



**Inspired by Stories of Resistance and Escape Lines during
WWII from Ireland, Spain Poland and Belgium**

Final Report

**Supported by Europe for Citizens
Strand One European Remembrance**



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Europe for Citizens Programme
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Comet Lines – Freedom Trails of Europe

Implemented by

Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality, Ireland
Theater & Reconciliation, Belgium
Akademia Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna w Łodzi, Poland
Iniciativas De Futuro Para Una Europa Social, Spain

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Europe for Citizens

The aim of the Europe for Citizens Programme is to contribute to citizens' **understanding of the EU, its history and diversity** and to **encourage the democratic participation** of citizens at EU level. The Europe for Citizens programme supports initiatives to strengthen remembrance and to enhance civic participation at EU level. Europe for Citizens is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency (EACEA).
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Comet Lines – Freedom Trails of Europe



Comet Lines - Freedom Trails of Europe was a yearlong, transnational project with four European partners from Ireland, Spain, Poland and Belgium that used creative processes of theatre workshops, performances, film and new digital technologies to promote a remembrance of European history with a focus on 'Escape Lines' during WWII.

'Escape lines' were secret World War II networks set up to assist Allied soldiers and citizens leave Nazi occupied territory during WWII. Today the Escape Lines are remembered as 'Freedom Trails' where citizens from across Europe and beyond, including the children and relatives of those who worked on the escape lines and those who were saved, come together to walk parts of the routes of the original lines especially over the Pyrenees. The aim is to remember and honor those who risked and in many cases lost their lives to help others be free.

The Comet Lines project gathered a range of stories of those involved in the escape lines and freedom trails of Europe, remembering the stories of 'helpers', escapees and evaders - those who either organised or used the escape lines of mainland Europe during WWII. The stories were used as inspiration to create a theatre workshop, an original theatre performance and a creative arts symposium, using the stories and activities as a catalyst for bringing people together to raise awareness of the power of European solidarity and the role of the EU to promote peace, democracy, and gender equality today.

The project remembers the stories of both men and women who set up and worked the escape lines including Belgium woman Countess Andrée Eugénie Adrienne de Jongh (1916-2007), nickname Dédée, who set up the Comet line (Le Réseau Comète) for escaped Allied soldiers and airmen. The Comet Line or Comète is estimated to have repatriated some 800 Allied servicemen who themselves were aided by over 3,000 civilians, 700 of whom were arrested and some 290 shot dead or died during deportation.¹

¹ [HTTPS://WWW.AZKUNAZENTROA.EUS/AZ/INGL/ACTIVITIES/THE-COMET-LINE-%E2%80%93-THE-ESCAPE-NETWORK/AL EVENTO FA](https://www.azkunazentroa.eus/az/inagl/activities/the-comet-line-%E2%80%93-the-escape-network/al-evento-fa)

Established in 1940 in Brussels, the Comet Line provided a means of escape for Allied soldiers and airmen on the run in Nazi occupied Europe. The escapees were given food, clothing and false identity papers by members of the Resistance in countries such as Belgium, France and Spain and were then guided by a chain of 'helpers' taking them through France, over the Pyrenees into neutral Spain and finally to freedom through Gibraltar. The network was established by De Jongh, a courageous 24-year-old Belgian woman who took enormous risks actively setting up and running the network with people from different nationalities and who herself personally escorted many of her charges out of France at risk to her own life. Dédée's own hero was Edith Cavell, a British nurse shot in 1915 in Schaerbeek for helping troops escape from occupied Belgium into neutral Netherlands during the first World War.

Comet Lines – Freedom Trails of Europe was implemented by Smashing Times, Ireland (lead partner), in partnership with IFES Coop, Valencia, Spain; University of Humanities and Economics (AHE), Łódź, Poland, and Theatre et Reconciliation, Brussels, Belgium. The project was supported by Europe for Citizens under Strand One: European Remembrance with support in Ireland from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Communicating Europe Initiative.

Creative Actions

Creative actions implemented by the project are two transnational partner exchanges; a dissemination strategy; a transnational book (digital) with four articles and 25 stories of people from Ireland, Belgium, Poland, Spain and England who were involved in the escape lines and Resistance across Europe during WWII. The stories are used to inspire the creation of a Remembrance through Theatre workshop model and performance implemented with panel discussions; and an international creative arts symposium bringing citizens together to remember the people who managed the escape lines during WWII and the solidarity that existed between citizens from countries including Great Britain, Poland, Belgium, Ireland, France and Spain.

A total of twenty-five public events took place across Europe attended by 1,249 citizens and dissemination activities reached 311,481 across Europe making a final project reach of 312,730 citizens across Europe. The project culminated in an international symposium on Thursday 19 September 2019 held as part of the inaugural Dublin Arts and Human Rights festival hosted by Smashing Times and Frontline Defenders in Dublin, Ireland and attended by over 30 arts and civil society organisations from across Europe and members of the public. There were three main events held on Thursday 19 October, conducted by the four partners as part of the Comet Line: Freedom Trails of Europe project.

International Symposium

The first event of the International Symposium was **'Freedom Trails of Europe: Intersections between the Arts, Equality, Human Rights'** held on 19 September, 10am-1pm at the Samuel Beckett Theatre. This event featured panel discussions, theatre workshops, and song. **Helen McEntee, Minister for European Affairs, TD Meath East, Ireland**, presented a keynote speech on the role of the EU and European solidarity to promote democracy, equality and peace today, with reference to the founding of the EU after WWII and how, in times of crisis, European citizens can come together to transcend borders and combat intolerance.

The panel of speakers included John Morgan, Lawyer and Secretary, Basque Pyrenees Freedom Trails Association (BPFTA); festival curator Mary Moynihan, Writer, Theatre and Film-Maker, and Artistic Director, Smashing Times who spoke about arts, creativity and human rights, linking the arts within a EU context to democracy, equality and peace. Frédérique Lecomte, Director, Theater

& Reconciliation, Belgium and the Congo spoke about her work using creative processes to promote conflict resolution and reconciliation in the Congo.

Following the panel talks, participants then took part in a series of workshops involving citizens in fun activities to promote remembrance and awareness raising in relation to stories of solidarity during WWII and the role and benefits of the EU today for promoting democracy, equality and peace. Facilitators were Tamar Keane, Kamila Witerska, Frédérique Lecomte, Larissa Manley, and Michael McCabe. The moderator was Dil Wickremasinghe, a journalist and human rights activist and the event ended with a rousing rendition of a song of Revolutionary Change by Fernando Benavente, IFESCOOP, Valencia, Spain.

The second event on 19 September was a full-length workshop presented by Frédérique Lecomte, Director of Belgian company Theater & Reconciliation. Frédérique showcased and discussed her extraordinary work that she had developed using creative processes to promote conflict resolution and reconciliation in the Congo and demonstrated the new Remembrance Through Theatre workshop model developed as part of the Comet Lines: Freedom Trails of Europe project.

The third event **Escape Routes and Freedom Trails – European Solidarity between Nations**, 19 September 7.30pm, took place at the Samuel Beckett Theatre and was a fantastic evening of theatre, film, music and panel discussions celebrating and remembering extraordinary stories of Irish and European men and women involved in the Resistance and in 'escape lines'. The event remembered the escape lines and freedom trails as well as modern day experiences of human rights defenders working on civilian rescue operations in Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, etc) today.

The evening began with a powerful theatre performance *Shadow of My Soul* by Mary Moynihan, directed by Dr Eric Weitz and performed by Carla Ryan, Megan O'Malley and Michael Bates, with research by John Morgan, lawyer and co-founder of the Basque Pyrenees Freedom Trails Association (BPFTA). *Shadow of My Soul* remembers stories of Irish and European women and men involved in the Resistance and in escape lines – secret World War II networks set up to assist Allied soldiers and citizens leave Nazi occupied territory during WWII. This is a play of remembrance reflecting on extraordinary stories of ordinary people in resistance during a time of darkness when people dared to hope for a future out there. 'I never cried in front of the Nazis, I only cried at night. They stole my sleep but they never took my freedom or my life' – words inspired by Andrée 'Nadine' Dumont, Member of the Comet Escape Line in Belgium during WWII.

The play was followed by a screening of a new film documentary *Réseau Sans Nom* by Basque film company Bira Productions; followed by a panel discussion with invited guest speakers remembering Escape Lines and Freedom Trails. Audience members heard about courageous Belgium woman Andrée de Jongh, who set up the Comet Line that saved over 800 Allied service men as well as courageous Irish men and women active during WWII including Katherine Anne McCarthy, Mary Cummins, Catherine Crean, Margaret Kelly and Samuel Beckett.

Artists and speakers for this unique event included Mary Moynihan, writer, theatre and filmmaker, Artistic Director of Smashing Times; John Morgan, Dublin lawyer and co-founder of the Basque Pyrenees Freedom Trails' Association (BPFTA); Eneko Aizpurua, award-winning writer, Basque Country, and Trinity graduate Seán Binder, from Cork, an Aid Worker who spent over 100 days in a Greek jail arising from his work volunteering with refugees.

A musical highlight of the evening was a performance of *Don't See Any Lines* by singer/songwriter Hilary Bow featuring Hilary Bow and Liam Ó Maonlaí on vocals. The single *Don't See Any Lines* was released on World Refugee Day (20 June 2019) by Cork singer and songwriter Hilary Bow.



L to R: Megan O Malley, Carla Ryan and Michael Bates in *Shadow of My Soul* by Mary Moynihan inspired by Comet Lines - Freedom Trails of Europe.

Impacts

By focusing on stories of 'helpers' and escapees - those who either organised or used the escape lines of mainland Europe during WWII - the project explored what happens when intolerance and totalitarianism take over and democratic processes are denied and encourages debate on contemporary democratic achievements in Europe today.

The annual transnational work programme implemented for **Comet Lines: Freedom Trails of Europe** used creative and cultural processes including story telling and performance to generate a shared remembrance of European history and to reach a wide range of European citizens at local, regional, national and transnational levels. The project promotes an understanding amongst young people and adults of the European union, its history, functions and diversity and the values it is built on, raising awareness of the importance of civic and democratic participation at EU level, fostering European citizenship and the active involvement of citizens in the construction of a stronger EU.

By exploring the causes of intolerance and totalitarianism and remembering stories of solidarity during WWII, the project raised awareness of how citizens can actively transcend borders and come together to combat intolerance and to promote a fair and equal society for all. The project linked with the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage by promoting awareness of intangible cultural heritage through the stories, values and principles of the Escape Lines and the people who worked and were saved by them. The stories for this project came from a range of countries representing a shared sense of belonging within Europe, linking local heritage to European memory and promoting intercultural dialogue and solidarity at an EU level in the past and today.

Gender Equality is a fundamental principle of the EU and a key component for democracy and peace. Women's rights are an essential component of universal human rights. Women are powerful drivers of change and this transnational project remembered promoted equality by remembering the role of both women and men in Europe and the power of the EU in promoting peace and gender equality for all. The stories of all genders are important as they highlight how solidarity encourages tolerance, mutual understanding, inter-cultural dialogue and reconciliation, all key values for building democracy, equality and peace today.

A key part of the project is to establish a transnational European network made up of different types of organisations including civil society organisations, local authorities, research institutions and youth and community groups. Links are made with all countries in Europe including the WWII Escape Lines Memorial Society from Great Britain to across Europe. With this wide breath of countries and cultures we can encourage remembrance, debate, and the sharing of common history and values. As lead partner Smashing Times were delighted to welcome over ten European partner organisations to Dublin for the final Comet Lines symposium presented as part of the inaugural Dublin Arts and Human Rights festival which took place in September 2019

This project successfully used creative art-based processes and digital technologies to promote a remembrance of stories from WWII linked to the theme of European solidarity in the past and today and the power of the EU to promote peace, democracy, civil rights and gender equality for all. Overall, **Comet Lines – Freedom Trails of Europe** was a huge success reaching 312,730 citizens across Europe and the project partners extend a special thanks to Europe for Citizens for supporting this innovative work.

Feedback from the Public



Elżbieta Zawacka (Liz), age 18. Photograph courtesy of Elżbieta Zawacka's index (FGEZ collections)

Feedback from Ireland

I absolutely enjoyed the performances and the talks afterwards, information and stimulating, very interesting to hear about how people in Europe stood up for each other in the past and we need that today.

Comet Lines is a great project, loved the play.

Very important for raising awareness of what happens when peace breaks down, enjoyed discussions and reading about the stories of the men and women on the escape lines, amazing the bravery of people and how they stood up for each other.

I'm more aware of how important the EU is for democracy and human rights. participant.

Feedback from Spain

It is essential that resources, effort and publicity are allocated to information and education campaigns against intolerance and hate speech.

Comet Lines is an example of fundamental values: the solidarity and generosity of the human being.

Do not forget history helps to never repeat the mistakes of the past.

The battle against intolerance and hate speech must be won by adding a broad positive social majority to the discourse of human rights and the values of the EU.

It is a very original idea to use the creative arts to raise people's awareness of the importance of the role of the EU in these matters.

Feedback from Poland

These people (couriers) had such a big impact on what happened during WWII. It shows that in time of need people can do almost anything to help another person no matter about nationality. And they do that selflessly.

For me this is really interesting but also very close topic. During WWII my mother was a nurse in field hospital close to German border, so histories of reality of war and its influence on everyday life had very big impact on how I see different things. That is why I really admire people who decided to be couriers as it was really dangerous. But I think that just like case of my mother, helping others was their little input in fighting for freedom.

Feedback from Belgium

We must come together, we must build on our common history to show solidarity.

It is by knowing the institutions and making them our own that we will be able to make our voice heard for a social Europe.

Europe is a great experience of living together: it is a group of countries that coexist and thrive with respect for others, cultures and traditions.

For me this project, Comet Lines, is exactly that. It's about giving people the means, the power to make theatre. That's exactly what democratizing culture means... It's great, we're very lucky.

It's great to be able to do things like that, theatre workshops, and to talk with people we don't know, it makes me feel good.



Florentino Goikoetxea, Basque Guide, The Comet Lines

Summary of Activities



1. Comet Lines Transnational Partner Exchanges

Two transnational partner exchanges were held. The first transnational exchange was hosted by University of Humanities and Economics (AHE), Poland, on 16 January 2019 attended by 16 (2 from Ireland, 1 from Spain, 1 from Belgium and 12 from Poland). A second transnational exchange was organised and conducted, hosted by Smashing Times, Ireland on 19 September 2019, at Trinity College Dublin and attended by all partners, 16 people- 1 from Spain, 3 from Poland, 1 from Belgium and 11 from Ireland.

2. Comet Lines Transnational Book with 25 stories and four articles

Comet Lines: Freedom Trails of Europe is a new book, available in digital format, containing four research articles and twenty-five stories, six from Ireland, six from Belgium, five from Spain, five from Poland and three from England related to escape lines and freedom trails across Europe during WWII.

The stories reflect experiences of different nationalities and countries across Europe before and during WWII, highlighting stories of women and men who helped all Europeans and who stood up against Nazism, Fascism and totalitarianism. Each of the 25 stories gathered highlight how the people lived under a totalitarian regime, where democratic concepts such as civil society, freedom and democracy and democratic procedures were denied, reflecting on causes of totalitarian regimes in Europe at the time including Nazism and Fascism, as well as identifying how people came together beyond national boundaries to support each other.

The book contains a summary of the **Comet Lines: Freedom Trails of Europe** project, an article on Escape Lines during World War II and Freedom Trails Today; an article on The Tatra Mountains Escape Line; an article on Totalitarian regimes and resistance movements in occupied Europe and an article on the role of the EU today to promote democracy, civil rights, gender equality and peace. The EU today is committed to core values of peace, democracy, civil rights and gender equality and the twenty-five stories in the book highlight the extraordinary measures ordinary people took during WWII to stand up for each other and the necessity today for all of us to play a role in promoting democracy, peace and human rights into the future.

Irish stories of Resistance during WWII

Katherine (Kate) Anne Mc Carthy (1895-1971)

Maureen Patricia O'Sullivan (1918-1994)

Mary Herbert (1903-1983)

Mary Cummins (1905-1999)

Catherine Crean (- 1945)

Samuel Beckett (1906-1969)

Belgian stories of Resistance during WWII

Andrée 'Dédée' de Jongh (1916-2007)

Andrée 'Nadine' Dumon (1922 -)

Elsie Maréchal (1924-unknown)

Jean-François Nothomb or 'Franco' (1919-2008)

François Janssens

Raymond Itterbeek (1922-2015)

Spanish Stories of Resistance during WWII

Alejandro Elizalde (1894-1946)

Florentino Goikoetxea (1898-1980)

Kattalin Aguirre (1897-1992)

Manuel Iturrioz (- 1991)

Maritxu Anatol (1909-1981)

Polish stories of Resistance during WWII

Elżbieta Zawacka (1909 – 2009)

Helena Marusarzówna (1918-1941)

Stanisław Marusarz (1913-1993)

Józef Krzeptowski (– 1971)

Stanisław Frączysty (1917 – 2009)

English Stories of Resistance

Edith Cavell (1865-1915)

Bob Frost (1923-2019)

Mary Lindell (1895-1986)



Maureen Patricia O'Sullivan on her wedding day, 1945, Calcutta, India. Photo Courtesy of her son John Alvey, via www.specialforcesroh.com

3. Equality and Solidarity – Remembrance Through Theatre Workshop Model

Theatre et Reconciliation, Belgium, led on the creation of a two-hour collaborative Remembrance Through Theatre Workshop model that actively involves citizens in EU-linked, fun activities to promote remembrance of stories of solidarity during WWII. The workshop uses accessible theatre-based exercises to explore stories and experiences from WWII, reflecting on happens when totalitarianism takes over and the role of the EU today to promote peace, democracy, civil rights and gender equality. The collaborative theatre model was create by Belgium, edited by Ireland with input from the partners and was used in each partner country and beyond by schools, youth and community groups.

4. Performance and Post-Show Panel Discussion



Andrée 'Nadine' Dumont (1922 -)

'I never cried in front of the Nazis, I only cried at night. They stole my sleep but they never took my freedom or my life' – words inspired by Andrée 'Nadine' Dumont, Member of the Comet Escape Line in Belgium during WWII.

Shadow of My Soul by Mary Moynihan is a powerful, original theatre performance directed by Dr Eric Weitz, and performed by Carla Ryan, Megan O'Malley and Michael Bates with research contributions by John Morgan, lawyer and co-founder of the Basque Pyrenees Freedom Trails Association (BPFTA).

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The play premiered at the International Symposium, **Escape Routes and Freedom Trails – European Solidarity between Nations**, 19 September 7.30pm, at the Samuel Beckett Theatre and was a fantastic evening of theatre, film, music and panel discussions celebrating and remembering extraordinary stories of Irish and European men and women involved in the Resistance and in 'escape lines'. The event remembered the escape lines and freedom trails as well as modern day experiences of human rights defenders working on civilian rescue operations in Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, etc) today.

The play was followed by a screening of a new film documentary Réseau Sans Nom by Basque film company Bira Productions; followed by a panel discussion with guest speakers celebrating Escape Lines and Freedom Trails. Audience members heard about courageous Belgium woman Andrée de Jongh, who set up the Comet Line that saved over 800 Allied service men as well as courageous Irish men and women active during WWII including Katherine Anne McCarthy, Mary Cummins, Catherine Crean, Margaret Kelly and Samuel Beckett.

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5. Public Events Across Europe and International Symposium



Andrée 'Dédée' de Jongh (1916-2007)

A series of twenty-five fun-based EU-linked public activities took place in four partner countries to promote remembrance, debate and learning in relation to escape lines from WWII and the role of the EU today in promoting civil rights, democracy, gender equality and peace. The aim was to promote European solidarity and active EU citizenship by engaging the public in a series of arts based activities and debates to promote remembrance and the importance of reflecting on our past and linking it to the role of the EU today in maintaining and promoting peace, democracy, civil rights and gender equality. Each partner conducted a series of events reaching a total of 1,217 - 455 in Ireland, 134 in Spain, 318 in Belgium and 310 in Poland., and communities including those not normally involved in activities related to the EU.

Smashing Times, Ireland hosted the final international symposium as part of the Dublin Arts and Human Rights festival at the Samuel Beckett Theatre, Dublin on Thursday 19 September 2019, attended by over 300 arts and civil society organisations from across Europe and members of the public. Three events were held as follows: an international youth symposium titled **'Freedom Trails of Europe: Intersections between the Arts, Equality, Human Rights'** held from 10am-1pm; a full-length workshop presented by Frédérique Lecomte, Director of Belgian company Theater & Reconciliation, held from 3 to 5pm and a public performance, film screening and panel discussion with Q and A titled **Escape Routes and Freedom Trails – European Solidarity between Nations**, held from 7.30-10.30pm .

6. Final Report and Evaluation

The project resulted in the creation of a Final Report and Evaluation distributed across Europe.

7. Communications and Dissemination

The partners agreed a Communications and Dissemination strategy with activities implemented by the four partner organisations across Europe with a total reach of 311,481.



Participants at event organised by Theatre & Reconciliation, Belgium for Comet Lines Freedom Trails of Europe project supported by Europe for Citizens. Photo_ Véronique Vercheval

Project Partners

Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality

The **Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality** is an award-winning international organisation dedicated to the promotion, study and practice of the arts, human rights, climate justice and gender equality. The centre operates as a world class arts space and digital hub for artists, citizens, communities and the general public across Ireland, Northern Ireland and internationally, providing a resource service, training and a membership and networking agency in relation to using high quality creative processes, collaborative arts practice, research and new digital technologies to promote and advance equality and human rights for all. The company implements an annual arts programme and runs a European wide network and resource service for the Arts and Human Rights - with over 600 members across Europe. The company develops innovative, state of the art national and transnational projects using creative, multi-disciplinary arts practice to connect citizens to the arts, human rights, climate justice and gender equality, working with artists and communities to create collaborative art practice in local, national, European and international settings.

Smashing Times is highly experienced in using the arts to promote issues at local, national and European levels linking with organisations in Ireland, Northern Ireland, European and internationally and in countries including the UK, Spain, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Sri Lanka, Greece and Latvia. The work is presented in a range of settings, on stage and on screen, from the professional theatre and arts space, to on tour in schools and communities where we are invited to work collaboratively with all ages and cultures, particularly in disadvantaged, marginalised communities. The company works with a range of organisations including schools, youth and adult groups and the general public.

Theater & Reconciliation

Theater & Reconciliation was founded in 1994 in Belgium by director Frédérique Lecomte and aims to perpetuate a particular dramaturgical practice that works, through theatre, to empower marginalized or vulnerable communities and to promote conflict resolution and reconciliation. This work is based on an original method, designed and developed by Frédérique Lecomte and the rehearsals mix professional and amateur actors to create a happy, political and unbridled theater that dares to say aloud what everyone thinks in a low voice, giving the floor to those who are deprived of it. "I create on the difficulty of putting together people who normally, hate each other, kill each other, take revenge, suspect each other, consider the other as part of an inferior humanity. There, I act, I combine, I mix; I rock the limits of fear, fear of others, fear of oneself." (Frédérique Lecomte, Theater & Reconciliation, Method for Theatrical Practice in Conflict Zones , The Stolen Letter, 2015).

University of Humanities and Economics (AHE) in Lodz, Poland

University of Humanities and Economics (AHE) in Lodz, Poland, is an accredited higher education institution offering traditional university programmes (BA, MA, MSc, PHD) as well as postgraduate studies and courses for various target groups. The university focuses on educational research, innovative teaching methodologies and e-learning. Key fields of study and research include education science, psychology, entrepreneurship, the economy, management, innovative teaching and learning, social exclusion, the application of ICT in teaching, systems of quality assurance and validation of prior learning.

Iniciativas De Futuro Para Una Europa Social

Iniciativas De Futuro Para Una Europa Social (IFESCOOP) is a non-profit cooperative collaborating with regional and local public administration organisations, with social partners including Trade Unions and employers associations, and with other institutions and organisations in different fields, mainly related to adult education and vocational training. As a training provider, the company offers tailor-made training programmes to improve employment opportunities and to support personal and professional development.

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