



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

## EAEA RECOMMENDATIONS ON PIAAC A WAKE-UP CALL FOR EUROPE!

Based on the [PIAAC results](#), EAEA recognizes three scenarios that Europe faces unless these issues are tackled. We see adult education having a key role in overcoming these challenges and thus offer a set of recommended actions.

### 1. Scenario: Europe of unequally skilled adults

PIAAC shows that in average 20 % of the EU adult population have low literacy and numeracy skills. Literacy as a continuum is the most significant foundation for an active participation in a rapidly changing society. Urgent action is needed to improve literacy across Europe and prevent the divide between generations.

#### EAEA recommended actions

- **Increased public investment in adult learning!** Public investment in adult education and learning is crucial especially for those who left initial education without any qualifications and those who are living in poor households.
- **Campaigns underlining the personal and social benefits of non-formal learning!** We call on all politicians, policy makers, social partners and companies to reflect on European-wide and national campaigns to promote lifelong learning across Europe. The campaigns should underline the social benefits of adult education, such as improved health, social cohesion, higher self-esteem, active citizenship and wellbeing.
- **Cooperation between different stakeholders!** In order to tackle the European-wide problem of low literacy among persons of all ages, close cooperation between governmental and civil society organisations is needed to raise awareness, develop appropriate measures and make use of the synergies of all social actors. A number of actors need to contribute more to adult learning in Europe:
  - a. **Social partners:** Both employers' and employees' representatives can be a driving force in the education and training of workers.
  - b. **Companies:** Skilled workers, whose competencies are kept up-to-date and who have a chance to develop professionally within their company, are the main assets of firms. Companies that invest in training and education have a much higher chance to survive and prosper in the competitive markets today.



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- c. **Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs):** Investing in training is often a challenge for SMEs (limited time, personal and financial resources). EAEA would like to underline that there are many good practice examples for solutions to such problems. We propose an increased and strategic dissemination of these good practices among SMEs. Even and especially for SMEs, education and training can make a big difference for their competitiveness.

## 2. Scenario: Europe of socially excluded groups

PIAAC found that in most countries, immigrants with a foreign-language background have significantly lower proficiency in literacy and numeracy than native-born adults. Low educational attainment combined with poor proficiency in the language of the host country can hinder integration into the society. PIAAC also shows a close relationship between the information processing skills and age. Europe thus faces a threat of socially excluded groups.

### EAEA recommended actions

- **‘One size does not fit all’ approach!** Learning offers should be tailor-made so that they are relevant to the groups concerned. Different under-represented groups may need special measures to attract them back to learning (e.g. migrants, older people, prisoners, etc.). Innovative and successful projects set up to attract particular groups are often short lived because of short-term funding and the methodologies not being mainstreamed.
- **Attention to older learners!** Special attention should be paid to the age groups of 50 + when it comes to adult learning. In the future, Europeans will live and work longer, therefore more efforts, support, knowledge, outreach and funding are needed so that older people can and will participate in learning. Research also shows that liberal adult education helps to reduce health care costs.
- **Ensuring that adults can go “One step up”!** We call for an initiative that will qualify a certain number or percentage of the population to secondary-level schooling. It is essential that possibilities for adults to go one step up in terms of qualifications become a permanent feature of adult education and training, so as to enable social mobility and the growth of competence, particularly for individuals with low qualifications.



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### 3. Scenario: Europe of passive citizens

The biggest difference in competences across age groups is in digital competences, especially among older learners. In order to ensure active citizenship and the participation of all groups, especially as Europe gets ready for the next elections, it is in the interest of democracy and European cohesion that we boost the access to adult education.

#### EAEA recommended actions

- **Provide access to and skills for ICT!** We call for future E-inclusion through collaboration and education with the pedagogy to recognise individual needs as key ingredients. With the ever-increasing use of computers and “smart devices”, a significant number of citizens are becoming isolated for lack of access, lack of knowledge or for disinterest. Adult education can bridge the digital divide.
- **Structural support for non-formal adult education providers!** Non-formal adult learning often works better for many learners because it can be much more flexible in responding to learners’ needs and interests than formal education. Strengthening non-formal adult education can increase participation and drive learning motivation (see the example of the Nordic countries). Participating in learning activities can provide a stable time framework, a community, a chance for re-orientation, a safe place, a new challenge, social recognition, and end up being an important tool for empowerment.
- **Real lifelong learning systems in Europe!** More exchanges and more equality between formal, non-formal and informal education and learning should be supported. The integration of informal and non-formal learning in National Qualification Frameworks is a crucial development. EAEA recommends setting up an integrated system with an emphasis on recognition of prior learning as well as individual education and training courses.