



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

EAEA RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S COMMUNICATION 'OPENING UP EDUCATION'

The EAEA welcomes the Communication of the European Commission on '[Opening up Education: Education Innovative teaching and learning for all through New Technologies and Open Education Resources](#)', a European Agenda to bring digital opportunities and contents in education and training. EAEA would like to draw attention to a few key points regarding the digital revolution in education.

Teachers' digital competences must be assured

EAEA agrees with the Commission that there is a great need to improve the digital competences of teachers in adult education. Digitally supported or technology-enhanced learning is becoming more and more regular in adult education. Trainers and facilitators have to be very competent in using new technologies, the internet and electronic devices for training and learning. Non-formal adult education in many European countries is based on freelance teachers and facilitators, teachers working in institutions, and in many cases even volunteers. This requests cross-sectorial and cross-institutional strategies to improve the digital competences of trainers and facilitators.

Examples from Scandinavian countries show how a good mixture of a top-down and a bottom-up policy has led to a raise of competences of trainers and teachers in adult education, independent of their age and gender. We are convinced that through European programmes ([Erasmus+](#) and [Horizon 2020](#)) and complementary national programmes success can be reached.

OERs as complementary learning material

The importance of [Open Education Resources \(OERs\)](#) and [Massive Open Online Courses \(MOOCs\)](#) for adult education is evident. OERs support flexible learning and the permanent innovation in the non-formal adult education sector which very often is transferred to the formal sector. The challenge is how OERs can be adopted and integrated into existing curricula and methodologies in adult education, and how high quality can be secured.

The current independent users of OERs and MOOCs offered by universities tend to be highly educated males with general interest in the topic who are not looking for formal accreditation. We believe that the most valuable use of OERs in adult education will happen in a blended learning context, which still includes support, coaching and face-to-face meetings. While OERs can support flexibility and self-directed learning, many learners still prefer structure and the social aspects of course situations. OERs have to be seen in complement to the existing, so-called traditional, learning materials.



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Ensuring access: Infrastructure and skills

A growing number of people use electronic devices, especially smart phones and tablet PCs, in their activities and learning. However, the usage and accommodation to new technologies vary. 'The early adopters' use the internet and electronic devices for learning nearly everywhere. At the same time many people do not have access to the internet due to a lack of good broadband connection, of cost-free public hotspots or of electronic devices. There are also a growing number of people with skills to use the internet who cannot afford high communication costs. Therefore an infrastructure of accessible internet points, for example in community adult education centres and libraries, where also support is available, is enormously important.

The recently published [PIAAC study](#) shows an increasing need to equip adult learners in using new technologies. The capability of using new technologies is important for improving individual employability and for reducing risks on the labour market. More and more governmental services can be accessed through the internet and participating in society will soon depend on ICT access and competence. We see a need to develop a framework of competences for teachers and adult learners combining [the learning-to-learn ability with ICT and civic competences](#). This needs to be accompanied by wide-reaching initiatives to train people with at least basic skills in ICT.

Best results from interest-driven learning strategies

Theory and practice of adult learning show that intrinsic motivation is the best driver for successful and sustainable learning. A policy on improving the competences in using new technologies has to focus on and to start with the interests of adult learners. An **interest-driven strategy** takes into consideration the manifold needs and interests of adult people in their different phases of life. From a didactical point of view it is necessary that learning objects have to be adapted to adults' experiences and expectations and put the learner at the centre.

Recommendations

EAEA underlines the necessity to promote the following aims in non-formal adult education.

Supporting teachers' competences

- Complementarity of OERs and traditional learning materials, and co-operation of learning providers, teachers and facilitators with publishers and other producers of educational content for adult education.
- Development of European Train-the-Trainer modules to improve the competences for digitally supported learning.
- Testing of appropriate didactical formats for Train the Trainer modules, including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).



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- Development of andragogical learning formats to improve the problem-solving competences for different target groups in adult learning.
- Consequent development of [EPALE](#) and support of Communities of Practice (CoP) and support of face-to-face meetings of experts to deepen the exchanges of experiences among teachers and facilitators in adult education.

Developing digital learning tools

- Adaption of Open Educational Resources (OERs) based on adults' needs, realities and interests, not only based on school, work or university orientation.
- A clear classification of OER (meta-data) to enable the search for appropriate learning tools for different target groups and to secure quality. Internet learning tools have been classified in the [Poliglotti4.eu](#)-project, in which EAEA participated.
- Development of digitally supported learning formats for people with low educational attainments.
- Promotion of OER development in the learners' languages (not primarily English).
- A European-wide solution for the copyright question of using resources from the internet.

Access to ICT competences

- Lower communication costs in order to assure the participation of people with low income to participate in digital society and economy.
- Provision of computer and internet access and support at community adult education centres and libraries.
- Development of broadband infrastructure (especially for remote areas) which can be used by learning institutions, companies and individuals to support the bring-your-own-device strategy.
- Construction of more cost-free public hotspots all over Europe.
- Development of a frame of competences for teachers and adult learners combining the learning-to-learn ability with ICT and civic competences.