

Adult Education in Europe 2016 – A Civil Society View

European Association for the Education of Adults

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ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE 2016

A Civil Society View

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Dear Reader,

This is now the third edition of the country reports provided by the members of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), and we are very happy to be able to present them. We would like to take this occasion to thank our members who are taking the time and the resources to answer the survey and to provide us with the insights that you will find in this publication.

As usual, we want to underline that this is not a scientific analysis – it is a snapshot provided by our members – how they see the developments in their countries and organisations. It is meant to complement any governmental reporting by providing a view by civil society and / or adult education providers.

We started this initiative in order to have an overview of developments in Europe, in order to inform policy-makers but also other stakeholders in adult education as well as ourselves. The EAEA Executive Board uses the reports as a basis for our work. The first reports highlighted the need to tackle the issue of financing adult education, so EAEA organised a workshop on the topic and then successfully applied for an Erasmus+ KA2 project.

Last year's report highlighted the need to look at adult education for migrants, which led to a focus on refugees in 2016. When you look at this year's report, you will understand why we chose the theme of 'engaging new learners' for 2017.

We hope that you find this publication as useful as we do!

Per Paludan Hansen, EAEA President



Gina Ebner, EAEA Secretary General



A summary of the situation of non-formal adult education in Europe

European Overview

New legislation on adult education

EAEA members across Europe have reported significant changes at the policy level. Some countries have seen the adoption of the first legislative frameworks, and others have updated the existing documents or by-laws, with possibly far-reaching consequences.

While some members have admitted that the legislation is still far from perfect – a specific mention is often made of imprecise terminology or unclear division of responsibilities among stakeholders – others have recognized the more decentralized or trans-sectorial approach of new adult education strategies. Georgia and Russia remain the only countries that still see no legislative recognition of adult education.

Certain members have seen major political changes which have shifted the potential directions that policies on adult education might take. Such is the case of Portugal, where recent elections fostered a more encouraging environment for non-formal adult education. At the same time, unstable political situation and upcoming parliamentary elections are a source of concern for EAEA members in Spain and Lithuania.

More work on validation

Another recurring theme concerns the continuing work on national validation systems. A number of countries, such as Bulgaria, Croatia and Macedonia, have reported the first validation systems as currently being designed. Other countries, such as Austria, have recently adopted the national qualifications framework.

These developments came with important challenges and EAEA members raise issues of particular significance to the non-formal sector. Some have pointed out that validation should not aim to formalize adult education, but rather focus on providing learners with personalized feedback. Others have wondered about the ways in which the process could be made more appealing for learners: putting the learner in the centre and promoting personal stories might work as a strong incentive.

Engaging new learners

While previous EAEA publications have already underscored the need to engage new learners, especially those from disadvantaged groups, this year it seems more visible than ever.

As the numbers of refugees in Europe are still on the rise, adult education providers across Europe strive to respond to new challenges. The new situation not only requires more flexibility from adult educators, but also raises other issues, such as the question of engaging volunteers as teachers and the effect it might have on the quality assurance.

At the same time, there is still a need to involve the local population in lifelong learning opportunities. Some members have admitted that the flexibility of the non-formal sector might make learning more approachable for NEETs, as they often feel that the formal system has not adequately responded to their needs. Other countries underline the impact of the demographic change in Europe and consequently the growing importance of engaging senior citizens as well.

What many EAEA members have agreed on, is the fact that many people do not participate in lifelong learning simply because they remain unaware of the existing possibilities. As most governments lack a specific strategy on reaching out to new learners, civil society needs to step up. Adult Learners' Festivals are often described as an appealing way of approaching potential learners.

More cooperation between civil society needed

EAEA members agree that the challenges which the adult education field is currently facing require a coherent response from all stakeholders. Advocacy work and raising visibility of adult education at the policy level can only be effective if different stakeholders act together. Such is the conclusion of EAEA members across Europe – in Austria and Belgium, but also in Slovakia, Estonia and Turkey. Cooperation is also of crucial importance when offering adult education services for refugees and implementation comprehensive validation systems.

At the same time, EAEA members admit that the sheer diversity of the sector, which ranges from national institutions, private adult education providers to NGOs – to name only a few – makes it increasingly difficult to cooperate.

Austria

EAEA Austrian members welcome the National Qualifications Framework. However, they also raise concern over the possible formalisation of the sector that it might lead to. Integration and education of refugees also remained a topical issue.

Recent developments

Many positive developments for adult education are reported to have happened in Austria, both in the formal and in the non-formal sector. Among the key ones Austrian members have mentioned the work on validation of skills. More specifically, EAEA Austrian members have contributed to a basic paper for the Austrian Validation Strategy. The adoption of the National Framework of Qualifications is also a crucial step in achieving a comprehensive policy on validation.

EAEA Austrian members have also had remarked that the basic financing of adult education is secured, with subsidies for umbrella organisations of adult education now prolonged for three more years. Similarly, since July 2015 the Continuing Education Academy run by EAEA member VOEV, which validates the competences of adult educators, has been financed by the European Social Fund and the Ministry of Education.

National Framework of Qualifications

The adoption of the National Framework of Qualifications is an important achievement, but it comes with a set of challenges. Will the sector focus on more certification and thus become increasingly formalized? How can the non-formal approach be preserved?

Challenges

EAEA members in Austria agree that the country needs a comprehensive and effective strategy on refugees' education and integration. Those should be put in place in bigger agglomerations as well as in more rural areas; the members also recommend that the strategies go beyond language courses and include validation of competences as well as guidance and counselling.

The adoption of the National Qualification Framework, while welcomed by EAEA Austrian members, also poses an important challenge. It should be pointed out that validation in Austria is now based on two pillars: one leading to the recognition of competences and certificates, another one focuses on raising awareness of learning outcomes. Some organisations fear that the Austrian NQF might promote orientation on certificates and the sector will have to undergo processes of formalization.

Among topical issues in the past year Austrian members mention adult education for refugees, also highlighted in the European Semester Recommendations (see the annex). The initiatives undertaken by civil society so far include language courses, lectures, symposia, and roundtables. At the same time, there has been a tension between volunteers and representatives of professional organisations. Some EAEA members believe that volunteers can support professional teaching but cannot replace it.

To avoid it, different faces of adult education should be analysed and its non-formal approach needs to be preserved. The members also call for more cooperation between different stakeholders. As the sector is quite diverse, a wider network and a better coordination could benefit everybody and possibly allow for more cross-sectorial cooperation also at the policy level.

Two important developments marked adult education in the past year:

“Ö-Cert”, an overall framework for quality in adult education was adopted, as well as “Initiative Erwachsenenbildung”, which provides free second chance education.

Future focus

EAEA Austrian members are planning to focus on democracy education and basic education training for young adults with low educational attainment. EAEA member VOEV is also currently working on a core programme for all 270 Austrian adult education centres which will be soon published as a catalogue.

The objectives of this programme are: to disseminate information on what an adult education centre (Volkshochschule) is, to give smaller organisations ideas of what could be offered and to develop learning outcomes based on a curriculum of a graduation landmark, which would be compatible with the National Qualification Framework.

Belarus

In the Republic of Belarus, adult education is often perceived as a citizen's personal matter which should be provided on a commercial basis. That said, in 2015 adult education was directly and indirectly in the spotlight of political discussions and decisions that might modernize the general system of education.

Recent developments

EAEA Belarusian members underline some developments that have emerged: Belarus joined the Bologna Process and facilitated the debate of the universities' role in Lifelong Learning; in 2014 the National Framework of Qualifications was initiated and a National Strategy of Lifelong Learning was drafted; and a large-scale discussion took place on ensuring quality in vocational education in the context of Lifelong Learning. The latter has been strengthened by the EU Delegation in order to support capacity building of vocational education providers.

Additionally, at the request of the Ministry of Education, the Republican Institute of Vocational Education developed the concept of training/retraining of specialists on adult education. If successful, it can become a starting point for a new pedagogical qualification and development of the national system of training adult education specialists.

The State Agenda on Education Development has been adopted! Its restrictiveness raises a major issue. Although the agenda includes a subprogram covering adult education, it assures funding mainly for state establishments.

Challenges

As the main challenge, EAEA members in Belarus indicate the connection of the adult education with the development of society and economy, along with the education system itself. Belarusian society is facing a deep economic crisis, declining employment opportunities and an aging population. Therefore, there's a growing necessity to broaden the scope of adult education programmes for senior workers.

The second important topic in Belarus is ensuring social equity and availability of adult education. Belarus has a comprehensive system of advanced training for various professional groups. Nevertheless, since there is barely any consideration of disadvantaged groups, the difficulty lies in developing the institutional basis of adult education in rural areas and among all population groups. This is why EAEA members in Belarus would like to see more involvement of local authorities in ensuring access to educational services on the local level.

Finally, one of the obstacles to adopting the concept of lifelong and life-wide learning is the lack of permeability between formal and non-formal, vocational and non-vocational education, state and non-state providers.

Future focus

The upcoming efforts will be concentrated on maintaining and developing non-formal and civic education programmes for youth and adults along with ensuring their participation in the life of their communities. Some concrete examples provided by EAEA member Education without Borders are: the “Susiedzi 3.0” Programme which facilitates the youth participation from Belarus, Ukraine and Poland and the International Summer Programmes for youth including summer camps and ecological learning.

EAEA members in Belarus have also been supporting festivals of non-formal education since 2006. A biannual event, the latest festival was held in July 2016 and the next one is planned for 2018.

Belgium (Dutch-speaking)

Non-formal and informal adult education are among the primary tasks of socio-cultural work for adults in Flanders. Some important policy developments are to be noted, with the Flemish Ministry of Culture currently working on a new decree on sociocultural adult work.

Recent developments

Among the events that indirectly marked adult education in Flanders, EAEA members single out the informal meeting of EU education ministers, which took place in March 2015 in Paris. The resulting Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education marked an important shift towards citizenship and societal competences, rejecting the strictly economic view on learning and education.

The renewed focus on the civil society has also led to a discussion on a new Flemish decree for the socio-cultural sector. These developments will certainly have a discernible impact on the adult education sector in Flanders, as it is constituted primarily by 130 socio-cultural organizations which organise cultural activities, promote community-building and stimulate social changes in favour of a democratic, solidarity, durable and inclusive society.

Challenges

EAEA Flemish members believe that societal competences and citizenship need to remain the centre of attention on the European policy agenda. EAEA Flemish members, as an umbrella organisation, will try to steer the discussion in the European Commission about the New Skills Agenda representing non-formal and informal education in Flanders.

The member also notes that the possibilities for European cooperation in the socio-cultural sector are quite limited. Taking the Erasmus+ programme as an example, EAEA Flemish members point out that only Action 1 and Action 2 are accessible for sociocultural organisations. Additionally, due to a lack of financial means for Action 2, this programme is almost inaccessible for small organisations that want to improve their professional level and their staff by international exchanges.

What could help to improve the mentioned programme is a clear statement on the role and objectives of civil society in relation to economic and market goals.

Future focus

In late 2016, EAEA Flemish members will organise a one-day festival and meeting opportunity for all socio-cultural organisations in Flanders. It is an annual event at which the Minister of Culture, the Department of Culture and a selection of keynote speakers and experts are always present.

The scope of the festival program is broader than educational and cultural themes, it involves topics of community-building, discussions and meetings regarding social changes. Each year EAEA Flemish members also organise a festival for the Folkhighschools in the Flanders Region and a festival for the Ethnic Cultural Organisations.

Another Flemish EAEA member has been focused on developing the previously mentioned decree on sociocultural work, in which adult education is said to be highlighted.

A new decree for the sociocultural sector will soon be adopted in Flanders – with more focus on adult education.

Belgium (French-speaking)

EAEA members in Wallonia appreciate the new legislation on compulsory integration programmes for newly arrived migrants, but express concern over some of its conditions. They also note more willingness in the formal sector to open up to non-formal training.

Recent developments

As the adult education sector in Belgium has been profoundly marked by the increasing numbers of refugees and migrants – also highlighted in the European Semester Recommendations (see the annex), EAEA members in Wallonia have welcomed new legislation on compulsory integration programmes. New programmes for newly arrived migrants have been adopted by both Brussels and Wallonia and include language training, vocational training and citizenship modules aiming at introducing migrants to the local culture. The main innovation is that attendance is made compulsory. When comparing the two legislations, EAEA members in Wallonia have noted that literacy is better taken into account in Brussels than in Wallonia. This is very relevant considering the tendency to aim at levels that are too high (A2) for learners lacking basic literacy skills.

Developments specifically concerning the literacy sector include the publication of a long awaited report on the state of play in the sector. This report provides a good knowledge of the supply in literacy training available, but not of the needs and demands, since no budget has been made available to take part in PIAAC or to set up separate qualitative surveys. Additionally, a survey is due to be launched by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation to gain deeper knowledge of the sector – but authorities have yet to send the questionnaire to providers.

EAEA members in Wallonia also state that numerous initiatives have been taken over the past years which are clearly related to EU-level developments, such as (a) the setting up of an institution dedicated to the validation of skills; (b) the creation of a French-speaking Qualifications Framework; (c) a renewed attention to quality incorporated into this framework.

General trends promoted at EU level also seem to have an impact on the non-formal sector (outside skills validation). For instance, a recent law organising non-formal vocational training in Wallonia (2013) requires providers to refer to common frameworks (in terms of skills, knowledge, etc.) when setting the goals of their training programmes. Such a requirement clearly shows a will to integrate non-formal training further into the frameworks set up for the formal sector.

New legislation on integration of migrants brings a few changes.

Training courses are now compulsory and include modules on language and citizenship.

Challenges

One of the main future challenges for the Belgian Region of Wallonia is to open the access to skills validation systems to people lacking literacy skills. Another concern is to improve access to vocational training to learners lacking basic skills.

EAEA members in Wallonia also voice concern over policy measures that aim to “activate” certain learners. While the European Semester Recommendations for Belgium highlight the underperformance of migrants and low-skilled young people (see the annex), one EAEA member in Wallonia argues that certain policies can do more harm than good. More specifically, using education as a conditionality in exchange for a given welfare provision or legal status, as it is the case in Belgium, can demean the work that is being done to promote universal access to basic skills.

The organisation believes that targeting one sub-category of learners (be it recent migrants, the unemployed, etc.) tends to increasingly fragment the public and increase the control of authorities on the associative sector.

Should adult education be used as a conditionality, in exchange for certain welfare provisions? Can it still be considered as a common good?

Future focus

As many learners possess numerous professional skills that are not being recognized because validation systems are not adapted, EAEA members from Wallonia will continue to focus on this matter.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

While adult education has received more attention at the policy level, the country still seems to lack a clear and comprehensive strategy and a national qualifications framework.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Bosnia and Herzegovina have noted two developments that marked the adult education sector at the policy level. In 2014 the Council of Ministers promoted the “Principles and Standards in the field of adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, with policies and legislation related to adult education.

A second document was admitted on the state level: “Strategic platform development of adult education in the context of lifelong learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014-2020”. It represents the legal basis for the operation and cooperation of the competent authorities, institutions, organisations and individuals at all levels in terms of admission and full implementation of the needed strategy and other development documents related to adult education.

More partnership needed! EAEA members in Bosnia and Herzegovina call for strengthening the dialogue between ministries, but also for more involvement of civil society.

Challenges

While EAEA members in Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomed the new legislations, they would like to see a more detailed arrangement of the adult education sector, with a clear definition of responsibilities and areas of action. Similarly, the members call for ensuring transparency in administering public funds.

The second big challenge is development and implementation of a qualification framework at the national level that would allow comparability of acquired competences in relation to Europe. An additional aim is to strengthen, vertically and horizontally, the partnership and networking at all levels of government. Partnerships must include the empowerment of the role and the capacities of ministries and institutions in charge of adult education.

It is essential (a) to involve all relevant partners in the process of reflection and planning policy on adult education; (b) to build the trust between the public sector and civil society organizations; (c) to link education with the labour market by informing employers, educational institutions and adults about the opportunities and potential offered on the market.

Finally, EAEA members in Bosnia and Herzegovina underscore the importance of professional development among the adult education staff. Regular trainings coupled with appropriate monitoring can ensure the highest quality of the educational process.

Future focus

EAEA members will continue to remain engaged throughout the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, as the country is structurally complex, with different legal and social solutions, the members admit that such a wide and active presence remains a challenge.

Striving to become available also in new micro-environments, one EAEA member is planning to strengthen its internal structure, skills and contacts with specific collaborators.

As a way to face the financial challenge, the members are planning to continue raising funds through direct sale of educational services, through partnerships with socially responsible institutions and through the implementation of projects.

Bulgaria

EAEA members in Bulgaria believe that the educational activities are mainly focused on the formal education of adults leaving aside the non-formal and informal sector. More advocacy campaigns are needed to put non-formal and informal learning on the political agenda.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Bulgaria report modest changes in national laws and regulations concerning formal adult education. The members have also noted that the Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century, published by EAEA, turned out to be a very useful document for advocacy work on adult education. A national coordination group for lifelong learning and a national network of schools for adults were established, thereby developing the national information system for adult learning.

National information system of adult education is now available in Bulgaria. 28 regional coordinators help keep the general public well-informed about learning opportunities. The first Days of Lifelong Learning were organised in 2015, along with Lifelong Learning Awards.

Challenges

The members admit that the first step to address an important challenge at the legislative level has been taken: a system of the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is being designed. That said, more work should be done to actually put the system into practice. Another key challenge consists in receiving adequate support from the state authorities regarding not only formal education, but also non-formal and informal learning. More mechanisms need to be developed in order to include all adults in different trainings.

Future focus

In the upcoming year, EAEA members from Bulgaria will focus their work on adult literacy, basic skills and validation of non-formal and informal learning. One of the main tasks will be the introduction and the implementation of fundamental principles and features of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training. The members are also planning to participate in National Days of Lifelong Learning organized by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Croatia

EAEA members from Croatia highlight the key role that adult learning festivals play in the recognition of the sector. A comprehensive National Qualifications Framework, while challenging, is necessary to respond to the needs of individuals, society and the labour market.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Croatia list a number of initiatives launched in the past year that promoted adult education and lifelong learning. The Lifelong Learning Week, to which adult education organisations actively contributed, is a notable example.

At the national level, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports is reported to be implementing the EU Agenda for Adult Learning with the financial assistance of Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture. The Ministry is also said to be organizing workshops and seminars to help relevant stakeholders improve the quality of their programmes, working towards the creation of a stable and comprehensive network.

***Croatia continues to implement the European Agenda for Adult learning.
A serie of workshops helps to create a stronger network of stakeholders.***

Challenges

It seems that Croatia faces a major challenge: the adoption of a wide and inclusive Croatian Qualifications Framework. The framework is intended to regulate the system of qualifications at all levels that would be based on learning outcomes and follow the needs of the labour market, individuals and society. EAEA members in Croatia would also like to see more financial support for adult education institutions to implement relevant projects.

Future focus

EAEA member PAR foresees a new training targeting the unemployed, which will take place during the Lifelong Learning Festival 2016. This seems in line with the recommendations of the European Semester (see the annex), which highlight the alarmingly high unemployment rates in Croatia. The organisation also supports the preparation of a summer school SenZations, this year held in Poland.

Cyprus

The importance of European partnerships and continuing professional development is highlighted by EAEA members in Cyprus.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Cyprus single out project work and increased opportunities for mobility as the most important developments last year. They underline the importance of developing partnerships and enhancing cooperation.

Challenges

EAEA members wish to see more people engaging in mobility projects and more interest in European projects among the organisations in Cyprus. At the same time, there is a need to strengthen the cooperation with governmental organizations and to assure adequate recognition of adult education at the national level.

Future focus

One EAEA member in Cyprus, highlighting the importance of continuing professional and organizational development, is planning to participate in more seminars and workshops in the months to come.

It will also continue to foster cooperation with other European stakeholders within the framework of Erasmus+ projects. The organisation also intends to focus on disadvantaged groups to ensure their participation in adult learning.

Denmark

EAEA members in Denmark stress the role that adult education can play in the integration of newly arrived refugees; one association has launched a large initiative to that end. Limited recognition of the sector at the policy level leads to inadequate funding, which can be changed by increasing advocacy work.

Recent developments

EAEA members have singled out the increased flow of refugees as a game-changer in the Danish adult education sector in 2015. While the financial support from the government is very limited in this respect, EAEA member DAEA launched a large initiative that embraces the role of adult education in the influx of refugees. Entitled “Folkeoplysning for Flygtninge” (“Adult education for refugees”), the project involves 23 organisations that participate in activities all over Denmark. By highlighting the importance of active citizenship and democracy, the association takes a different approach than that of the Danish government, which homes in on including the refugees on the labour market.

Adult education for refugees (Folkeoplysning for Flygtninge) is a project run by DAEA. 23 organisations across Denmark organise activities that focus on active citizenship and democracy. The underlying theme is learning for refugees, with refugees and about refugees.

That said, Danish adult education organisations highlight the recent change in European and Danish policies following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. It seems that strengthening citizenship skills is now higher on the agenda as a response to the growing radicalization.

Another significant development relates to the link between the formal and non-formal adult education sector. As many young people find themselves unable to take up formal learning, the Prime Minister has established national working groups to look for possible solutions. EAEA member DAEA is participating in one of them, trying to raise awareness about the role of non-formal education and its possible link to the formal system.

Challenges

EAEA members in Denmark consider funding to be the most pressing challenge that the field faces. This is also reflected through the lack of recognized and financed opportunities for young people that would provide them with non-formal education. A drastic cut in financial support left one of EAEA member’s school forms on the edge of survival.

A key challenge also involves the low participation levels among low-skilled workers and migrants. Despite efforts of inclusion, the two groups are still largely underrepresented in the field of adult education.

As has been previously mentioned, the government prioritizes the employability of newly arrived refugees and undermines the role that adult education could play in their integration. This can also be inferred from the European Semester Recommendations that focus predominantly on labour market inclusion (see the annex).

This is partly why EAEA members in Denmark stress the role of lobbying, which can increase recognition of the sector at the policy level. They also highlight the importance of innovative communication and the necessity to constantly develop and renew actions for participation and involvement.

We need strong arguments!

Advocacy work can only be effective if it focuses on strong, research-based arguments. More research on wider benefits of adult learning is needed!

Future focus

Danish members stress the importance of providing research-based information about the role of the sector in different contexts. This is why in the future one association is planning to focus on the documentation of developments, benefits and effects in the field of non-formal learning. The research-based approach could also help build strong arguments to ensure funding.

Estonia

EAEA members in Estonia single out inclusion of disadvantaged groups into lifelong learning activities as the most important challenge facing the sector. While there is a new Adult Education Act, no clear policy has been adopted on engaging learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recent developments

Regarding the developments at the national level, Estonia indicates the 2015 Adult Education Act to be the new basis for management of the area of adult education. The document lays out the requirements for the management of continuing education institutions and for the provision of continuing education institutions, the learner's right to study leave and the bases for financing continuing education.

The Estonian members also highlight the role of the European Agenda for Adult learning, noting that the activities planned around the Agenda support the participation of disadvantaged groups in adult learning and improve the cooperation between different stakeholders.

The 2015 Adult Education Act is a new legal basis for the sector. It stipulates the right of every person to constantly develop their knowledge and skills and specifies the obligations of state and employers.

Challenges

Continuously stressing the importance of including disadvantaged groups, an EAEA member plans to implement the action "Adult education promotion and enhancing learning opportunities", targeting adults who are not involved in lifelong learning but need it most. The implementation of the initiative will represent a challenge due to an unclear policy and the lack of methodology on engaging disadvantaged groups.

As a response to this problem, the member suggests strengthening the cooperation between different stakeholders: adult education providers, decision makers, community groups.

Future focus

Taking into consideration the abovementioned challenges, the EAEA members in Estonia plan to focus on disadvantaged groups and activities that support the creation of an effective learning environment.

Finland

Education of adult migrants has been dominating the discussions in and about adult education in Finland. EAEA members also raise the questions of public funding, structural changes and the role of data collection in advocacy work.

Recent developments

EAEA members report the increasing number of refugees and migrants to be the main factor influencing the adult education sector in 2015. While the education of migrants and its funding is currently undergoing reform, the government is planning to reduce the budget for education.

The Ministry of Education and Culture set up a steering committee to look for the most cost-effective ways that would re-organise education and training for migrants while at the same time providing them with a quick entrance to the labour market.

Fortunately, the role of adult education in the process does not go unnoticed. A survey conducted by the Board of Education has shown that liberal adult learning is already an important factor in the integration of migrants. The role of education in the integration of migrants and refugees has also been highlighted in the European Semester Recommendations (see the annex).

This being said, the Finnish members also describe adult education as disappearing from the national educational policy and system. This can be illustrated by the fact that the Ministry of Education and Culture no longer has a special department or unit for adult education and the authority has been divided between the departments of vocational and general education.

Yet another development is the structural change of the sector, with the number of institutions steadily decreasing in the past years, partially due to the merger of some organisations. This is seen by EAEA Finnish members as having a positive impact on the work of the organisations: bigger units are able to operate and to target their resources better than the small ones.

Adult education for migrants and refugees

Quite importantly, while some migrants opt for courses designed specifically with them in mind, others (as many as 20,000) attend open courses, which furthers the integration between migrants and the Finnish population.

Challenges

As reflected above, the education of migrants and its funding will continue to pose a challenge for the Finnish adult education sector. While adult education providers would like to see the cost of all integration education covered by the state, regardless of the institution that provides it, this has yet to be approved as the funding system is currently being reformed.

The current reform of vocational education and training has also sparked some controversy, as it might put many folk high schools out of business. At the same time, the reform might offer new possibilities for liberal AE institutions as providers of general and preparatory education courses.

To investigate the situation of the field and its future developmental needs, one EAEA member has started lobbying for a parliamentary adult education committee or work group.

Future focus

EAEA members keep focusing on promoting and lobbying for liberal adult education, raising the questions of public funding and the important part it plays in the educational field.

They also point out that for the lobbying work to be effective, it is necessary to base the arguments on sound research. One EAEA member is also planning to conduct surveys to cover the models of structural development and the state of digitalization of the field.

France

As the government targets jobseekers and low-skilled workers, trainings and skills assessment remain on top of the agenda. The adult education sector also has to respond to the need for more trainings on literacy and basic skills.

Recent developments

EAEA members in France remark a few notable changes that the sector underwent in 2015 and 2016. The most important one is Plan 500 000, launched in January 2016 by President François Hollande. The plan aims at doubling the number of adults, particularly the unemployed, registered in training programmes.

Another innovation is the so-called “Compte personnel d’activité” (CPA), a personal activity account, activated for each person who starts their professional life. The potential of the account is also highlighted in the European Semester Recommendations for France (see the annex). A personal training account, or “compte personnel de formation”, was also established by the Vocational Training Reform 2014 and has already achieved remarkable success: more than 3.3 million people have activated their account as of August 2016.

EAEA members also report two major trends in adult education. On the one hand, it is necessary to fight against increasing illiteracy rates. Basic skills provision and recognition of prior learning are said to be at the very core of adult education in France throughout 2016, with new pedagogical tools and devices currently being explored. On the other hand, political initiatives have been largely focused on promoting employment and facilitating apprenticeships for adults.

Compte personnel d’activité

All active people, that is, private sector employees, civil servants, freelancers and jobseekers, can now cumulate different rights and decide how to use them. Those include trainings, assistance for business development initiatives, skills assessment, change to part-time employment, early retirement, to name a few.

Challenges

The above-mentioned developments come with a set of challenges. The ambitious and wide-ranging scope of Plan 500 000 requires the mobilization of all organisations working in the field. EAEA members call for promoting convergence between State services, regions and social stakeholders to ensure a wide outreach of education policies. The members also point out that to be successfully implemented, Plan 500 000 needs to focus on quality of the trainings, not just on their quantity.

The increasing number of migrants in France continues to challenge the adult education sector. The Equality and Citizenship bill, currently under discussion, confirms the trend to focus on literacy and includes the proposal for French language learning also in the field of vocational training.

To make sure that adults get high-quality services, one member suggests taking a more personalized approach to learning. This requires improving advice, guidance and counselling provision.

Plan 500 000

The initiative foresees a financial investment of about 1 billion euros.

A preliminary analysis was done in June and showed a significant increase in the number of adults enrolled in training programmes.

Future focus

EAEA members are planning to concentrate on teaching French to migrants and learners who struggle with literacy. They will also continue to be active on a European level.

EAEA member La Ligue de l'enseignement is organising the first annual European Civic Academy, uniting major European platforms on education and citizenship. The member is also planning to continue running the Salon Européenne de l'Éducation. The annual event, taking place for 17 years now, focuses on education and training for all and includes information about both formal and non-formal learning paths and activities.

Georgia

A recent structural change has led to more cooperation between adult education stakeholders and foundation of new learning centres. EAEA members in Georgia voice concern over the lack of involvement from governmental institutions and the necessity to rely on international society donors.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Georgia cite the work of DVV International Georgia to be steadily improving adult education in the country. Since 2002, the organization has been driving changes, innovations and initiatives in the field, such as the continuous establishment of non-formal adult education centres. Another centre will start functioning in Racha in the fall of 2016.

EAEA members note that it is thanks to DVV International's holistic approach to educational measures that non-formal adult education in Georgia was systemized.

The creation of the Georgian Adult Education Network in 2014 is yet another example of a successful structural change brought about by DVV International, one that allowed for more cooperation between adult education centres and supported the involvement of adults in lifelong learning.

External donors provide immense help in Georgia, but the sector still lacks public funding. A legal basis for adult education is needed!

Challenges

Insufficient financial support from central and local governmental institutions is reported to be the main challenge that adult education in Georgia has to face. This stems from the fact that adult education has no legislative basis either in education or municipal law.

To fund its activities, adult education centres have to rely on the support of national and international society donors, which is steadily diminishing. This is why EAEA members would like to see more financial support from the government and thus make the field more sustainable.

Another important challenge that needs to be confronted is the participation in learning activities among the Georgian adult population, still described as low. In order to improve the participation rates, EAEA members wish to see more awareness raising, also helping the field in achieving recognition.

More cooperation with European stakeholders is also needed to effectively learn from best practices across the continent. To improve dialogue with other stakeholders, EAEA members would welcome an opportunity to host an international conference. It would also be an occasion to compare experiences in respective countries and discuss possible improvements. Exchange programmes for adult education staff would work to a similar end.

Integration programmes in Georgia

There are more than 40,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Georgia.

EAEA members run a number of initiatives in IDP settlements that foster their integration, focused on gender equality and building dialogue with the local community.

Future focus

EAEA members are planning to continue lobbying for adult education in Georgia through awareness raising activities and would gladly take part in a relevant EU campaign if presented with the opportunity.

EAEA member GAEN also strives to establish partnership between its member adult education centres and similar institutions to develop professional exchange programmes. Among the themes that Georgian adult education organisations would wish to explore are adult education management, cooperation with municipalities and teaching methods.

Germany

The adult education sector in Germany has been dominated with discussions around the integration of refugees. A number of challenges have arisen, including the overwhelming need for qualified teachers, volunteers as well as more civic and intercultural education.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Germany agree that the integration of refugees has been a major topic in the media, bringing the much needed attention to the field of adult education. This attention could and should be used as a way of raising awareness about the role that adult education and lifelong learning play in the education chain and its comparative lack of funding.

A general focus on literacy and basic skills is also highlighted, following the announcement of the Decade for Literacy by the Federal Education Ministry. With more funding for projects tackling the issue, a few EAEA members have decided to focus in their activities on literacy.

Some German members have also been active in advocacy work, lobbying, among others, for more focus on adult education in the Erasmus+ programme and for the exclusion of education from TTIP.

Adult education for refugees

Large programmes for refugees need to be prepared in a very short time span; volunteer teachers need to be quickly trained. How does this sense of urgency affect quality?

Challenges

Among the main challenges, EAEA members focus predominantly on the efforts of adult education providers to support the integration of refugees. This brings many additional question marks – EAEA members have noted that with a high demand for courses targeting refugees it is becoming increasingly difficult to also respond to the learning needs of the local population. Striking a balance between the two very different target groups, also in terms of funding, is a key issue.

Yet another concern relates to the distribution of education offers for refugees. The members note that the provision of courses depends mainly on whether the refugee has a perspective of staying long-term, which is often difficult to establish as the rules can be unclear and confusing.

The increasing demand for language courses is understandably coupled with the need for qualified teachers and adequate infrastructure. Additionally, some EAEA members have singled out the work of volunteers and the necessity to develop, and ultimately validate, their skills and competences.

Most EAEA members in Germany also recognize the need for more interreligious and intercultural dialogue between refugees and the receiving communities. In this respect, one EAEA member has noted that an open discussion on the meaning and consequences of immigration with representatives of civil society and politicians could pave the way for them to act as non-partisan moderators in their communities.

Other challenges discussed by organisations in Germany include insufficient financial support for the field as such. The focus on financing projects leaves little funding for the structure and thus detracts the sustainability of adult education activities.

Financing adult education

How can organisations move from mainly project-based funding to more financial support for structures? Sustainability of funding remains an issue for many adult education providers in Germany.

Future focus

In keeping with the challenges explored above, EAEA members in Germany say they will focus their activities on the work with refugees and the development of new civic education courses. One member is also planning to explore digitalization and Advanced Learning Environments in adult education.

Greece

Social inclusion of refugees is at the centre of the activities for EAEA Greek members. The financial crisis in Greece is still taking its toll, having led to general disappointment with education and its potential. With structural reforms only touching the formal sector, non-formal adult education has been left behind at the policy level.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Greece have levelled some criticism at the lack of progress in the field of non-formal adult education. While the Ministry of Education has focused on reforming the formal system, broader adult education has been left behind. With few events happening, a meeting on the European Agenda for Adult learning is described as a missed opportunity, as the number of invitations was limited and the information about it was poorly disseminated.

Challenges

Integration of refugees remains at the forefront of the adult education sector in Greece. However, with priority given to practical arrangements, such as provision of food and housing, the importance of refugee education is often overlooked. EAEA members have argued that adult education should be considered as key for the inclusion of refugees and can effectively change attitudes in a society based on diversity and pluralism.

Future focus

EAEA members in Greece puts the work with the unemployed and refugees at the centre of their activities and plan to keep this direction in the foreseeable future. They intend to keep project work that involves learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and stimulates the spirit of citizenship and volunteering.

Adult education after the crisis

The Greek financial crisis led to a general feeling of disappointment and mistrust towards the education system, as unemployment levels soared also among the well-educated. Adult education restores the belief in the power of learning, proving that it is easier to face challenges together through social activism and solidarity.

Hungary

More second chance education programmes and increased involvement from the government could answer some of the largest challenges in adult education according to EAEA Hungarian members.

Recent developments

The European Agenda for Adult learning is said to have had remarkable impact at the policy level in Hungary. It has helped generate policy discourse and promoted widening policy approaches to adult learning within the national lifelong learning strategy from 2014 onwards. It also highlighted the role of higher education in the development of adult learning.

Challenges

Recognizing the alarmingly high rate of early school leavers, EAEA members in Hungary suggest developing more second chance programmes as a way of counteracting this problem. The European Semester Recommendations suggest that early school leaving is particularly common among the Roma population and still needs to be resolved (see the annex). The EAEA members would also like to see increased participation in non-formal learning activities and more partnership-based actions in adult learning, citing the example of learning cities as a potential model.

To improve the overall situation of the field, members suggest more involvement from the government. Opening up a bottom-up discourse on adult education with key stakeholders, including civil society representatives, could highlight the wide benefits of adult learning and its importance that goes beyond the labour market.

Future focus

EAEA member the University of Pécs intends to continue developing its BA and MA programmes in adult education. Among its areas of focus, the university cites professionalization and research on adult education.

EAEA members in Hungary single out the work of UNESCO to be the most significant in resetting the agenda for education, including adult education. The UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, Post-2015 Agenda and the INCHEON Declaration have played an important role.

Iceland

Up-skilling opportunities, career guidance and recognition of prior learning are now widely available in Iceland to assure the inclusion of all groups on the labour market. EAEA Icelandic members highlight the necessity for new teaching methods and marketing strategies to increase the attractiveness of adult education.

Recent developments

The Icelandic members have reported changes in adult education to be both structural and content-based. More specifically, the VET system has been undergoing some structural changes, with initiatives being taken to make vocational education more appealing for young people. A new Directorate of Education was established in 2015 to improve quality, certify educational providers in LLL and support progress in education.

Another important development was the adoption of the Act on Adult Education in 2010, which focused on the inclusion of adults with little formal education and marginalized groups in the labour market. At the same time, members admit that the current system has created some fragmentation in adult learning.

In terms of content, adult education organisations in Iceland have highlighted the importance of introducing modernized learning, including the ongoing improvement of digital teaching. It is explained that while the overall participation in lifelong learning has been quite high for decades, the sector needs to look for new ways to maintain its attractiveness. Digital methods in learning, allowing more flexibility and introducing a personalized approach, could increase the appeal of adult education among the general public.

The 2010 Act on Adult Education has led to more funding opportunities for up-skilling initiatives, guidance counselling and recognition of prior learning. Labour market inclusion remains a priority.

Challenges

EAEA members in Iceland believe that lifelong learning in all its variety will constitute an integral part of our lifestyles in the near future. As everybody will need to update their skills on an everyday basis, regardless of age, gender, work status or social class, the educational providers will have to respond accordingly to the growing need for flexible learning pathways.

The organisations working on the ground foresee a dramatic change, one that would require a reinvention of the overall concept of LLL and education. The change could come hand in hand with a comprehensive use of IT and new marketing strategies. This updated approach would also ensure the improvement of access to education and embrace the diversity of learners.

With such wide-ranging challenges ahead, EAEA members underscore the importance of sharing good practices. European projects and policies can be effectively used to raise awareness of new ways of thinking across the continent. In this respect, EAEA members underline the value of Erasmus+ programmes, which help progress within the educational system.

More flexibility needed!

In a rapidly changing society, everybody needs to update their skills regularly.

Adult education can offer remarkable support, but needs to remain flexible.

Future focus

As an umbrella organization with 19 members running 50 offices across Iceland, EAEA member LEKIN focuses on disseminating information on new developments in adult education, both to the members and the general public.

The association is also active in advocacy work, raising awareness about adult education and its role among policy-makers. EAEA members plan to continue promoting the trends and initiatives in adult education in Iceland and act as an intermediary between European partners and member institutions.

Ireland

With financial support for community education steadily declining, EAEA members in Ireland fear that disadvantaged groups will feel left behind. More research into wider benefits of lifelong learning could inform national policy on adult education and subsequently increase participation levels.

Recent developments

EAEA Irish members have listed a large number of developments that recently marked the field of adult education, with some new structures put in place. Most notable examples include the Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS), Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI) and Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

With a new Further Education and Training Strategy currently being implemented, there has been more focus on evidence-based policy and a learner centred approach. In this respect, the strategy foresaw the establishment of a forum for adult learners which would help adult learners influence policy decisions.

Delegated from SOLAS to EAEA member AONTAS, the first National Adult Learner Forum was held in February 2016 and gathered 80 learners from across Ireland. With the learners now firmly in the centre of the Further Education and Training policy, their experiences will be used to gather qualitative data and inform national policy.

AONTAS has also been involved in the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning as the national coordinator and managed the One Step Up Initiative, which provided information to thousands of adult learners through its Freephone Helpline, website referral and calendar of events. The member also supported Education and Training Boards to organize activities locally to promote their service, with over a thousand learners involved in activities and 57 adult learners acting as learner advocates and promoting the benefits of adult learning.

Challenges

As a main challenge that adult education in Ireland still faces, EAEA members have mentioned participation levels, which remain below expectations. A possible solution could be learning from top-achievers in this respect and including learning to learn skills which could help turn participants into self-directed learners.

EAEA members have also noted the continuing impact of cutbacks, especially on community education. With funding streams reduced in the past years, community education providers in Ireland have difficulty in maintaining their activities. The establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and its associated new policies has also led to funding problems.

The new proposed QQI requires a re-engagement fee (of around 5,000 euros) for community education providers. This can limit equal opportunities for educationally disadvantaged groups. If asked to bear the costs, most learners would probably be unable to afford it.

To offer an adequate response to the persisting challenges, EAEA members have suggested ensuring ring-fenced funding for non-accredited community education programmes that promote civic engagement and enhance the capacity of communities to recover from the effects of recession. This is why EAEA member AONTAS calls for prioritizing educationally disadvantaged learners by increasing the allocated percentage of SOLAS funding for Community Education Programmes and waiving the proposed QQI re-engagement fee for community education providers.

In terms of the offer of adult education providers, the members hope for flexible arrangements adapted to different training needs of adults, including guidance support, and for more activities that would foster solidarity between different age groups.

Future focus

As an association representing over 500 individuals and organisations, AONTAS is planning to continue advocating for and promoting the right of adults to quality learning throughout their lives.

Four major themes include:

- developing relationships with key stakeholders, including the new Irish government.
- broadening the current debate on the value and role of adult and community education – as shown in the European Semester Recommendations (see annex), there is a continuing focus on up-skilling and reskilling, without mentioning the wider benefits of adult learning.
- influencing and supporting members to engage in European policy and opportunities offered through Erasmus+.
- expanding membership engagement through online engagement activities.

As can be seen from the previous sections, AONTAS has already channelled its activities to follow the four themes, most notably by organizing the Adult Learners' Festival and the National Adult Learner Forum and by coordinating the One Step Initiative. With its broad membership, the association intends to continue acting as a strong collective voice for adult learning.

Israel

EAEA members in Israel highlight that professional development of staff is needed to assure top quality of adult education provision.

Recent developments

EAEA members have noted that the influence of European developments on adult education policies in Israel should not be underestimated, with documents such as the European Agenda for Adult learning often being a source of inspiration.

EAEA member Israel Adult Education Association has also mentioned its project work, particularly the project on Martin Buber, which included an internal study group, a four-day conference in Germany and a wide dissemination of the results in Israel.

Challenges

Recognizing the need for more professional development among the adult education staff, EAEA members would like to see more opportunities for adult education professionals to enhance their skills and competences.

Future focus

As has been mentioned above, EAEA members have been concerned with the relative lack of opportunities for adult education staff to develop professionally. This is why one EAEA member is looking into the possibility of opening a training institute.

Italy

EAEA Italian members see non-formal learning as an attractive alternative for disadvantaged groups, but more cooperation with the formal sector is needed to assure a smooth transition.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Italy do not report any significant developments in adult education at the policy level. One notable structural change involves the establishment of CPIA, a governmental structure with provincial and regional offices, where formal and non-formal education work together to improve the knowledge and skills of adults.

Challenges

Among the key challenges EAEA members mention insufficient funding and low participation levels in lifelong learning paths. The lack of integration between formal and non-formal education systems is said to be most visible in the education of NEETs and migrants.

As the two groups have difficulty in approaching formal education systems, EAEA members see the potential of non-formal adult education in engaging them as learners and thus highlighting the importance of the field to local and national stakeholders.

One EAEA member has been managing projects within the framework of the National Protection System for asylum seekers and refugees. The organisation believes in strengthening the relationship between the local community and migrants. Recognizing both formal and non-formal learning of migrants is also key to successful integration.

Italian members also suggest more focus on dissemination of both government policies and opportunities that adult education brings to reach a wider audience. More civic education is also needed to increase the involvement of adults in society.

Future focus

Taking note of the challenges mentioned above, EAEA members intend to focus on the education of NEETs, migrants and low-skilled adults. While some organisations also stress the importance of cooperation with other stakeholders nation- and region-wide, others focus on European projects and being active in European networks.

Liechtenstein

Continuously working on raising awareness about adult education, EAEA members in Liechtenstein are determined to overcome challenges mostly regarding funding issues.

Recent developments

EAEA members from Liechtenstein aim to strengthen the visibility of adult education in the country. With this purpose, a workshop was organized in which many institutions working in the field discussed the possible ways to raise awareness about adult education.

Basic skills have been another important working subject. In the context of a European project, EAEA member the Adult Education Foundation has produced a short motivation spot in order to increase the awareness among Liechtensteiner population, the labour market and specific target groups.

Adult education organisations in Liechtenstein have also highlighted the importance of the European Agenda for Adult learning, seen as a guideline for Liechtensteiner associations.

Challenges

While the potential of non-formal adult education is remarkable, the challenges for the coming years are also significant. The most important one relates to budgetary restrictions, which limit the range of activities of adult education providers.

Future focus

EAEA member in Liechtenstein will concentrate on reviewing its funding. While at the moment it funds institutions, the idea of funding individuals is currently being considered.

The theme for 2017: Education instead of the screen! Each adult education institution will organise an event following this approach.

Lithuania

EAEA members in Lithuania recognize the potential of the new law on non-formal adult education, but improvements are still needed to ensure its effective implementation. The upcoming parliamentary elections might offer an opportunity to raise awareness about adult education at the policy level.

Recent developments

The implementation of a new law regarding non-formal adult education and continuous learning opens new possibilities for Lithuanian adult learning institutions by stimulating the adult learning development in local municipalities.

EAEA members believe that the law can provide legal guarantees for the lifelong learning sector. That said, it is difficult to plan far ahead, as the upcoming parliamentary elections and subsequently the appointment of a new Minister of Education and Science will directly concern the adult education sector.

In 2015, the 16th Adult Learning Week took place under the theme of “Active learning for active life”. Many organisations participated and different activities were organized, such as trainings, open door days, open lessons, creative workshops, afternoons and evenings actions, community meetings and discussions.

Challenges

The implementation of the new law, while welcome, comes with a major challenge. Although all local municipalities are obliged to assign a coordinator of non-formal adult education, so far, there has been little coordination in achieving this. This is due to the fact that the legislation in many municipalities does not provide any common approach for appointing a coordinator.

The perspective of EAEA members also highlights the need for a better agreement among stakeholders involved in adult learning, in which they should develop a common point of view and support each other. This is especially important considering the considerable split that exists between the public sector and NGOs.

How is adult education understood on the policy level? Perceived as part of vocational education, its importance for citizenship, creativity and personal fulfilment is frequently overlooked.

Future focus

EAEA member Lithuanian Association of Adult Education stresses its intention towards a further participation in the Umbrella Educational NGOs, which were established in 2015 to improve the dialogue and coordination with public institutions.

The association is also planning to develop a strategy for overcoming the weaknesses found as a result of the PIAAC survey. It will focus on the recognition of competences acquired by non-formal and informal learning and promote the quality assurance system for non-formal adult training providers using the European Quality Mark.

The European Quality Mark

The EQM is a quality assurance mark for all providers of non-formal learning throughout Europe, jointly developed by partners from eight European countries. It measures how effectively the organisation understands what systems and activities are required to provide and support quality learning in relation to the European standards for quality assurance of adult learning.

Macedonia

Macedonia, as a candidate country for EU accession, is trying to keep up with the European developments in adult education and to adapt its education system accordingly. Policymakers are implementing new strategies and priorities focused on non-formal adult education and informal learning.

Recent developments

A variety of strategic documents are being developed or updated and new policies are about to be designed. The development of multiple frameworks includes: a new National Education Strategy in which Adult Education will be incorporated, a new Adult Education Strategy and a Lifelong Learning Strategy. Since the beginning of 2016, a new process concerning a validation system for non-formal and informal adult education has begun. This procedure should be concluded at the end of 2017 and piloted in 2018. A set of legal documents and regulations will be developed for this purpose. Additionally, since 2012 a system of non-formal adult education recognition has been developed with reference to non-formal adult education and basic adult education.

Challenges

In spite of the recent developments, EAEA members in Macedonia point out that there is a lack of coordination between the various stakeholders and actors. This is why the greatest challenge would be to harmonize all documents, laws and systems and to put them in one effective system so that they complement and fit into the big picture.

Future focus

EAEA Macedonian members support the system and structures of adult education in the country. As the priorities of the policy makers for the next years are focused on designing and developing a validation system for non-formal adult education and informal learning, adult education organisations would like to be involved in the creation of this system, with projects and measures in line with its needs. EAEA member in Macedonia, the Lifelong Learning Centre will organize the upcoming 13th Lifelong Learning Days. This important national event will be held under the patronage of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia. The aim is to get the attention from the local government, the NGOs and all other actors involved in the sector at local and regional level, in order to raise their awareness about the role and importance of lifelong learning.

Training the trainer

Professional development is key! An EAEA member is planning to introduce a training programme for teachers and trainers.

Montenegro

The adult education sector has seen remarkable improvements, with an expert group now firmly established. A comprehensive validation system still remains to be developed.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Montenegro list a number of developments that have significantly improved the field of adult education. An expert group has been established, with the purpose of reporting the situation of adult education in the country and describing advantages, disadvantages, needed measures to ameliorate this sector. The group was composed of representatives from relevant Montenegrin adult education institutions.

The first non-formal education guide is out!

The guide explains to the general public how and where to acquire different qualifications, develop key competences and other skills. The first national portal has also been created, facilitating communication between people interested in non-formal learning.

Montenegro has also seen the launch of the first publication about adult education in the country and of an international adult education framework. An adult education manual for teachers has also been elaborated, aiming to deliver a programme on Elementary Functional Literacy of Adults.

Challenges

EAEA members mention a few significant challenges that need to be tackled in the months and years to come. Providing didactic material for adult learning, especially focused on learners with poor skills, is certainly necessary; the same regards promoting an electronic database for programmes, learners and adult education providers. The members would also support the strategy that could increase adults' participation in lifelong learning activities via research practices and cooperation with the NGO sector and also call for a comprehensive system that would assure validation of prior learning and strengthen the link between adult education and labour market.

Future focus

The principal direction for EAEA members is related to the stated challenges. EAEA member the VET Centre intends to promote the importance of adult learning and establish a database on adult education providers, programmes and learners. The organisation is also planning to expand the educational offer for adults and professional training of professionals in the area of quality assurance.

The Netherlands

Although the Dutch government has directed its attention to lifelong learning, participation levels remain low. Flexible learning pathways are necessary to make adult education more attractive for potential learners.

Recent developments

EAEA members have noted that the lack of a long political and cultural history of lifelong learning in the Netherlands is now recognized at the policy level. Current strategies and legislation focus on state-funded learning, particularly for underrepresented groups, as well as on provision of employment and work-related training. The Dutch government has also called for a stronger learning climate, aiming to increase the participation rates. At the same time, Dutch members admit that it is difficult to strike a balance between the interests of different stakeholders, that include employers, unions, formal education institutions and NGOs.

Challenges

Low participation levels represent the main source of concern for Dutch members. These can be explained by a number of obstacles that learners have to face: tight schedule, family responsibilities, participation costs. At the same time, the organisation calls for putting the learner in the centre of the learning process, making sure that their needs are adequately identified.

How does digitalisation influence adult learning? EAEA Dutch members believe that with online learning now widely available, traditional methods and face-to-face meetings in education seem to have lost their value.

To adequately respond to the challenges of the modern world, adult education organisations in the Netherlands would like to see the development of transformational learning, one that would take into account the different identities and roles that adults have to take up throughout their lives.

Future focus

As their priorities, EAEA members list strengthening the independent role of the Adult Learning Festival and acquiring external financial support from different partners. EAEA member Learn for Life will also focus on organising roundtables and discussions for policy makers, researchers, professionals and voluntary practitioners about leading towards a lifelong learning climate. Among its plans, the organisation also mentions the joint development of a Month of Learning.

Poland

The Polish members have pointed out the importance of cooperation between different ministries to ensure a comprehensive approach to adult education at the policy level. The lack of basic skills and key competences among adults remains a problem.

Recent developments

There seems to have been quite a few positive developments in Poland – EAEA members have noted a stronger focus in national and regional programmes on the disadvantaged groups, particularly adults with low qualifications and those with limited access to the educational offer. An increased interest in adult education goes hand in hand with a rise in entrepreneurial spirit in Poland and more opportunities for cooperation and social debates between the sectors.

More space for workplace learning

Workplace learning seems to have gained more recognition in Poland. It is now considered to be a both more attractive and more practical way of learning.

Challenges

While the European Semester Recommendations for Poland call for more focus on developing transversal skills (see the annex), EAEA members highlight the need for development of key competences among adults, notably computer skills for daily use as well as functional literacy. It is pointed out that the recent boost in immigration has brought about a new group of adults that need to be re-trained, educated or have their professional qualifications recognized. In view of these challenges, EAEA Polish members call for more cooperation between policy-makers from different ministries. Education of adults is no longer a question of only the Ministry of Education and educational institutions. It now permeates to other sectors: employment, economy, health, and administration, to name but a few.

Future focus

The activities of the EAEA members in Poland will most likely be organized around the different funding programmes, notably Erasmus+ (Key Action 2), Horizon 2020 and the Polish Regional Operational Programme. There are already two international conferences planned that will take place in 2017 within the framework of different Erasmus+ projects, both organised by EAEA member Institute for Sustainable Technologies. Content-wise, EAEA members are planning to focus on employability, especially with regard to vocational education. The implementation of the Polish Qualification Framework and the development of the Integrated System of Qualifications will also be among the topic of interest in 2017.

Portugal

With a new government now in place, EAEA Portuguese members note an encouraging atmosphere for the national adult education sector.

Recent developments

With the previous government, no adult education initiatives were funded and civil society was left aside. All validation centres of prior learning were left without funding and most of them had to close. In 2015 a new funding structure was promised which was based on project applications. The funding results were published only this present year (2016).

On a positive note, the change of government has a potential to transform the adult education sector in Portugal. The new government cooperates with civil society and EAEA members. Additionally, because of the recreation of the umbrella organisation for adult education, a short manifesto was launched and adult education was efficiently put in the agenda.

Challenges

The minister of Education and the Minister of Labour have announced a new adult education programme – Programa Qualificar – which is mainly addressed to the economically active population but focuses predominantly on the employers' needs. EAEA Portuguese members point out that the continuing focus on employability, which is also in line with the European Semester Recommendations (see the annex), pushes aside topics such as life skills, democracy, and participation.

What is also missing at the policy level is a long term strategy defined with other political parties, in a way that would allow a common understanding of key concepts of adult education in Portugal.

More focus on literacy needed

It is estimated that around 500,000 adults in Portugal struggle with reading and writing. Stronger policies on literacy are urgently needed.

Future focus

In 2017, EAEA member Kerigma is planning to organise a national Lifelong Learning Week. The first Lifelong Learning Festival was organised in 2016, with more than 70 organisations and 400 participants (teachers, learners, policy makers as well as Members of the European Parliament).

Romania

EAEA Romanian members explain low participation levels by the lack of national policies on adult education. A new National Lifelong Learning Strategy could change it.

Recent developments

Among the relevant events in 2015, EAEA Romanian members mention the adoption of a National Lifelong Learning Strategy, which includes a methodology regarding the organisation and operation of a community of lifelong learning centres. It covers the period of 2014-2020 and takes the National Qualifications Authority (NCA) as the national coordinator of the project.

The strategy aims to diversify the education and vocational training system by becoming more relevant for the labour market. With that goal in mind, it has identified a number of priority target groups, including: early school leavers; graduates with formal qualifications no longer relevant on the labour market; individuals returning to the country after a period of working abroad; low-skilled adults over the age of 40.

Romanian members also note the launch of the EPAL service in Romania and its support system for accessing information, funding opportunities and dissemination groups.

Pillars of the new National Lifelong Learning Strategy:

- (a) access and incentives for participation***
- (b) quality and relevance***
- (c) partnerships for better information.***

Challenges

EAEA members in Romania agree that the main challenge that adult education faces is the low level of participation in lifelong learning. This is particularly worrying as the lowest rate of participation in training is recorded in rural areas and among employees with low levels of education and professional qualifications.

Adult learning participation in Romania

According to the Education and Training Monitor 2015, only 1.5% of adults participate in learning. It is still far below the European average of 10.7%. The new National Lifelong Learning Strategy aims at a 10% participation rate by 2020.

Such alarming levels could be explained by the fact that Romania spends less public money on education than any other country in the EU. The lack of accurate terminology at the national level also makes it difficult to implement coherent policies, and a national plan on the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult learning could help achieve higher participation levels.

Some members have called for pushing adult education into the public agenda and giving an active and meaningful role to the National Coordinators.

Romanian adult education providers also highlight the difficulty of staying on the adult learning market because of the large competition and considering the fact that NGOs are not financed by the state budget.

Future focus

In the years to come, one EAEA member aims to concentrate on trainings for teachers who work in violent contexts and disadvantaged communities.

Another organisation will focus its work on new projects addressed to disadvantaged groups, especially people from rural area, unemployed or people in search of a job. Additionally, the member would like to promote business courses through e-learning platforms and to implement online testing systems to assess language competences.

Russian Federation

With no recognition of adult learning at the policy level, adult education organisations find it increasingly difficult to continue their activities.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Russia express concern over the lack of recognition of adult education at the national level. Even though the Russian Federation Law on Education contains 32 notions, there is no mention of adult education amongst them. It is also excluded from the statistics and reports about education.

With no support at the policy level, adult education is promoted thanks to adult education weeks. In 2015, the event was organised under the theme “Development of multi-cultural tradition of adult education as an essential component of the educational process in our multicultural and multi-confessional country”. 2015 also saw the first Adult Learners’ Week on rural adult education.

Challenges

EAEA Russian members have explained that some of the challenges are caused by global factors, such as developing diversity, digital environment, growing inequalities, need for key and transversal skills. In Russia, adult education also faces specific country conditions, first and foremost due to the weak legislation. Additional and important factors are the social and economic shifts. However, the general challenge is to resist a manipulative paradigm in education and instead develop critical thinking among adult learners.

Other difficulties include developing recognition mechanisms of prior non-formal learning and building a bridge between the formal and non-formal education. The extreme rigidity of the formal education system makes it impossible to establish any kind of connections with the system of non-formal education. Therefore, encouraging cooperation between the formal and non-formal education systems is as much as a serious challenge as a part of the solution.

Future focus

During the Adult Learners’ Week 2016, EAEA Russian members will focus on intersectorial and inter-departmental interaction in the development of adult education, with special attention paid to the intergenerational and multicultural programs.

Adult Learners Week 2017

The next Adult Learners Week in the Russian Federation will be organised around the theme of “Unity in Diversity: The movement of the country to the learning community”.

Serbia

New regulations have the potential of creating a lasting change for adult education in Serbia. Civil society is currently exploring the opportunities of community education.

Recent developments

A few policy developments that took place in 2015 have the potential of changing the adult education sector in Serbia. The Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development issued a subsidiary act regulating non-formal adult education.

The new bylaws of the Adult Education Law

The new regulations define the conditions (in terms of programs, staff, space, equipment and teaching tools) under which institutions and organisations can gain status of a publicly recognized organizer for non-formal adult education activities. These measures can increase the quality of adult education as well as give a clear view under which circumstances adult education can take place.

Also last year, a draft National Strategy was prepared to create an enabling environment for civil society development in the Republic of Serbia. Still, EAEA members are waiting for the adoption of this document, which could improve the situation of non-formal education within civil society sector.

As Serbia is one of the transit country for refugees, in 2015 EAEA members and their associates undertook initiatives to help refugees. The main activity consisted in reporting about this topic through EPALE and Elm magazine. Furthermore, Serbian adult education organisations interacted with the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights.

Challenges

The main issue for the upcoming period is the implementation of the bylaws related to the Adult Education Law. The implementation of the action plan of the Strategy for Education Development in Serbia 2020 is also needed.

EAEA members have also mentioned the cuts in financial support to NGOs, which have made it more difficult to provide sustainability to smaller organisations.

With labour markets transformation, with the demand for skills changing and with the need of intercultural understanding, the education system needs to adapt so that it can cope with the continuing geopolitical changes. Informal learning activities, exchange and sharing opinions can make a positive impact on social cohesion.

A push for entrepreneurship among adult population is an important motivator for gaining skills related for self-employment in a country characterized with a high unemployment rate. Visible cross border cooperation in adult education, especially with Croatia and Kosovo, will promote EU integration process, will encourage the whole region and will provide better support for refugees.

Future focus

For the period of 2016/2017, EAEA member Adult Education Society aims to undertake research on the question of refugees in partnership with national and international organizations. The aim is to not only report, but also open a global and national dialogue. The organization will continue to be present at conferences and consultations about refugees.

The association also intends to implement a quality assurance system for trainers who are working in adult education based and supported by Swiss SVEB. Since AES already has an accredited trainer, training programmes and a partners' network, it will soon start implementing a project which synchronizes the legislation on adult education while taking care of the market situation and needs.

An online catalogue to be launched

The Adult Education Society is planning to launch an online catalogue of educational programmes and learning activities. The aim is to support transparency in advertising commercial programmes and to provide better visibility of non-commercial opportunities for knowledge exchange and adult learning.

Another goal will be to establish, using good international examples, an adequate community learning model for local communities in Serbia via capacity building. This way, the members could implement some trends that are already present internationally (such as maker spaces, learning circles, learning cities). The annual Adult Learning Festival will be one of the ways to advocate for and promote the new learning model.

Slovakia

There has been quite a number of interesting developments affecting adult education in Slovakia, some of which can be seen as steps forward and others as holdups. The cooperation of stakeholders, NGOs, public and private sector is essential to achieve a consistent progress in the adult education sector.

Recent developments

Slovakia has seen adult learning achieving greater recognition partly thanks to the RENEWAL project coordinated by EAEA, which focused on strengthening the European Agenda for Adult Learning in the Southern and Central Eastern Regions.

At the policy level, the Law on Lifelong Learning adopted in 2009 has been amended several times and a new law, drafted by the National Institute for Lifelong Learning, was expected in 2015. Unfortunately, private providers and civil society were left out of the first stage of the consultation process and the law was not finalized. In consequence, the new cross-sectoral working group was established to draft the law, but met only once in 2015 and following the parliamentary elections in March 2016 the situation remains unclear. Therefore, for now the new law on LLL is expected in the 2018. The new Manifesto of the Government leaves hope for improvement.

The new Manifesto of the Government was launched in 2016. It aims not only to prepare a new law on further education, but also to create conditions for a functioning system of recognition of qualifications of non-formal and informal learning.

During the Lifelong Learning Week conference, representatives of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour declared their will to cooperate with civil society representatives and involve EAEA members in the Slovak Republic into working groups focused on adult learning. The conference was also the occasion to launch the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) in Slovakia.

Challenges

Adult education participation, raising awareness and quality assurance seem to remain the main challenges facing the sector in Slovakia. EAEA Slovakian members also indicate a lack of a systematic financial tool which would support adult education.

While the European Social Fund is an important source, in the previous period the funds were used mainly on national projects implemented by ministerial institutions, leaving aside private companies and NGOs. Access for all stakeholders and mutual communication will be crucial for an effective implementation of the programme.

The legislation that governs training is highly fragmented and lacks a basic law on adult education. Moreover, inconsistent and imprecise terminology used in existing laws cause confusion and delays, for example when approving the referencing report of Slovak National Qualifications Framework to the EQF.

Future focus

The Lifelong Learning Week in Slovakia will represent an important opportunity to promote adult education at the national and regional level. Conferences, workshops, seminars, as well as other educational and promotional activities will take place in all regions of the country.

Slovenia

Quality assurance, guidance and recognition of prior learning are the recurring themes in the Slovenian report. Members stress the importance of reaching out to groups that might be unaware of existing opportunities.

Recent developments

Several changes occurred since 1996 when the Adult Education Act (AEA) was adopted, making its revision very much needed. Therefore, the Slovenian EAEA members have been preparing a background document to amend the AEA, which determines the fundamental principles of adult education in Slovenia.

EAEA members also have also noted several developments in the area of quality assurance. By far the most important initiative was the development of self-evaluation and expert external processes at the providers' level within the national network of quality counsellors.

Guidance for adult learners

EAEA member SIAE was involved in two major initiatives:

- ***Guidance for Adults – a project that involved 20 adult education centres, which provided counselling to adults and ultimately reached out to almost 3,000 adults.***
- ***GOAL – an Erasmus+ project, which aims to set up educational services for low educated adults in six countries across Europe, including Slovenia.***

EAEA members have also mentioned the new approach to promoting adult/lifelong learning that has been developed in the past three years, namely the Learning parade – Days of learning communities. In 2016, it has become a constituent part of the Lifelong Learning Week and has received financial support from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

In 2015, many professional events at the local level were carried out by major providers of adult education with the aim to identify existing practice in the field of raising adult skills, to disseminate results and to collect opinions of stakeholders on how this practice could improve. That said, more awareness raising activities should be developed to boost the profile of adult education.

Challenges

Among the challenges for the years to come, EAEA members have mentioned increasing the participation of adults – especially vulnerable groups – in education and training. Offering educators further training on how to motivate adults could be part of the solution; another idea would be to develop new learning opportunities, free of charge, that would target vulnerable groups.

Adult education organisations in Slovenia have also highlighted the importance of guidance and validation of skills. The regional concept of organised guidance for adults in 14 guidance centres, if maintained, could bring significant benefits in this respect.

The personal dimension of learning is continuously stressed by EAEA members; particularly the fact that validation of skills and recognition of prior learning should constitute an individual right of adults. Instead of only formalizing the process of learning, it should be considered a personal feedback on the learning outcomes. Promoting life stories of successful learners is one of the ways of making the process more attractive.

Future focus

In the upcoming years, EAEA Slovenian members will focus on implementing new programmes for adult educators who work with immigrants; they will also turn their attention to other specific groups, especially with regard to guidance. This focal point can be accomplished by building partnerships with different organisations (at a national and local level) that work the groups in question: the unemployed, older adults, migrants, Roma people.

EAEA member SIAE, active at the policy level, will continue to monitor the implementation of the Annual Plan of Adult Education and will prepare the draft of the new Adult Education Act. The members also underscore the importance of using qualitative and quantitative data in policy work.

At the national level, for the next three years, SIAE will collaborate with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in developing a national system of validation and recognition of prior learning of adults. This is linked to the further implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

More digital skills for trainers

EAEA members are also planning to organise training programmes that would develop digital competences of adult educators. One association points out that digital skills are necessary also considering that the use of ICT can contribute to a larger flexibility of courses.

Spain

Unstable political situation in Spain is the main factor that stops adult education from developing.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Spain state that there have been few developments in the sector at the policy level. In fact, one of the members points out that while a new law on education is currently implemented, adult education does not constitute a significant part of it.

Regardless of the unwelcoming political climate, throughout the past year each of the EAEA members was active in their scope of work. Some focused mainly on migration issues and, among others, organised a training for trainers. Others concentrated on early school leavers and developing digital skills, as well as on international cooperation. One EAEA member turned its attention to citizenship skills.

Challenges

EAEA members single out the political situation in Spain to be the most notable difficulty. Adult education providers find it increasingly difficult to plan their activities even mid-term. EAEA Spanish members wish to see a comprehensive strategy on adult education, one that would include a number of ministries. The ET2020 strategy could be a source of inspiration.

Looking at the Spanish society, the organisations have voiced concern over high early school leaving rates, the relatively low rate of graduates in post-compulsory education as well as insufficient digital competences. Raising awareness about existing opportunities and building multi-stakeholder partnerships is necessary to increase participation rates in lifelong learning.

Future focus

The future aim of EAEA members is to educate and to strengthen different social groups of the Spanish society. This can be achieved by implementing educational projects and programmes as well as by cooperating with local, European and international stakeholders.

Among the activities planned for the years to come, EAEA members list trainings of trainers as well as courses developing basic skills.

The first Adult Learners Week will take place in Girona, most likely in September 2017, and will be organised by EAEA member ACEFIR.

Sweden

EAEA members have stepped up to include refugees in their activities, with encouraging results. At the same time, they recognize the necessity for awareness raising activities about refugees among the general public.

Recent developments

As the numbers of refugees in Sweden steadily increase, study associations have extended their missions in study circles to include asylum seekers. In practice, these study associations have initiated activities on a broad scale focusing on language and social studies in refugee housing units, often in collaboration with their member organisations.

The circle leaders are both employees and non-profit bodies. Some examples of activities include language cafés, grammar sessions, conversational practice, cooking, handicraft, excursions in the forest and country. It was made possible thanks to a special government grant for those studies.

EAEA member in Sweden has promoted the funding opportunities offered in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, whose priorities are usually aligned with the ET2020 objectives. The EAEA member and its respective members are currently developing the use of social media to share information and interact with their target groups: politicians, journalists, educators and participators. This includes photos, films and streaming lectures, debates and meetings.

Challenges

There is a great demand from the asylum participants to develop their knowledge of the Swedish language and to become active in the community. This is coupled with an increasing need for adult education to inform Swedes about the asylum seekers' situation, background and culture. The role of study associations and study circles in the process should not be underestimated.

Future focus

Taking account of the aforementioned challenges, EAEA members are planning to focus on adult education for and about refugees. The organisation also intends to work on employment training for young adults, digital inclusion as well as art and culture for all, including music and literacy.

In the autumn of 2015, 73,500 people who had applied for asylum participated in the activities of study circles.

Switzerland

Switzerland has seen some positive developments in adult education at the policy level, with a new law on adult learning now adopted. The implementation of the law might be challenging.

Recent developments

EAEA members in Switzerland report that the Swiss government has adopted the first comprehensive law on adult learning. It provides a framework for all departments, such as health, labour, culture, migration. The new law prioritizes the development of basic skills, with some funds earmarked for this purpose.

Challenges

Implementation of the new law on adult learning will certainly represent a challenge for the sector. The EAEA Swiss members suggest working on quality assurance, trainings for trainers as well as validation of skills. Limited funding for adult education remains an issue.

Future focus

In the upcoming years, EAEA members will concentrate on raising awareness of adult education, most notably by organising an adult learners' week and by promoting their activities on a new website. The members will also continue working on EU projects as well as national projects, particularly with regard to the development of basic skills and digital competences.

Turkey

The assessment system for adult education, the access to lifelong learning opportunities within a variety of innovative methods and the integration of refugees and immigrants are among topical issues in the sector. EAEA members have noted that these can only be tackled if all interested parties work in harmony and in cooperation.

Recent developments

In Turkey, a Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper and an Action Plan were prepared to increase effectiveness and efficiency of lifelong learning system on the European Adult Education Agenda. Both documents will be valid between 2014 and 2018.

Four axes of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper:

- (a) supporting the LLL culture generation and raising awareness in the society;***
- (b) increasing LLL access, opportunities and provisions;***
- (c) creating a Lifelong Guidance and counselling system;***
- (d) developing the system of evaluation of prior learning by monitoring LLL system.***

Integration of asylum seekers and migrants has been the most important issue for the whole Europe as well as for adult education. In order to find a possible solution, relevant activities should be led by adult education centres, effective in all areas of social life. Adult education providers in Turkey try to find new approaches to contribute to the integration process of migrants and refugees through educational trainings and projects.

EAEA Turkish members have also noted that the attractiveness of adult education is currently on the rise due to the demographic change and increasing unemployment rates. New innovative teaching methods, particularly in the non-formal sector, have also boosted the appeal of adult learning.

A notable example is the increasing popularity of distance and mobile learning, as they provide equal opportunities for everybody to access education. Theatrical, artistic and role-play methods are also becoming more and more common in adult education.

Challenges

EAEA members in Turkey have listed a number of challenges that the adult education sector is now facing. The members point out that the rapidly changing Turkish society requires more focus on digital literacy skills and more integration measures for refugees. Among the priorities organisations mention reaching out to seasonal workers and adults living in rural areas, as well as more vocational guidance and counselling services for adults.

The members also underline the difficulty of cooperation in a sector with such a vast number of stakeholders, that include public and private institutions, universities, municipalities and NGOs.

Future focus

EAEA members in Turkey have established three main strategic objectives for 2016/2017: increasing access, improving the quality and capacity building of lifelong learning. More specifically, this will mean more focus on studies and projects for the integration of refugees and immigrants and more awareness raising activities, especially targeting disadvantaged groups.

EAEA members are also planning to develop, to implement and to be partner in projects that support capacity building of individuals and organisations towards the development of human resources. Finally, they intend to carry out trainings and project work aimed at increasing employability.

United Kingdom

EAEA members point out that Impact Forums organised in each of the UK administrations make a significant contribution to adult education policies. More evidence-based advocacy work is still needed to make sure that sufficient funds are earmarked for the sector.

Recent developments

In terms of developments at the policy level, EAEA British members point out that adult learning and skills in the UK operate in a devolved policy system across the country. This means that European initiatives play out differently in each of the four UK administrations. That said, since 2012 EAEA member National Learning and Work Institute has been the UK National Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult learning, working alongside 31 other countries to have a strategic impact on adult learning policy development in Europe and across the UK.

With respect to policy work, EAEA members have highlighted the importance of Impact Forums, which give an opportunity to present research papers as well as policy and guidance from different governance perspectives. The Impact Forums were formally recognized by the European Commission evaluators as key to contribute to both national and EU policies.

In 2015, EAEA member L&W also continued to work on its Citizens' Curriculum, using it in different contexts and implementing a measurement framework. The organisation also delivered a range of projects to improve the support for adult carers to access education, training and employment. Another important theme was preparing offenders for release and resettlement, also by developing a relevant digital offer.

Festival of Learning

Previously named the Adult Learners' Week, the event is organised annually by the National Learning and Work Institute. With 2,500 Have a Go activities, the festival helps adults find motivation to learn something new. The campaign is widely promoted by the BBC.

Challenges

The England Devolution Agenda, which foresees devolution of a single adult education budget to local level by 2018/19, is certainly a challenge for the sector. EAEA members are hoping that this could allow to shift the focus from higher education to adult education, as the sector remains grossly underfunded. The members also highlight that local commissioners and stakeholders will now need to make sure they have the most appropriate data and evidence to make informed decisions about adult learners.

Research findings on adult learning should be contextualised to maximize their effect. Ideally, the policies should reach out to all constituents, not just those already in the labour market but also those who are the furthest away from both learning and work.

Increasing participation levels among low-skilled adults is particularly important; the lack of basic skills increasingly locks people out of opportunity and society. Global changes, such as advances in technology and changes in the market, are also increasing the importance of ensuring everyone in society has a basic platform of skills. Similar conclusions can be found in the European Semester Recommendations for Ireland (see the annex).

Around 1 in 6 adults in the UK struggles with reading and writing; 1 in 4 finds maths difficult. 850,000 people living in Britain are not proficient in speaking English.

Future focus

EAEA member L&W will continue to focus on its successful Citizens' Curriculum, advocating for its commission by local governments, as it aims to ensure everyone has the English, maths, ESOL, digital, civic, health and financial capabilities they need.

The innovative approach taps into what motivates adults to learn, through careful contextualization and delivering an integrated curriculum offer, ensuring that more people are learning skills which are relevant to their lives and their work.

In the upcoming years, L&W is planning to work with providers and awarding bodies to design provision that embeds this approach. It will also continue to develop programmes of "Improving Life Chances" for those furthest away from learning and work. The institute will also continue supporting the European Agenda for Adult learning.

Ukraine

Political changes in Ukraine have led to more interest in adult education, with current decentralization reforms offering more opportunities for civil society.

Recent developments

EAEA members and partners in Ukraine report the political situation to have had an immense influence on recognition of adult education. Current decentralization reforms in Ukraine have led to more discussions on the role of civil society in communities and its dialogue with the authorities.

EAEA partners also feel an increasing interest in scientific development of research in the field of adult education. This can be seen through some recent activities: Forum "European Union - Ukraine: Adult Education", the International Adult Education Days followed by the publication of its collection materials, the launch of a specialized magazine on Adult Education called "Territory of Success".

That said, it must be admitted that there is no mass understanding among Ukrainian population of the European Agenda for Adult learning, though the first steps were made during 2015. Specialists in adult education and lifelong learning were involved in several discussions together with the European colleagues on different aspects and approaches. The EAEA "Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century" was translated into Ukrainian, published and distributed among a wide circle of organizations.

EAEA members and partners have also been active in working with internally displaced persons. While one organisation provides workplace, psychological training and computer literacy classes, another Ukrainian partner recently implemented a project with DVV International Ukraine that distributed micro-grants to local organisations working with IDPs.

A Ukrainian project wins the 2016 Grundtvig Award

From Destruction to Creation – such was the theme of a project run by the Integration and Development Centre for Information and Research, in cooperation with DVV International Ukraine. To facilitate the integration of internationally displaced persons, the project disbursed sixteen mini-grants for participatory civic initiatives, implemented by local organisations.

Challenges

At the policy level, EAEA partners from Ukraine expect certain changes regarding the legal basis for adult education. The new umbrella law on education will contain special articles that will regulate the adult education field. This, in turn, could serve as a basis for a future law on adult education.

There have also been discussions about opening a special department within the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, which would implement a systemic approach to adult education. Those tasks will certainly represent a challenge for the sector.

EAEA collaborators also raise concern over the continuing lack of funding for adult education. This directly influences their ability to participate in international conferences and projects. Another notable problem is the lack of opportunities for professional development. More specifically, there is a need to introduce the speciality of an andragogue at universities as well as in the classification of occupations. This would not only raise visibility of the role of adult education, but also contribute to quality assurance in adult education.

Future focus

Ukrainian members and partners will turn their focus to monitoring the Adult Education Law. Some EAEA partners will also develop a programme for training specialists at universities, as well as a programme or senior citizens.

Other organizations will focus on communication within multicultural communities in Ukraine through innovative adult education services and initiatives. It will also be achieved thanks to a training programme in a School of Cultural Management and a re-granting scheme for local civil society projects.

Annex

European Semester Recommendations

2016

Excerpts

Austria

The high influx of refugees experienced in the past year has a number of social and economic consequences for Austria. While in the short run, the inflow of refugees is set to increase public expenditure and to create additional domestic demand, the medium-term effect on employment and growth hinges on refugees' successful labour market and social integration, including via educational support.

Belgium

Certain members have seen major political changes which have shifted the potential directions that policies on adult education might take. Such is the case of Portugal, where recent elections fostered a more encouraging environment for non-formal adult education. At the same time, unstable political situation and upcoming parliamentary elections are a source of concern for EAEA members in Spain and Lithuania.

Croatia

The problem of high inactivity is compounded by high unemployment; the low utilisation of the labour potential holds back growth. Youth unemployment remains a key concern, pointing to weaknesses in the education system, and there is still room to improve the effectiveness, monitoring and evaluation of the Youth Guarantee. Long-term unemployment rates have fallen recently but are still about twice the EU average. Participation in lifelong learning remains very low, due to an underdeveloped adult education system.

Denmark

Labour market inclusion and improving the employability of disadvantaged groups remain a challenge. This particularly applies to people with a non-EU migrant background, including those who have resided longer in Denmark, and young people with low educational attainment.

Finland

The arrival of a comparatively large number of migrants and refugees in Finland in 2015 could serve to counter the effects of population ageing, but only if they are successfully integrated into the labour market and the education system.

France

In 2015, the unemployment rate increased to 10.4%. Unemployment is higher among young people non-EU nationals and less qualified workers. (...) The offer of training for the unemployed, less qualified workers and SME employees remains insufficient, despite the ongoing vocational training reforms, including on governance, incentives and counselling and the new targeted unemployed training plan. (...) The upcoming personal activity account may help to rebalance access.

Hungary

Early school leaving remains high among Roma. Hungary has introduced a number of measures that aim to address low-achievement more effectively. However, important details on the implementation of these measures are not available, making it difficult to assess their potential impact. A systemic approach to promoting inclusive mainstream education has yet to be developed. (...) The transition between different forms and stages of education remains difficult and recent reforms in vocational education might further hinder transitions.

Ireland

Skills mismatches remain and skills shortages have emerged in certain areas, while upskilling and reskilling opportunities remain insufficient, and the decrease in education expenditure could have a negative impact on educational outcomes in the future.

Poland

Although the education system has improved significantly in recent years, it still fails to equip pupils sufficiently with the transversal skills needed for the rapidly changing labour market and innovation. (...) According to employers, graduates lack transversal skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, or teamwork. Participation in lifelong learning is low, and vocational education and training do not correspond to market needs.

Portugal

Absorbing the large pool of long-term unemployed remains a challenge, negatively affecting economic growth and the social situation. The barriers to cooperation between universities and the business sector are high, due to both regulatory and bureaucratic obstacles and the lack of incentives for cooperation in the academic system. This is detrimental to the employability of graduates and to innovation.

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Lire et Ecrire

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Bulgaria

Innovative Community Centres Association

Croatia

Association for the Promotion and Development PAR (PAR Association)

Denmark

DAEA - Danish Adult Education Association

Estonia

Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA)

Finland

Finnish Adult Education Association

France

INFREP/ La ligue de l'enseignement

Georgia

Georgian Adult Education Network (GAEN)

Germany

Agentur für Erwachsenen- und Weiterbildung

Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV)

KEB Deutschland (Catholic Adult Education of Germany)

Greece

DAFNI KEK

Hungary

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Iceland

LEKIN

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Adult Education Foundation

Lithuania

Adult Education Foundation

Macedonia

Lifelong Learning Center

Moldova

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Radio ECCA

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Switzerland

Swiss federation of adult learning

Turkey

International Lifelong Learning Association

Ukraine

Integration and Development Center for Information and Research (IDCIR)

Public Union "Ukrainian Association of Adult Education"

Romania

Asociatia Euro Adult Education

Center for Promoting Lifelong Learning

UK

National Learning and Work Institute

Manifesto for **Adult Learning** *in the 21st Century*

Adult education has a role to play when it comes to:

1. Active citizenship, democracy & participation



People who participate in adult education have more trust in the political system, participate more in society, by voting, by volunteering or taking active roles in communities.

2. Life skills for individuals



Adult learners feel healthier, lead healthier lifestyles, build new social networks and experience improved well-being.

3. Social cohesion, equity and equality



Adult education provides many opportunities to equalise societies on a larger scale and to create economic growth.

4. Employment and digitalisation



Workplace learning is one of the key drivers for adults' participation in lifelong learning. Adult education can also help in closing the digital gap.

5. Migration and demographic change



Civic education and intercultural learning can create integration friendly cultures. Language and basic skills training will enable migrants to become active citizens. Learning seniors are more active, volunteer more, work longer and are healthier.

6. Sustainability



European citizens need information and innovative spaces to develop new lifestyles, new projects, new approaches. Adult education can help provide the information, the debate spaces and enable the creativity.

7. European policies



Adult education contributes to main European strategies in the field of growth, employment, innovation, equity, social cohesion, active citizenship, poverty reduction, climate change internal market, migration, peace and more.

Go to the EAEA website to read the full Manifesto (available in 15 languages) and to order a printed copy!



**EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS**

**European Association for the Education of Adults
(EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education
in Europe.**

EAEA is a European NGO with 141 member organisations in 45 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.

EAEA promotes adult learning and access to and participation in non-formal adult education for all, particularly for groups currently under-represented.

EAEA's MAIN ROLES

- **Policy advocacy for lifelong learning at European level**
- **Development of practice through projects, publications and training**
- **Provision of information and services for our members**
- **International cooperation**

**THE VOICE OF ADULT
EDUCATION IN EUROPE**



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

**ADULT EDUCATION
IN EUROPE 2016**

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