



EAEA response

## Public Consultation on the “Recommendation on Promoting social inclusion and shared values through formal and non-formal learning” July 2017

EAEA welcomes the **Open Public Consultation on “Promoting social inclusion and shared values through formal and non-formal learning”** and agrees with the importance of the issues raised by the consultation. EAEA would particularly highlight the **necessity to include adults and adult education and learning** within the scope of the consultation and consequently the relevant policies. Non-formal adult education is **an essential channel to transmit values and promote social cohesion**, and this role should be recognized by linking the Upskilling Pathways adult education strategy and the social inclusion strategy to one another.

### Adult education promotes social inclusion and European values

Recent voting behaviour (e.g. UK) demonstrates that it is often older people who are more sceptical when it comes to shared European values. On the other hand, there are a number of traditions in adult education when it comes to active participation and democracy that have contributed enormously to social inclusion, empowerment of citizens and the democratic development of the respective countries. Given that it has played such roles, adult education could be used today as a way to promote European values to older people.

As examples of adult education traditions which have fostered social inclusion and shared values, we would like to highlight study circles<sup>1</sup> in the Nordic countries, which have been playing a pivotal role in encouraging democratic debates and opinion forming, making it possible for citizens to learn how to take part in the processes needed in democratic societies. This model has been exported to many other countries<sup>2</sup>.

The German-speaking countries, where adult education has a long tradition as well, have been working successfully with the concept of ‘politische Bildung’ for decades. ‘Politische Bildung’, often translated as ‘civic education’ or ‘citizenship education’, aims to equip people with the tools and instruments needed to become active citizens engaged in democratic processes and involved in their own governance<sup>3</sup>. These tools and instruments encompass, among others, social skills, critical media literacy, and intercultural competences.

---

<sup>1</sup> Larsson, S./Nordvall, H. (2010): Study Circles in Sweden. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press. <http://liu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:328351/FULLTEXT01>

<sup>2</sup> Bjerkaker, S. (2003): The Study Circle – a method for learning, a tool for democracy. Paper for the FACE Annual Conference 2003. <http://www.face.stir.ac.uk/documents/Paper109Bjerkader.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Massing, P. (1999): Theoretische und normative Grundlagen politischer Bildung. In: Beer, W. et al. (ed.): Handbuch politische Erwachsenenbildung. Schwalbach/Ts.: Wochenschau Verlag, p. 26ff



### Social inclusion means considering all age groups

Evidence, in particular from countries outside of Europe in the so-called “Global South”, shows that social inclusion works best if all age groups are considered in education. While children and young people will eventually be the adults of tomorrow and will have internalised the shared values of European countries through their education, any educational efforts that promote social inclusion have to include the adults of today who act as multipliers of shared values in their families, social groups, work places etc. Non-formal adult education and learning promotes social inclusion by speaking to learners from various groups of society and age groups, and reaching out to **disadvantaged groups**, enabling everyone to participate and empowering those who are furthest away from the centre of society.

### Non-formal adult education methodologies can create safe spaces for citizens

EAEA believes that it is very timely and even urgent to renew a European effort to strengthen democracy, respect, intercultural / interreligious / intergenerational learning at all levels. Educational institutions need to be and become **safe spaces for meetings and debates** where information but especially opinion forming based on facts as well as exchanges and democratic methodologies are practiced and developed. As the study circles mentioned above demonstrate, most of this can be achieved by employing **non-formal adult education** methodologies that bring together people with different backgrounds, thereby promoting social cohesion.

### EAEA calls for policy coherence in adult education and lifelong learning

To ensure policy coherence in the field of adult education and lifelong learning, EAEA proposes to **link any initiative in the Upskilling Pathways with the social inclusion strategy**, and vice versa. Furthermore, EAEA urges to foresee a link between **basic skills training and civic education and learning**, as adult education providers and organisations have been doing for a long time.

EAEA agrees with the Lifelong Learning Platform in calling for the following aspects to be highlighted:

- **Empowering, preparing and supporting teachers and educators** in formal, non-formal and informal education to deal with diversity and create inclusive spaces of learning
- Encouraging **dialogue and cooperation between the different learning environments and forms of education** to promote a holistic approach to education and respond to current and future societal challenges
- Encouraging awareness-raising about shared values **among learners of all ages** to enhance intercultural understanding and solidarity
- Helping people understand their role as responsible and active members of European societies by raising awareness and informing them about their **rights and responsibilities** as well as shared values of the European Union
- Encouraging participation in **non-formal and informal learning opportunities** and volunteering as well as creating more opportunities for civic engagement
- Supporting a **democratic learning environment** to allow learners to experience democratic values and mutual respect



In addition to these points, we would like to remind the conclusions that EAEA together with other LLLP members developed during the Civil Society Day in 2017 on that topic, and especially the conclusions from the chapter on governance:

- All institutions and stakeholders at all levels need a common innovative and future-oriented, comprehensive and sustainable strategy for inclusive education
  - Underlying **principle: Inclusion is excellence**
  - Education should be founded on the **principle of cooperation** and not competition
  - Elaborate a common definition of what inclusive education is, in order to get all institutions and stakeholders at all levels to get on board
- Inclusive education is a priority and needs clearly accountable leaders in charge
  - A coordinated governance should include a rethinking and possibly a **redefinition of the role of all implicated institutions**
  - Enable/support governments to use/implement **cutting-edge solutions** to compensate for market forces
- Coordinating governance: structured dialogue and capacity building mechanisms (with appropriate funding) to bridge government, at EU and national levels, civil society and other stakeholders
  - Only a **coordinating governance** will be able to implement this long-term strategy
  - This means organising tools for governments to **consult and cooperate with civil society organisations**, thus giving access to the grassroots level, channelling down European policies to the local level. Ask Member States to introduce **information and communication technologies to broadly consult** civil society organisations and citizens.

### More information

**Contact:** Gina Ebner, EAEA Secretary-General, +32 02 893 25 24, [gina.ebner@eaea.org](mailto:gina.ebner@eaea.org).

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