



## THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S THREE INITIATIVES ON KEY COMPETENCES, COMMON VALUES AND DIGITAL EDUCATION

EAEA Response  
February 2018

The [European Association for the Education of Adults](#) welcomes the [initiatives](#) that the European Commission presented on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2018.

- [A Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning](#)
- [A Council Recommendation on common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching](#)
- [A Digital Education Action Plan](#)

### Key competences

EAEA appreciates the update of the key competences framework. Many adult education providers are working with the framework and have used it as a reference for skills and competence developments on different levels.

EAEA is pleased that a number of our recommendations have been taken on board. We are happy to see that civic competences have been strengthened and that sustainability has become part of the framework.

EAEA would still suggest that health should play a stronger role. The 'personal competences' do speak about 'support[ing] one's physical and emotional well-being', but to acquire basic knowledge about health and health services and how to access them is a somewhat different competence.

We also propose to re-evaluate the current explanation in the annex: 'Individuals should be resilient and able to cope with uncertainty and stress.' This individualises the reaction to uncertainty and stress, which is highly problematic. Considering that about one in four people experience mental health problems at one point in their lives, this should not be about coping but managing in a supportive and inclusive context.

We also call on the European Commission to promote and support the implementation of the framework across all levels of lifelong learning.

### Common values

Concerning the two other papers, we believe that they are several missed opportunities. Both documents are based on a very narrow and formal understanding of education and thereby miss the opportunity to link formal, non-formal and informal learning as well as creating more ambitious and holistic strategies that take learners of all ages into account.

Similarly, the [First European Education Summit](#) was organised along the same principle – it was actually the First European School Education Summit. EAEA would find it helpful if the title spelled it



out more clearly what it is about. This also makes an increased effort to strengthen the lifelong learning approach of all the work that concerns education, training and skills.

Concerning the [Council Recommendation on common values](#), we agree with the analysis:

‘The Union and its Member States are faced with a variety of challenges, including populism, xenophobia, divisive nationalism, discrimination, the spreading of fake news and misinformation, as well as the challenge of radicalisation. These phenomena could pose a serious threat to the foundations of our democracies, undermine trust in the rule of law and democratic institutions, and hinder a common sense of belonging within and amongst our European societies.’ (Explanatory Memorandum, p.1)

EAEA believes that this would necessitate a European strategy on fostering common values and democracy across different background, ages and forms of learning. In many European countries, it is very often the older cohorts that challenge European values and intercultural exchanges. It is of utmost importance to foster democracy among young people, but there is a clear necessity to reach adults as well. The current proposal focuses almost exclusively on schools and (school) teachers and also misses the link and opportunities presented through the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

EAEA would also like to contest the analysis of the consultation that is presented in the [staff working document](#):

‘Early childhood education and care (ECEC) (75.6 %), primary (77.6 %) and secondary education (73.6 %) are seen as quite effective to transmit shared values. Higher education (69.9 %), vocational education and training (68 %) and adult learning (66.5 %) are seen as less effective.’ (p. 18)

‘Less effective’ is very relative indeed when we are talking about almost 70% for three different sectors that can contribute enormously to fostering values and democracy.

There are many different possibilities to make this agenda more cohesive, comprehensive and inclusive: a closer link to the [Europe for Citizens programme](#) combined with a substantial budget increase, a stronger strand for democracy and active citizenship within the [Erasmus+ programme](#) that is open for all sectors and ages, the re-introduction of mobilities for some groups of adults, close cooperation with DG Employment so that common values and democracy are key elements of the New Skills Agenda.

EAEA therefore suggests to reconsider the proposal and widen it so that all forms of learning and learners of all ages are integrated in a genuine lifelong learning strategy for Europe.

## Digital education

When considering the [Communication on the Digital Education Action Plan](#), EAEA is disappointed with the narrow focus of the proposed actions. The Communication rightly says that,



‘The digital revolution will continue to dramatically change the way Europeans live, work and study. While this offers tremendous opportunities, there are also significant risks if digital competences are not developed.’ (p. 7)

Unfortunately, this is then not followed up by any further initiative or proposal in ‘The way forward’. It does mention the Upskilling Pathways initiative, but fails to integrate it further into the Action plan.

EAEA also suggests broadening the scope of competences in the communication by applying the [Digital Competence Framework](#)<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, EAEA would like to see a lifelong-based strategy that brings together this communication, the [New Skills Agenda](#) and the [Digital Competence Framework for Citizens](#) in a coherent and complementary way.

In its [Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), EAEA has outlined the key challenges and the action required for Europe. We have identified active citizenship, democracy and participation as one key challenge and digitalisation as another one.

Adult education has a significant role to play; the evidence for which as well as the good practice across Europe is well documented. EAEA therefore calls on policy-makers to acknowledge the significant role of adult education and learning when addressing these issues and to revise the strategies appropriately.

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*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.*

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<sup>1</sup> The accompanying staff working document does reference the framework and the situation of adults when it comes to digital skills, but this is not followed by any proposals.