



THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS AND THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA

EAEA response
December 2017

[The European Association for the Education of Adults \(EAEA\)](#) welcomes the proclamation of [the European Pillar of Social Rights](#) in Gothenburg on 17 November. EAEA has, together with its civil society friends and partners, long proposed more focus on social Europe and on the needs and aspirations of people living in Europe. EAEA welcomes the fact that education, training and lifelong learning are the first principle of the pillar. This recognises the fundamental role of learning and access to education and training for social inclusion and social cohesion across Europe.

The Pillar must urgently move from proclamation to implementation. EAEA agrees that a Road Map that will direct it is necessary. Cooperation with civil society will also be a key success factor for the Pillar, and EAEA is prepared to work with its members, partners and stakeholders to create a more Social Europe.

EAEA also welcomes the proposal for a [European Education Area](#) – EAEA has long advocated for a strong lifelong learning strand when it comes to the future of Europe.

Having said that, we regret that the European Commission talks about ‘education’ rather than lifelong learning. Education usually refers to formal and initial education which takes place in schools and universities, and so does not take account of the wide range of non-formal learning taking place in the wider community across a range of settings. For there to be real progress in how Europe approaches learning, then it is **important that we recognise and encompass all forms of learning for everyone.**

This leads on to the next point that EAEA would like to raise, that of policy coherence. EAEA proposes to **link the European Education Area more closely with existing policies** in the area of lifelong learning, for example the policies in support of flexible learning pathways and those related to validation.

A strong and ambitious strategy in the area of education and skills can only work with **appropriate governance structures on all levels.** A number of DGs are concerned by the issues raised, including DG EAC and DG EMPL, but also:

- DG HOME and JUST for migration, democracy and fundamental rights
- DG SANTE for the relation between learning and health
- DG CONNECT for the impact of digitalisation and digital learning and
- DG DEVCO for development education, global citizenship education



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

EAEA proposes that the European Commission establish a governance structure that enables the communication, cooperation and collaboration between the DGs which would also include stakeholders such as civil society organisations and social partners.

From an 'adult' perspective, EAEA is delighted with the proposal to raise the participation of adults in lifelong learning to 25% by 2025. It is absolutely necessary to increase participation in general but particularly of those adults with low basic skills. EAEA hopes that [the Upskilling Pathways initiative](#) will contribute and enable member states, regions and municipalities to strengthen their efforts. In order to implement this ambitious goal, **additional investment in adult learning opportunities will be necessary**. EAEA therefore suggests that the European Commission also proposes a **benchmark of expenditure specifically for adults** and leads by good example in increasing the [Erasmus+](#) and [European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#) expenditure for adults' participation in lifelong learning accordingly.

Finally, EAEA recommends **strengthening and supporting civil society organisations in lifelong learning** in order to progress. Especially in the non-formal area of lifelong learning, umbrella organisations of sectoral organisations can be enormously beneficial for capacity-building, advocacy and innovation, which is exactly what Europe needs for better education, training and lifelong learning systems.

[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 142 member organisations in 44 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.