crucial for success.

### Competences Developed:

1. **Enhanced Communication Skills:** S.S. and J.L. improved their ability to facilitate effective communication and collaboration across generations.

2. **Creative Problem-Solving:** They observed increased motivation and creativity among participants, leading to innovative solutions and better engagement.

### Results for the Target Group:

1. **Increased Knowledge and Skills:** Older participants gained confidence and a sense of value through sharing their expertise, while younger participants benefited from their insights.
2. **Improved Intergenerational Cooperation:** Activities strengthened social bonds and promoted gender equality, enhancing the role of older adults in the community.

### Conclusions:

1. **Importance of Mentoring Programs:** S. Schwaebe and J-M. Lohse found that mentoring programs are effective in leveraging the experience of older adults and fostering cross-generational learning.
2. **Regular Engagement is Key:** Ongoing involvement and tailored support are crucial for long-term empowerment and community engagement.
3. **Tailored Support Programs:** Support programs should address the specific challenges faced by older generations and promote intergenerational collaboration.

### Suggestions for Improvement:

1. **Simplify Introductory Units:** Make introductory materials more accessible by using simple language and structured presentations.
2. **Adapt to Changing Participants:** Adjust the program to accommodate the varying needs and backgrounds of participants.

### Feedback:

Participants provided positive feedback on the initiatives led by S. Schwaebe and J-M. Lohse. They appreciated the impact of intergenerational collaboration despite communication challenges. The success of the project has led blinc eG to commit to ongoing involvement in the Weststadt Conference to further support these activities.

## 2.9 D.I.'s Experience with A. (Slovakia)

### Introduction

D.I., an experienced business consultant from Slovakia, has been part of the SASSI LLC project, where his role involved guiding older workers through career transitions and fostering entrepreneurial ambitions. One of his most inspiring clients was A., a former lawyer with over 25 years of experience. Dušan first met A. at a legal workshop, and their professional relationship quickly evolved into something much more meaningful. A.'s desire for a radical career change presented a unique challenge but also a valuable opportunity for both of them.

## **Initial Engagement and Understanding**

A. approached D. feeling lost and disconnected from her long-standing legal career. It was evident to Dušan from the beginning that A. had experienced burnout and was grappling with the anxiety of starting something entirely new. Her aspiration to enter the hospitality industry was a bold move, but it was clear that she needed help in breaking her ideas down into actionable steps and overcoming her fears.

Dušan recognized her situation as a perfect fit for the SASSI LLC methodology, which aims to support seniors in reimagining their careers and transitioning into new paths. Encouraging A. to explore entrepreneurship, they engaged in several in-depth sessions focused on working with her olderpreneurial mindset and reshaping her vision for the future.

## **Implementing the SASSI Approach**

Dušan's primary focus with A. was helping her regain confidence. She had built a successful career in law but now found herself questioning whether she was capable of entering an entirely different field. Dušan leveraged SASSI's tools and methodologies to guide A. in breaking down her vague, dream-like ideas into practical and manageable steps.

In their sessions, D. introduced strategies to help A. identify her fears and work through them systematically. They also used design thinking approaches to map out her hospitality goals and build a clear vision for the future. This approach allowed A. to build trust in her own capabilities and rediscover the confidence she had once lost.

## **Challenges**

Working with A. was not without its challenges. One of the key difficulties Dušan encountered was A.'s deeply ingrained self-doubt, which stemmed from both her age and the significant career shift she wanted to undertake. She struggled with the idea of moving from a structured, highly intellectual profession like law to the more fluid, dynamic world of hospitality. It took time for A. to recognize the transferable skills she already had.

Another challenge was A.'s attachment to her past identity as a lawyer, which made it harder for her to embrace her new entrepreneurial role. D. had to help her disentangle from her past without dismissing the value it brought to her future endeavors. This required continuous dialogue, patience, and adjusting strategies as A.'s emotional and mental blocks surfaced.

## **Competence Development**

Through his work with A. and the SASSI project as a whole, D. developed several key competencies. First and foremost, he improved his ability to tailor his coaching methods to the specific emotional and psychological needs of older individuals undergoing major career transitions. The SASSI methodology equipped him with tools to address the distinct challenges faced by senior entrepreneurs, such as fear of failure, age-related anxieties, and lack of confidence in entering new markets.

Dušan also honed his skills in integrating personal strengths into professional growth plans. With A., he learned how to draw out and build upon her existing

expertise—both legal and managerial—so she could apply them in a completely new sector. This process enhanced D.'s capacity for recognizing and leveraging transferable skills, which has become a cornerstone of his consulting approach.

Furthermore, D. developed deeper insights into the psychological aspects of later-life career transitions, especially the need to balance personal reinvention with the preservation of professional identity. This competence in managing emotional transitions alongside practical career shifts is something he continues to apply in his work with other older entrepreneurs.

- **Transformation and Outcomes**

Over the course of several months, D. witnessed A.'s transformation from a hesitant former lawyer to a confident entrepreneur. As she developed concrete plans for a career in hospitality, she soon found herself managing a small hotel owned by a former client. This hands-on experience not only validated her career shift but also prepared her for larger ventures in the near future.

What struck D. the most was A.'s ability to blend her legal expertise with her newfound passion for hospitality. Her work as a lawyer helped her navigate the complexities of the hospitality business, which led to her involvement in a future resort development project in Italy. D. felt immense pride in seeing how far A. had come, using both her past and her new skills to shape her future.

### **Reflection**

"Working with A. was a rewarding experience," D. reflects. "She came to me with uncertainty but also a determination to make a change. The SASSI LLC methodology gave us the framework to turn her aspirations into something tangible. Her growth was not just professional but personal as well. It has been a privilege to be part of her journey, and her story shows that age is never a barrier to pursuing new dreams."

D. believes that A.'s story is a testament to the power of the SASSI project in empowering older individuals to reinvent themselves. He has no doubt that A.'s next chapter will be just as successful as the start of her new career.

### **Final Thoughts**

Through his work with the SASSI LLC project, D. has improved and enriched his skills in supporting older workers through complex career transitions. For him, the real impact lies in helping people like A. discover their potential and achieve dreams they once thought impossible. As Dušan continues to work with more clients, he remains committed to fostering the same sense of possibility and empowerment.

## 2.10 H.S.'s Pilot: Transitioning into Retirement with "Last Years or First Years?" (Portugal)

**Background:** In early 2024, H.S. launched a project titled "**Last Years or First Years?**" with the aim of supporting older workers nearing retirement in Portugal. The project was facilitated by INOVA+ and focused on helping participants

transition smoothly into retirement while exploring new career opportunities and post-retirement interests.

**Objective:** The primary goal of the project was to prepare older workers (aged 55+) for a fulfilling transition into retirement. The initiative sought to enhance their competences, work environment, and expectations, while also providing them with tools to visualize and plan for a meaningful retirement.

**Approach:** The project spanned from February 5, 2024, to February 29, 2024, and consisted of weekly sessions with six older workers. Each session tackled various challenges related to career management and retirement planning through practical exercises, teamwork, and discussions.

### Session Breakdown:

1. **Session 1:** Introduction to career management and goal setting, including practical exercises on identifying career challenges and aspirations.
2. **Session 2:** Focus on digital business marketing strategies tailored for older entrepreneurs, with group brainstorming on adapting traditional business models to digital platforms.
3. **Session 3:** Case studies of successful businesses run by individuals aged 55+, emphasizing skills transferability and exploring new career opportunities.
4. **Session 4:** Development of personalized career action plans, peer feedback, and final reflections on lessons learned.

### Successes:

1. **Engagement and Motivation:** Participants greatly valued the hands-on activities and teamwork, which allowed them to directly apply new skills and strategies. The supportive environment fostered engagement and boosted participants' confidence in implementing new ideas both in their current roles and for future retirement plans.
2. **Skill Development:** The project helped participants enhance their self-confidence in managing their careers and planning for retirement. They were able to align their skills with market demands and explore entrepreneurial possibilities.

### Challenges:

1. **Technical Difficulties:** Some participants struggled with advanced digital concepts, highlighting a steep learning curve for those less familiar with new technologies.
2. **Adapting Content:** Tailoring complex concepts to individual contexts proved challenging, necessitating additional time and support to address diverse needs effectively.

### Lessons Learned:

1. **Support for Older Workers:** The project highlighted the importance of targeted support for older workers. Many participants felt undervalued in their current roles, underscoring the need for initiatives that provide opportunities to update skills and explore new career paths.
2. **Retirement Planning:** Participants perceived retirement planning as complex and daunting. The project emphasized the need for accessible resources and proactive planning to help older workers navigate this transition confidently.

### **Competence Development:**

Through the SASSI LLC Programme, H.S. enhanced her ability to facilitate career transitions and provide tailored career counseling for older workers. The program enriched her understanding of the motivations and challenges faced by older workers, improving her skills in guiding them towards fulfilling career goals and meaningful retirement.

### **Results:**

Participants reported increased self-confidence and a clearer vision for retirement. They began to plan their retirements with greater purpose, exploring new interests and entrepreneurial opportunities previously unconsidered. The project successfully highlighted the potential for a positive transition into retirement and demonstrated the value of targeted support for older workers.

### **Conclusions:**

The project underscored the need for continuous adaptation and resilience in the latter stages of careers. It emphasized the importance of staying updated with market trends and developing relevant digital skills. By fostering intergenerational dialogue and providing supportive environments, initiatives like this can enhance career prospects and promote a positive outlook on retirement.

### **Recommendations:**

1. **Address Emotional and Social Aspects:** Future projects should address the emotional, social, and financial impacts of retirement, offering comprehensive support for older workers.
2. **Simplify Introductory Content:** Simplify and adapt introductory materials to better suit diverse audiences, ensuring accessibility and relevance.

### **Feedback:**

Participants provided enthusiastic feedback, noting how the project helped them rethink their final years of work and plan effectively for retirement. They appreciated the structured approach, practical tools, and the opportunity to explore new hobbies and entrepreneurial pursuits. The facilitator's expertise and adaptability were particularly praised, contributing to the project's success.

This case study illustrates the transformative impact of targeted support for older workers, highlighting the importance of tailored initiatives to empower individuals as they transition into retirement.

## 2.11 M.M.'s Pilot: "When Dreams Drive Life" – Empowering Older Workers for Career Transition (Portugal)

**Background:** In January 2024, M.M. facilitated a project titled "**When Dreams Drive Life**" in collaboration with INOVA+. This initiative aimed to motivate and guide older workers in Portugal to pursue their passions and plan for meaningful career transitions or new hobbies. The project was designed to address older workers' unique needs and foster community work and personal development.

**Objective:** The primary goals of the project were to:

- Encourage participants to identify and pursue their passions.
- Enhance motivation and self-esteem for career change.
- Promote community work and cooperation.
- Design individualized career paths based on participants' strengths and weaknesses.

**Approach:** The project took place over three days from January 10 to January 12, 2024. It involved four older entrepreneurs (aged 50+), focusing on practical and interactive sessions to support career transitions. The sessions used methodologies such as Persona Development, Design Thinking, and Storytelling.

### Session Breakdown:

#### 1. Day 1: Persona Development

- **Activities:** Ice-breaking, creating personas to identify individual strengths and aspirations, group discussions and presentations.
- **Outcome:** Participants gained clarity on their passions and strengths.

#### 2. Day 2: Design Thinking

- **Activities:** Introduction to Design Thinking principles, problem identification, brainstorming solutions, collaborative projects to design career paths.
- **Outcome:** Participants engaged in creative problem-solving and designed actionable career plans.

#### 3. Day 3: Storytelling

- **Activities:** Workshop on personal branding through storytelling, crafting personal narratives, sharing stories, and feedback.
- **Outcome:** Participants developed skills to present and promote their new career ideas effectively.



### Successes:

1. **Effective Persona Activity:** The Persona Development activity was particularly successful. It helped participants articulate their strengths and passions, providing a solid foundation for career planning.
2. **Supportive Environment:** The collaborative nature of the Design Thinking exercises fostered a supportive and creative atmosphere. This environment encouraged peer learning and helped participants develop feasible career ideas.
3. **High Engagement:** Participants' commitment and creativity were notable, which contributed significantly to the success of the sessions.

### Challenges:

1. **Storytelling Difficulties:** Some participants struggled with the storytelling exercises due to varying levels of confidence and experience in public speaking. This challenge was partly due to the initial unfamiliarity among participants.
2. **Limited Time for Activities:** Participants expressed a need for more detailed and extended activities to fully explore their career aspirations and transition plans.

### Lessons Learned:

1. **Tailored Support:** A supportive and collaborative environment is crucial for older adults in career transitions. Tailoring activities to different comfort levels and providing additional support can enhance engagement and effectiveness.
2. **Need for More Initiatives:** There is a clear need for more projects that focus on older workers' career transitions, addressing their specific needs and providing comprehensive support.

### Competence Development:

Through the SASSI LLC Programme, M.M. enhanced her skills in facilitating career transitions and mentoring older workers. She gained a deeper understanding of what motivates and demotivates older workers, which will inform her future work in career counseling and support.

### Results:

Participants were able to articulate their career aspirations clearly, develop actionable plans, and gain confidence in their ability to transition into new roles or pursue new hobbies. The project successfully increased their motivation and provided them with practical tools for achieving their goals.

### Conclusions:

Older workers benefit from a tailored, hands-on approach that acknowledges their unique experiences. Providing practical activities and fostering a collaborative environment are key to supporting their career transitions. Flexibility and additional support in areas like storytelling are essential to enhance their learning experience.

### **Recommendations:**

1. **Personalized Support:** Incorporate one-on-one coaching to provide more individualized guidance.
2. **Additional Resources:** Offer more practice opportunities for public speaking and introduce video testimonials from older individuals for role modeling and inspiration.

### **Feedback:**

Participants provided positive feedback, noting the practical and interactive nature of the sessions. They particularly valued the Persona Development and Design Thinking activities. Some participants suggested extending the time for activities to maximize their effectiveness and explore their career ideas more thoroughly. Overall, the feedback underscored the value of the project's approach and its impact on participants' career planning and self-esteem.