



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

EAEA response

Public Consultation on EU funds in the area of values and mobility

February 2018

EAEA welcomes the [Open Public Consultation on EU funds in the area of values and mobility](#) and agrees with the statement of the European Commission that ‘a stronger Union needs to be equipped with appropriate financial means to continue to deliver its policies.’ (Commission Work Programme 2018) EAEA particularly appreciates that the consultation stresses education and training as central tools to promote European values and the empowerment of citizens as well as the development of skills and competences, in order to ‘contribute to open, democratic, more equal, inclusive and creative societies.’ (Public Consultation on EU funds in the area of values and mobility 2018).

EAEA highlights the **need for strongly increased resources for the next generation of financial programmes, particularly those supporting education, training and lifelong learning**, such as Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund. EAEA also underlines the **need for a better support of non-formal adult education**, which plays a crucial role for the promotion of European values, democracy, social inclusion and active citizenship¹ as well as upskilling and employability. In this programme period, adult education has only 5% of the overall education and training budget of Erasmus+. Considering the challenges that Europe is facing and the fact that adults are actually the largest target group, EAEA calls for an increase to 20% for adult education. Erasmus+ in general should see a 10-fold increase as it is one of the key programmes of the European Union.

A holistic adult education approach puts equal importance on all policy challenges

According to the Public Consultation, the European Commission has identified several policy challenges that could be addressed through future funds and programmes. These include the support of lifelong skills development through learning mobility, the support of employability through lifelong learning mobility, the support of innovation, the promotion of solidarity, the promotion of social inclusion and fairness, and the support of active citizenship, democratic participation in society, and the rule of law, to name just a few. These challenges need to be ranked from “very important” to “not important at all”. Many of these challenges are linked and should therefore be approached in a **complementary manner**. EAEA believes that the programmes that support these key challenges are equally important and should not be pitted against each other.

However, in the light of the results of the recently published Erasmus+ midterm evaluation², we would like to stress that there are areas that would urgently require a better recognition and funding, particularly adult education and lifelong learning. While policy challenges such as supporting lifelong skills development and employability through education, supporting innovation and solidarity as well as promoting active citizenship, democratic participation in society and European values, should be a

¹ See also the EAEA response: Social inclusion means considering all age groups in education, July 2017

² See also the EAEA reaction to the Erasmus+ midterm evaluation, February 2018



top priority for the European Union and its Member States, we do not believe that these challenges are adequately addressed in the current programmes.

We recommend that any future programmes and their respective budget should integrate **sustainability** as well as the principles set out in the Sustainable Development Goals as a key objective. Adult education and learning promotes European values by creating inclusive learning environments that foster creativity and empower learners to become active citizens.

European funding brings added value

Funding through **European programmes** such as Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund is **essential for the sustainability of adult education programmes at the national, regional and local level**, to promote innovation in the sector and to reach out to new groups of learners, particularly those who are furthest away from learning. The recent years have seen a decrease of public adult education budgets in many Member States of the European Union and a shift towards project-based financing. European funding partly compensates for these losses of public funding and supports the sector in maintaining and improving its offers.

As outlined in the EAEA statements “Put the Plus into Erasmus+”³ and “Adult Education needs ESF Funding”⁴, Erasmus+ (and the Grundtvig programme in the past) as well as the European Social Fund have contributed enormously to the innovation and cooperation within adult education in Europe. In many countries and organisations, Erasmus+ is one of the few opportunities for staff development, ensuring that adult education staff experience the “European added value” and promote European identity and common values as multipliers in their organisations. The European Social Fund promotes policy reform at the national and regional level by supporting the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning as well as helping to establish or improve national structures for adult learning. It makes innovation in the sector possible, and it enables the development of tailored programmes for target groups with specific learning needs. Lastly, Erasmus+ and the ESF foster cross-sectorial and transnational cooperation, which would not be possible without these funding programmes and their European dimension.

Objectives: policy coherence to address current and future challenges

In order to strengthen adult education in its effort to address current and future challenges, policies of the European Union need to take the **holistic vision of adult learning** into account. Adult education is often viewed through the lens of employability, but social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development and life skills are equally important and should be addressed within the Erasmus+ programme. Whether we are talking about digitalisation, the integration of refugees or reducing the number of people with low basic skills, adult education is at the centre of global and European developments, which should be reflected in all future programmes, but especially Erasmus+. This also means promoting more and better cooperation between all institutions and stakeholders that are concerned by European values and mobility.

³ EAEA (2017): “Put the Plus into Erasmus+”, EAEA statement September 2017

⁴ EAEA (2017): “Adult Education needs ESF Funding”, EAEA statement November 2017



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Make programmes and results more accessible

Considerable work has been done to make bureaucratic procedures more simple, but a lot still needs to be done. We therefore recommend further simplifications in forms, reporting and financial rules (e.g. lump sums etc.) and a stronger involvement of civil society organisations in the programme implementation (e.g. programme committees).

More information

Contact: Gina Ebner, EAEA Secretary-General, +32 2 893 25 24, gina.ebner@eaea.org.

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 142 member organisations in 44 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.