



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

EAEA RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

[The European Association for the Education of Adults](#) welcomes the European Commission's proposal for a [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). Together with [Social Platform](#), EAEA has always promoted a more social Europe as well as Eurozone that would not only be a monetary union but also a social one.

As representative of non-formal adult education associations across Europe, EAEA sees access to quality lifelong learning as crucial for the further and sustainable development of Europe. We therefore propose policy coherence and even a strengthening of the policies that have been proposed in the area of lifelong learning and adult education. The implementation of the [European Agenda for adult learning](#), validation systems that take non-formal (adult) learning into account and the newly proposed [Skills Guarantee](#) are important to raise the skills levels in Europe, to increase participation in learning and to promote competitiveness, social cohesion and inclusion in Europe but also the personal development and well-being of people in Europe.

The staff working document (SWD 2016), 51 final, p. 11) cites an aging population as one of the challenges for European welfare states. There is convincing evidence that adult education has enormously positive effects for (older) people's well-being. On the one hand, continuous workplace learning will sustain the productivity of workers over a longer period. Non-formal learning beyond the working life also keeps people healthier, more active and more involved in society.

Adult education also helps newly arrived people to learn the host language and to train professionally. Additionally, many initiatives promote intercultural learning so that understanding and cohesion among different groups are achieved.

EAEA would like to comment on two specific sub-chapters in the **First preliminary outline of a European Pillar of Social Rights** and then make one more general point.

First, on chapter I.1.a.

EAEA agrees in general with the recommendation

"All persons shall have access to quality education and training throughout the life course to acquire an adequate level of basic skills and key competences for active participation in society and employment. Low skilled young people and working age adults shall be encouraged to up-grade their skills."

Nevertheless, EAEA proposes some improvements, based on the following remarks:

"Low skilled young people and working age adults shall be encouraged" – by using this terminology, we are putting the responsibility for upskilling to the individual. EAEA would like to underline that,



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in order to participate in upskilling, the following preconditions are necessary:

- A lifelong learning system needs to be in place that is actually able to provide the adequate learning offer;
- The quality of this offer needs to be ensured by well-trained teachers / trainers;
- Guidance and counselling needs to be available so that people can make the right choices;
- Validation needs to be available so that those willing to undertake upskilling are able to start at the most appropriate step for them and do not waste any time studying skills they have already acquired elsewhere;
- EAEA believes that 'encouragement' is probably not enough to convince low-skilled people (younger and older) to participate in learning. Many of them have had bad experiences in the formal education system and will actively avoid being put back into such a system. What is therefore necessary are outreach activities in combination with non-formal learning offers;
- In order to achieve high-quality lifelong learning systems, appropriate funding is necessary;
- EAEA also believes that the encouragement, or better, outreach, should not stop with the end of the working life. As pointed out earlier, lifelong learning has enormously positive effects (not only) for older people, so in order to alleviate the consequences of demographic change, lifelong learning should be a high priority for them.

EAEA therefore proposes the following change:

"All persons shall have access to quality education and training throughout the life course to acquire an adequate level of basic skills and key competences for participation in society and employment. Suitable lifelong learning systems that include guidance, validation & recognition of prior learning and outreach should enable especially low skilled young people and working age adults, but also older people, to up-grade their skills and participate in learning activities."

Chapter I.4.

The outline very rightly identifies "measures to develop, skills, qualifications or work experience to enable entering into new occupations" as important. EAEA would like to underline that active labour market policies can use unemployment periods to upskill people rather than financing companies for inserting them into the labour market. EAEA would like to see a much stronger emphasis on learning and upskilling in this particular chapter.



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The role of civil society

Together with our platforms, [Lifelong Learning Platform](#) and [Social Platform](#), EAEA would like to underline the importance of civil society. Civil society organisations are essential at all governance levels, in the design, monitoring and implementation of programmes and policies related to skills, education and lifelong learning. They can promote and implement effective inclusive education and active labour market policies, which is especially necessary for groups that face disadvantages. Civil society is most important for a social, learning, democratic and highly skilled Europe.

More information

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The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 141 member organisations in 45 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.