

# Awareness Raising for Adult Learning and Education

European cases, experiences and ideas on how to raise awareness for adult learning among the general public, special target groups and policy makers.



# Introduction to ARALE magazine

## **Taking politicians on a bus tour.**

**Producing tv-ads that motivate adults to learn basic reading and writing.**

**Recruiting adult learners to be mentors for new learners.**

**Inviting citizens for an educational walk in their own town.**

All over Europe adult education organizations and providers are working to raise awareness for adult learning and education – as also many public authorities, trade unions, employers' organizations etc. are doing. In this magazine we present experiences from a large number of European countries. We collected these cases and ideas as part of the ARALE project.

The highpoint of the project was the ARALE Conference which took place in Brussels on 2nd and 3rd of October 2013 – two thirds into the project period. 70 persons from 21 countries participated.

In a number of presentations adult learning organizers from many countries presented their best practice examples of awareness raising activities, chosen from the submissions to the project survey. All three elements of the project were represented:

- **Campaigning towards the general public**
- **Campaigning towards special target groups**
- **Campaigning towards policy makers – advocacy**

Opening and inspiring the conference was a presentation of the results of another European project, the BeLL project, about the Benefits of Lifelong Learning. At the end of the conference a representative of the European Commission informed the participants about the new educational programme of the EU: ERASMUS +. As the project coordinator, Tania Berman, said in her presentation, the conference was meant to be:

- **a place to learn about other activities**
- **a place to discuss**
- **a place to share your opinion**
- **a place to provide your analysis and your question**

This magazine is based on the submissions to the project and on the conference. By presenting the conference presentations and deliberations so comprehensively, we hope to share the knowledge and the experiences of the participants with the rest of the European adult learning community.

As a separate section of the magazine you will find the ARALE recommendations. In this section we have summarized the advices and recommendations that have come forward during the project. We hope that the recommendations will be a useful tool for many adult educators around Europe.

**Gina Ebner, EAEA**

**Trine Bendix, DA EA**

**Tiina Jäger, ENAEA**



## Contents

- 02 Introduction to ARALE magazine
- 04 Enthusiasm raises awareness
- 06 Pooling our campaigning experiences
- 08 Festival for celebrating and campaigning
- 10 Adult learners become mentors
- 12 Advertising on national TV
- 14 Senior adult education on the fringe of the fringe
- 16 Inspired by the youth
- 18 You need a story
- 20 Take them for a ride
- 21 The long and winding road
- 22 The perspective of the learner
- 23 Attracting the adults via their children
- 24 Walking the streets
- 26 The chicken and the egg

## Recommendations - special section

- 01 Recommendations
- 02 ARALE Recommendations - an introduction
- 03 Recommendations 1.  
How to convince policy-makers
- 05 Recommendations 2.  
How to reach out to potential learners
- 06 Recommendations 3.  
How to organise Lifelong Learning Weeks
- 07 Recommendations 4.  
How to best use role models
- 07 Recommendations 5.  
How to attract and cooperate with sponsors

# ENTHUSIASM RAISES AWARENESS



Enthusiasm for learning is the goal. But enthusiasm is also an important tool for raising awareness of adult learning. And enthusiasm certainly was present at the conference on Awareness Raising in Adult Learning and Education (ARALE).

The conference took place in Brussels on October 2 and 3 with around 70 participants from 20 European countries plus Israel and Japan. At the conference the results of a survey on EAEA-members' awareness raising activities were presented, debated and not the least: new experiences and viewpoints were added. The survey is part of the ARALE project.

## CELEBRATING

Berni Brady from AONTAS, Ireland, described one way to introduce enthusiasm into awareness raising: "We make our campaigns into celebrations of learning, including Star Awards and big events," said Berni Brady from AONTAS, Ireland. She presented the Irish Adult Learner's Week, one of the examples of campaigns directed at the general public.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Another way of creating enthusiasm also came from Ireland. Clare McNally from the National Adult Literacy Agency told the conference participants about their TV advertising campaigns towards a "special target group", adults with reading problems. "We focus on the possibilities and opportunities that occur when dyslectic people take the difficult step of taking an adult education reading and writing course – not their difficulties and setbacks," said Clare McNally.

"Since then I never looked back," was the repeating optimistic statement of the case persons in the TV-spots.

## PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE

Enthusiasm alone will not do it. You have to combine it with professionalism. That was one main point in the lecture of Amelie von Zweigbergk from Sweden, introducing the third aspect of awareness raising – for a very special target group: policy makers.

With the benefit of being a former politician and now working for adult education (she is an EAEA Board member) she gave a hand-on instruction on how to talk to politicians.

"You must prepare your story. You must prepare your message, and you must know all about the minister, who has given you 15 minutes – and wants to get it done quicker," she said.

## SHARING

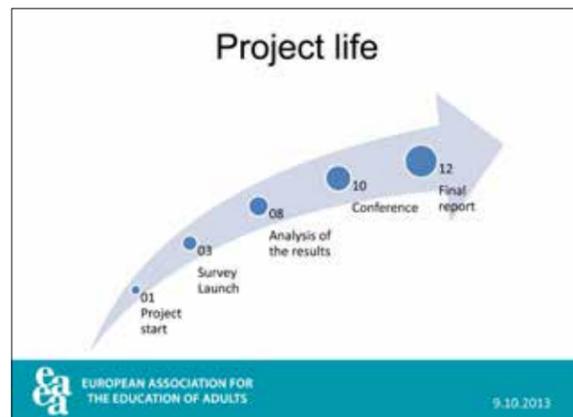
Eight different awareness raising efforts were presented. Eight workshops took place. In addition participants heard an introduction to another project on the Benefits of Lifelong Learning (BeLL), a panel debate and an introduction to Erasmus + by a representative of the European Commission.

But the reason that most participants left enthusiastic was the sharing of experiences.

In the final session Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic from Slovenia summed up, what conferences like this are about: "stealing and sharing – dreaming and daring".

# Pooling our campaigning experiences

56 reports from 19 different European countries – that is how far the ARALE project already was before starting the conference. Project coordinator Tania Berman reported on the results of the survey among EAEA members - adult education institutions and organizations.



Speaker:  
Tania  
Berman

**T**he 56 submissions were way beyond our expectations, and we are very grateful to all of you. A number of the cases in the submissions will be presented at this conference. As you will realize, they are very different. This makes them difficult to compare,” said Tania Berman. She also noted that most submissions were about successful campaigns. “You may learn a lot from your failures, but maybe there is an element of embarrassment in reporting on this,” she said.

## VIDEOS AND HOTLINES

About half the submissions is about special target groups. In this category the differences are quite obvious. Tania Berman listed the variety of target groups:

- **Seniors**
- **Young adults**
- **Families**
- **Dyslectic persons**
- **Roma adults**
- **Citizens with literacy problems or other lack of basic skills**

“We see very different types of campaign groups. Concerning the methods used, there are some common elements in the literacy campaigns: video messages, hotline, providing information on where to learn and role models,” Tania Berman explained.

## CAMPAIGNING WEEKS

Many EAEA members are involved in similar types of campaigning weeks with different names:

Adult Learner’s Week, Lifelong Learning Week or Adult Learning Festival. This type of campaigns submissions were received from Croatia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Norway and Denmark.

“The common concept is a lot of events in a short time-frame on a country-wide scale,” Tania Berman told the conference participants.

She also found common patterns in the way of funding, spreading information and providing guidance and organisation of opening ceremonies and award ceremonies.

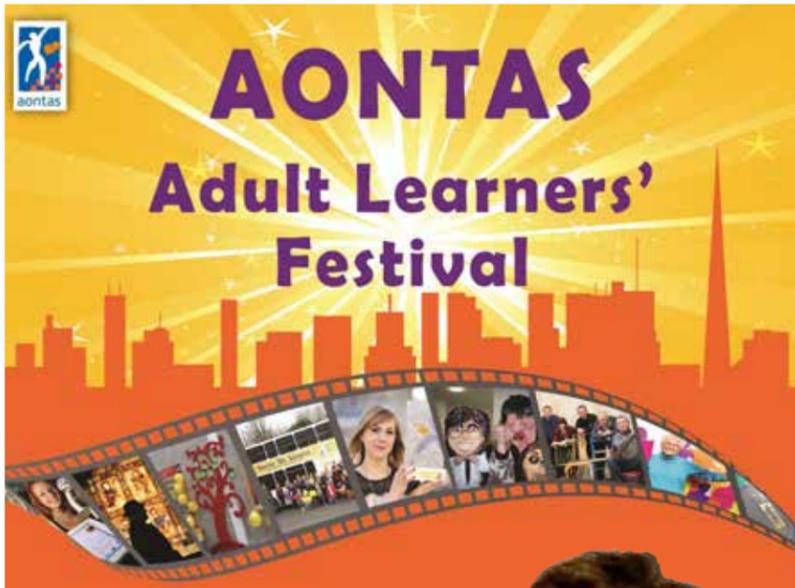
“It seems that a way to make these weeks successful is to involve many organizations, like adult education institutions, schools, cultural institutions, public libraries, employment service, public local authorities. Also important is strong national promotional campaigns combined with a big degree of freedom left to the local organizers,” she said.

## A LONG TIME EFFORT

In her presentation of the submissions on campaigns directed at policy makers, Tania Berman took up a number of points that were repeated and widely discussed later during the conference, for example the importance of presenting concrete examples, facts, documentation. From the submissions she passed on the advice that adult education spokespersons must combine formal and informal contacts with policy makers, and they must be prepared to define and write concrete law proposals. “Advocacy is a long time effort,” she said.

## POOLING AND ANALYSING

Finally Tania Berman explained what will happen after the conference. Based on the submissions and the contributions from the presentations and debates at the conferences the project group will analyze the experiences and inputs in the final report that hopefully will become a useful tool for adult education organizers in Europe.



# AONTAS

## Adult Learners' Festival



Speaker:  
Berni Brady

# Festival for celebrating and campaigning

“We want to show the work of the providers and place adult education on the political agenda,” said Berni Brady. But Adult Learners Festival in Ireland is not just public awareness campaigning: “We also want to celebrate the achievements of the learners.”

**4**00 events took place nationwide as part of the Adult Learners Festival in Ireland this year. There are lots of good reasons to invest resources in the festival according to Berni Brady, who is the director of AONTAS, the national adult education organization.

“Participation in lifelong learning in Ireland is still relatively low, and the adult education sector is often overlooked in mainstream media. Currently all the focus is on training and upskilling, but we need also to highlight the social value of adult education – and the fact that learning happens in many different places,” she said.

Each day of the week put focus on a special aspect of adult learning:

- Celebrate Learning
- Green Learning
- Learning communities
- Learning for work
- Lobby for learning
- Family Learning



### CELEBRATE THE LEARNERS

“The festival is about showcasing the work of adult education providers and promoting the work of AONTAS and the adult education sector. In addition we want to ensure that adult education is placed firmly on the political agenda,” Berni Brady told the audience, but she was very keen to get another message through to conference participants:

“Celebrating adult learning and the achievements of adult learners is as much important as creating public awareness. That is why we put so much effort into our STAR awards in different categories. We want the learners to really feel that they accomplished something.”

### LEARNER’S INFLUENCE ON POLICY

AONTAS does not only celebrate the learners. The organization gives the learners the opportunity to contribute actively to policy development.

“We want to draw on the experience of the learners, and we make sure that the message of the learners is brought to the politicians. Sometimes by the learners themselves, like when we organized a round-table with learners and decision-makers including the Minister for Training and Skills,” said Berni Brady.

# Adult learners become mentors

Recruiting adult learners to be mentors is one of the tools for Helen Cormack and her partners of the European project FORMULA. The aim of the project is to facilitate the work of mentors and role models in supporting adults from socially and economically deprived communities to participate in education and make progression in society.

Helen Cormack from Scottish Wider Access Programme West presented not only national experiences to a European audience; she brought to the conference the results of a European project involving five countries with the very long name “Facilitating Opportunities for our disadvantaged adult using mentors (Role Models) to Underpin Learning for Adults who are socially excluded” (FORMULA).

Participating in FORMULA is:

- **SWAP-West - a consortium of 18 Further Education Colleges and 8 Higher Education establishments, working with Community Education**
- **FORMARE STUDIA from Romania**  
– a professional training centre
- **POE EDUCO, spol. s r.o. from the Czech Republic**  
– a private organization providing education services to adults
- **the University of Malmö, Sweden**
- **the Foundation for Social Development (FDS) from Spain - a non-profit organization promoting the development of the population in the rural areas**

Glasgow Caledonian University from the UK is an associate partner.

In her presentation Helen Cormack stressed that the partners were very different. They brought different skills to the project. That is one of the reasons that the project result can benefit others.

## ENCOURAGE AND GUIDE

“The role of mentors is to encourage people to engage in adult education. Via the project we wanted to find out what kind of guidance was needed and to develop material that can be used to train mentors for adults that have difficulties,” Helen Cormack said.

The mentors are role models who take care of people from poor backgrounds with multiple deprivations. They help learners progress and obtain the qualifications society needs them to have, by providing robust guidance frameworks.

## 25 MENTORS IN FIVE COUNTRIES

The work of the project FORMULA passed through three stages. First they distributed a questionnaire to adult potential learners and existing learners. Secondly they developed materials, trained facilitators and recruited Role Model Mentors.

At stage 3 they trained the Role Model Mentors.

“We were very ambitious and set ourselves a target of 100 mentors per country - across Europe. In fact we received 500 answers to a survey asking people to become mentors. 25 percent of those wanted to hear more about becoming mentors. Now we have 25 mentors in each country,” Helen Cormack told the audience.



Speaker:  
Helen Cormack



## VOLUNTEERS WORK

She put strong emphasis on the message that it is possible to recruit adult volunteers as mentors:

*“We targeted people that went to an adult education class when we looked for mentors. And it is important to notice that the mentors learn too,”* she said.

Finally Helen Cormack said that the concept actually worked in five very different countries. In contrast to many other national or European short-time projects the work can be sustained after the project period, and it can be transferred Europe wide.

*“And most important of all: Socially disadvantaged adults will return to education and training because of the support.”*

# ADVERTISING ON NATIONAL TV

Focus on the benefits instead of making negative connotations. That was a major advice from Clare McNally in her presentation of national TV advertising campaigns for literacy courses.

**“S**ince then I never looked back”. That is the end sentence of each of the three persons in three different TV-ads produced by the Irish National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA): a mother, an older man and a younger guy. All of them really looked forward, explaining what they gained from participating in literacy courses.

Clare McNally of NALA explained some of the key objectives and messages of the advertising campaigns:

“We want to remove the stigma of people who cannot read. The campaigns should act as a trigger to do something, and of course we want to let people know that there is help available,” she said.

## MORE PEOPLE ENROLLING

NALA has run advertising campaigns twice a year for seven years with the result of 18,000 calls to the hotline that is mentioned in all the ads.

“The callers were relieved to know others had a similar problem, and happy to learn that help is available. They were also relieved that the service was confidential,” Clare McNally explained.

Noteworthy was that the TV-ads had most effect on men – who usually are more reluctant to join courses. The effect is not just to be counted in direct calls to the hotline. Local Adult Literacy Organisers have noticed a significant increase in adults enrolling in literacy classes since the adverts were first broadcasted. Specifically they noticed an increase in what they defined as the ‘hard to reach’ population.

## YOU KNOW YOUR POSTMAN

Advertising on national TV is expensive, and the NALA campaigns are only possible because of the sponsorship of the Irish national post company An Post.

“For us it is a good sponsor because you know your postman. That is the one you ask to help read letters, and the post office is a part of the local community,” said Clare McNally.

“For An Post, literacy campaign is a good branding in the community – and it is obviously related. People, who don’t read and write so well, do not send that many letters,” she said.



Speaker:  
Clare McNally



**Top indigenous brand in Ireland in terms of reputation**

- 10,000 staff
- 1,100 post offices
- 1.7 million customers every week
- 2,700 vans
- 1,600 bicycles

# Senior adult education on the fringe of the fringe



**“Adult education is on the fringe of the educational system, and adult education for seniors is on the fringe of the fringe, especially in some of the Eastern European countries.”**

**“***In Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia older people are excluded from lifelong learning. Because of the general poverty, it is considered a luxury.”*

That is how Gabriela Körting from the University of Ulm in Germany explained some of the challenges of Danube Seniors’ Universities. It is an informal educational network that promotes lifelong learning, social participation of older persons and intergenerational dialogue in the Danube Region.

The main aim of the network is to offer the possibility for older people to stay informed, acquire new knowledge and open new possibilities of meaningful, socially relevant activities through academic continuing education. The tool for accomplishing this is the model of “Seasons Academies” which the University of Ulm had provided twice a year since 1992.

## LINKING UNIVERSITIES AND NGO’S

The partners succeeded in involving more than 300 participants from the three Eastern European countries in the pilot project. The older participants were strongly motivated, and the pilot event was generally well accepted by them.

According to Gabriela Körting, key to the good results was the tandem of partners. Both in Serbia and Romania one university cooperated with one or two NGO’s, and in Bulgaria such tandem were established in two cities. The NGO’s were:

- *The association “Universities of the third age” and National Foundation for Human Aging of Serbia*
- *Institute for Adult Education and Window Association of Romania*
- *The Pensioners’ Union 2004 and the Pensioners’ Association of Bulgaria*

## SUSTAINABLE RESULTS

While many projects and networks often result only in temporary results, Gabriela Körting was happy to tell about a number of sustainable results of DASUN. For example the University of Ruse, Bulgaria agreed to create a Third Age Education Center as a part of the University academic structure.

Also, the University of Belgrade and the University of Arts in Belgrade have organised “Academic Weeks” for older adults that included lectures and interactive workshops, presentations and exhibitions on topics related to adult learning, aging and third age. In Romania, the University of Craiova and the relevant NGOs are working on developing a national network focusing on seniors’ education and on the subject of geragogy, a theory on teaching the elderly.



**Speaker:**  
Gabriela  
Körting

# INSPIRED BY THE YOUTH

Combining professional organization, young activists and social media is a formula for a successful campaign for raising awareness of vocational educational training. Tiia Meuronen brought inspiration from campaigning among and with young people to the adult educators at the conference.

**“W**e trained the school activists for the campaign,” explained Tiia Meuronen from the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) - the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe.

Using the energy of the students themselves was an important asset of the OBESSU campaign, called “Claim your Voice! Stand up for VET!”

## MAKE VET ATTRACTIVE

“The status of VET and VET students is still low. VET is seen as the “plan B” if nothing else works. That is why we started this campaign in 2011,” said Tiia Meuronen. She listed four objectives:

- raise awareness of Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- secure representation of VET students
- bring value to VET systems and discuss it as a viable alternative to academic studies
- make VET more attractive



## CAMPAIGN TOOLS

OBESSU combined a number of campaign tools and elements, and they planned the effort meticulously. Before launching the campaign they made a survey, contacted stakeholders and built support.

Important politicians were involved. Online actions on web, Facebook and Twitter were part of the campaign, school student activists were gathered from many European countries to be trained, and the member organizations expanded the campaign on national level.

Tiia Meuronen acknowledged that the success of the campaign was not all up to OBESSU: “It was an important factor that VET, apprenticeships and work-based learning are priorities at the institutional level,” she said.

Speaker:  
Tiia Meuronen



**Speaker:**  
Amelie von Zweiberg

# YOU NEED A STORY

**“When you enter the office of a politician, you must have a good story to tell – if not, he or she will soon stop listening.” Amelie von Zweiberg is a real expert on advocacy – knowing matters from both sides of the table as a politician and former state secretary in Sweden and at present a member of the EAEA board.**

**“W**hen a representative of some organization has been in my office for two minutes, I usually start thinking: What do these people really need from me? And so do all other politicians. So you got to have one story, one point, one problem – that is easy to explain.” Close to brutality – combined with a lot of humor – Amelie von Zweiberg painted a vivid picture of hopeless citizens and lobbyists meeting with bored politicians. She did not leave the audience without hope, though, but rather provided them with an arsenal of good advice.

## **PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE!**

*“You must know your politician,” Amelie von Zweiberg stressed.*

*“Do your homework. What is the formal and real capacity of this politician? Can she solve your problem? If not, do not make an appointment, but find the right one to talk to. Of course, even before that you have to make up your mind about what problem you want the politician to do something about.”*

Again Amelie von Zweiberg underlined the point by describing how not to do it:

*“Hello, my name is blah-blah. I am working for blah-blah. We are doing a lot of good work. Blah-blah-blah.”*

Amelie von Zweiberg also argued for good timing. If you go for money, you have to know the “budget circle”. Is this the exact time when a politician in his position can do something?

## **SOLVE HER PROBLEMS!**

Another quiet thought that passes through the head of a politician during such a meeting - according to Amelie von Zweiberg - is “What is in it for me?”

*“Find out what kind of problems this politician is fighting with. Does she need more press coverage? Is she having an in-fight with another minister for position? Is she just plain lazy and want you to relieve her of obligation?*

*Do not pose as a victim or a beggar. You are here to help the politician.”*

## **ROLE PLAYING**

Abrupted by bursts of laughter from the audience Amelie von Zweiberg kept on for half an hour of parodies of politicians and advocators and hands-on remedies for advocacy.

Not surprisingly more than half the participants opted for her workshop later that day – only to get involved in role playing advocacy moments, of course with Amelie von Zweiberg as the sceptical, slightly bored politician.

# TAKE THEM FOR A RIDE



Speaker:  
Annelie Roswall Ljunggren

The Swedish Adult Education Association invited a whole parliament committee for a bus tour to see what non-formal adult education really can do to people.

Usually adult education advocates send their reports to politicians. They have half an hour meetings, or they try to link up with them at conferences. Annelie Roswall Ljunggren and the SAEA of Sweden did something else. They took the politicians for a bus ride to a number of the institutions of the non-formal adult education.

## ...AND THE COFFEE BREAK

*"We showed them what we are actually doing, and they got the chance to talk to teachers, study circle leaders and participants,"* Annelie Roswall Ljunggren told the conference.

Among the examples that she mentioned was a group of migrant women learning Swedish and another group of people with mental health problems who learned handicraft.

*"It was quite an exhausting programme, but we did remember what is absolutely essential in Sweden: the coffee breaks,"* she said.

## A QUESTION OF FINANCING

Annelie Roswall Ljunggren also explained why it is so important for the sector to make the politicians aware of the tasks that non-formal adult education takes on and the effects on people's everyday life.

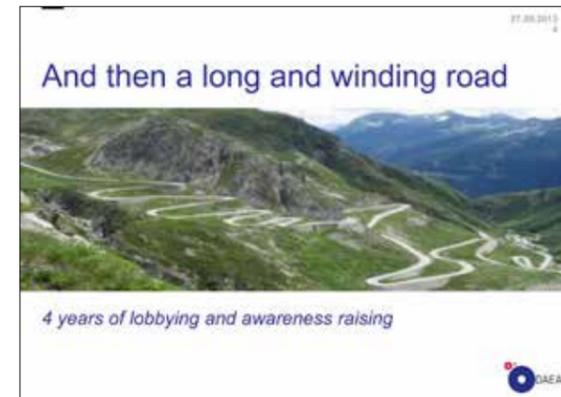
*"The financing depends on grants from the government, the county councils and municipalities. Every year the study associations receives approximately 1.7 million euro from the Government. To maintain that support we have to provide the good arguments and examples, and we must establish good personal contacts,"* she said.

## STORY TELLING

Of course the facts are an important part of the advocacy work of SAEA: numbers of participants, courses and meetings.

*"Just as important is the story telling; especially when people are telling their own story. That is what we accomplished with the bus tour,"* Annelie Roswall Ljunggren said.

# The long and winding road



Speaker:  
Trine Bendix



Destruction, dreams and hope. Not the usual vocabulary of a presentation on advocacy for adult education. But those were the words that Trine Bendix used to tell the story on how her organisation succeeded in convincing the politicians of the need of a research institute for non-formal adult education.

Destruction was the first slide of the story of Trine Bendix from Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA). It referred to a 2001 decision by a new government to immediately close down a well-established and well-working research and development centre for adult education.

Dreams was the starting point of the advocacy project that the DAEA submitted to ARALE; dreams about having a new centre established to document the efforts and effects of non-formal adult education and to help develop new methods.

The long and winding road was the four years of lobbying and awareness raising with lots of initiatives, meetings, documents, but also with some frustration, mistrusts and dead ends along the way.

One of the important stepping stones was the National Commission on non-formal adult education. The two DAEA-members in the commission raised the idea of a research centre and convinced the other members of its rationale, so it ended up as one of 33 proposals from the commission.

*"The minister at the time promised to implement the proposal. But still there was a lot of work to do,"* Trine Bendix explained.

Changes of ministers and changes of government made it necessary to start all over again a couple of times: *"In that situation it was very important that we had good 'travel companions' – in the sense of allies among other NGO's and not the least among civil servants in governmental departments,"* she added.

Hope was the last key word of Trine Bendix, meaning hope that the new Danish Institute for Non-formal Education - now firmly established, though on a small scale - will succeed and grow.

Speaker:  
Antonius Schröder



“We argued from the perspective of the learner, not the institutions.” This was one of the reasons that Antonius Schröder and others succeeded in convincing the decisions makers to establish a regional campus structure for lifelong learning in Hessen.

## The perspective of the learner

**A**mbitions were not lacking when Antonius Schröder of the Technical University in Dortmund, Germany, started working for “HESSENCAMPUS” of all lifelong learning activities in the region.

“We wanted to implement new overall and comprehensive structural principles of the education system. For that we needed to change from an institutional to a strict learner’s and learning process perspective,” he told the conference participants.

### INSPIRATION FROM THE USA

To do that, they had to convince the politicians.

“We had our 15 minutes with the minister of culture and education. But I don’t think that made so much difference. More important was that the prime minister of Hessen recently had visited Wisconsin, USA, where he was introduced to exactly such a structure,” said Antonius Schröder.

### MISTRUST AND AGGRESSION

For the HESSENCAMPUS to become a reality, a maybe greater challenge was to convince all the existing educational institutions to be part of such a regional structure, which would undoubtedly benefit the learners, but which might limit the freedom of the institutions.

“There was some mistrust and aggression to overcome,” Antonius Schröder admitted.

In 2006 HESSENCAMPUS was initiated through a binding cooperation of mainly public educational institutions. Today 21 out of 23 local authorities are within HESSENCAMPUS with about 200 local actors:

- 79 schools (mostly adult and vocational schools)
- 51 training institutions
- 25 employers associations and employment agencies
- 13 regional or local administration departments
- and others.

### Interview:

## Attracting the adults via their children

**T**he economic depression in Italy has changed the conditions of adult education. In Foggia, in the south-eastern part of Italy, the educational institution IRSEF has adapted to the new situation. IRSEF is an Institute for Research and Studies for Education and Training and at the same time a provider of professional, vocational and non-formal education.

### DEPRESSION

“In the present situation of depression it is difficult to attract adult learners,” explains Valeria Caravella for IRSEF.

“It is not only the economy, many people are also depressed. They drink and they fight each other – and they certainly do not go looking for adult education. That is why we developed the idea of getting whole families involved,” she says.

### THE SIMPLE THINGS

At the institute, young people participate in vocational training.

“We invited their parents to come see what the kids were doing, to see what they learn. That made them realise that it was interesting.”

Motivating the adults to actually participate themselves in learning was the next step.

“We invited them to a party, parents and kids, and made them cook together. We had to start with very simple things, but with an educational implication.

Then we organised handicraft activities, visits to museums and so on. In that way we kept them busy and started changing their mentality towards each other and towards learning.

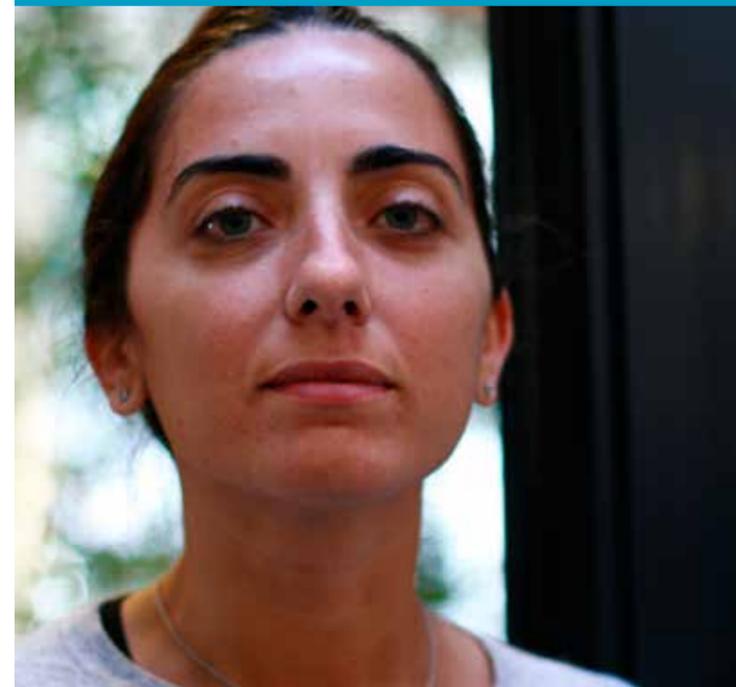
I think we created a sense of community in which they shared and learned from each other’s experiences,” says Valeria Caravella.

### INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

IRSEF even involved the parents in international cooperation.

“We are doing two projects in Palestine. In that way they learned international cooperating and being part of a network.

All the way we organised it as family activity, even though the young ones and the parents did not do the same things. While the parents were making handicrafts, their children video recorded it,” says Valeria Caravella who works for IRSEF.



Valeria Caravella

# WALKING THE STREETS

To the inhabitants of a country in crisis like Portugal the first step to adult learning can be to leave the house and walk the streets of their own city. Ana Miguel went to the ARALE conference to tell about the project “Andar na rua”.

“I am not exactly like the other participants at this conference,” said Ana Miguel, and in some ways the school teacher from Portugal actually did differ from the people of national adult education associations, the heads of institutions and the employees of Brussels based European organisations. Ana Miguel and the other project organisers do not organise national campaigns or lobby parliamentarians and ministers. But they are certainly raising awareness on adult learning in the city of Torres Vedras, 50 kilometers north of Lisboa.

## NO MEMBERS – NO PROGRAM

Every Wednesday evening Ana Miguel invites the citizens of Torres Vedras for a walk in the city centre. For each walk there is a theme.

“We go to an art exhibition and are introduced to the art works. Another evening we visit a local association and the chairman explains about their activities. Or we visit historical places together with a history expert,” Ana Miguel tells.

The participants differ each evening.

“We have no members, no programme, no courses. Instead we combine learning, mild physical exercise by walking, and creating relations between people – even intergenerational relations,” says Ana Miguel. It may seem very basic, but according to Ana Miguel it has to be very basic: “There is a very hard crisis in Portugal these years. Many people have no job, and they are poor. So many stay at home all day and get socially isolated. Just getting them out of their house or apartment is a big step, and it may be a first step to further activity and learning.”

## DO IT YOURSELF!

“Andar na rua” is a real grass root initiative. Ana Miguel and everybody else are organising the events as volunteers. That was also how it started.

“The municipality of Torres Vedras invited the citizens for a meeting to discuss the plans for developing the historical centre of the city. I went there with my colleagues from the secondary school where I work,” tells Ana Miguel.

“There were a lot of people and a lot of ideas. But most ideas was either expensive, or they depended on getting somebody else to do something, the municipality, the government or a big company.

My colleagues and I wanted propose something that we could do ourselves. That is why we proposed city walks. Together the citizens could look at the buildings and the squares of the historical centre, learn about the places and discuss what may be changed.”

## WORKING AND VOLUNTEERING

That is how the project started. The teachers invited inhabitants of the city centre and the participants of the adult education courses that take place at their school. From that point it developed into weekly events.

“I think that my work at the school, and my volunteering in “Andar na rua” is complementary,” says Ana Miguel. And though she was not like the other participants, she enjoyed the ARALE conference: “I learned from the presentations, and I like to tell other people about our project.”



# THE CHICKEN AND THE EGG

What comes first – a European initiative on adult learning to inspire national developments or national activities that are coordinated on a European level? It was like the chicken and the egg at the final panel debate of the conference.



Speaker: Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic

Speaker: Dana Bachmann



Speaker:  
Per Paludan Hansen

“Do we need a European-wide campaign on adult education?” That was the question that the three panelists were asked to talk about.

Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic from the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and Per Paludan Hansen, who is both chairman of the Danish organisation and of EAEA, supported the idea of such a conference. While not directly opposing it, Dana Bachmann, head of the vocational training and adult education unit of the European Commission, stressed that activities have to take place on the national level.

## KEY PRIORITY

“Awareness raising for adult learning is a key priority for the Commission,” Dana Bachmann said in her introduction and mentioned three ways to work for that goal:

- **Developing specific strategies**
- **Encouraging actions at national level**
- **Encouraging member states to appoint national coordinators, for whom awareness raising is a central task**

## A MOVEMENT

Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic pointed to the conference itself: “This kind of conference is a learning festival. It is our way of celebrating,” she said.

In her introduction she also said that the European adult learning community must discuss how to become a real movement - again.

## STRENGTHENING EUROPE

Taking up the note from the very first presentation (the BeLL project) at the conference, Per Paludan Hansen said that the sector must develop its capacity to explain the benefits of adult education.

“For example we can contribute to the strengthening of Europe, both in relation to competition and the market and to individuals as active citizens in a democracy,” he said.

## EUROPEAN INITIATIVES

Per Paludan Hansen also said:

“We can contribute to the creation of a European perspective in our countries. But it does help us if there are special European initiatives, for example a European Year for Lifelong Learning.”

The immediate reply from Dana Bachmann was to stress that action must take place on the national level where the citizens are.

EAEA general secretary, Gina Ebner, intervened in the debate saying: “The national governments could learn from Brussels. National governments are sometimes very narrow-minded.”

Dana Bachmann once again stressed that the Commission must stay within the limits of the European treaties, defining education as primarily a national prerogative.

## JOBS OR MORE?

Uwe Gartenschlaeger from the German DVV-International was critical to the overall EU strategy, as it is defined in the so called Lisbon Strategy: “It turns adult education into a tool for job purposes. Lifelong learning must be humanistic, and we must have a holistic approach to people, addressing all their needs as citizens, family members, individuals – and of course on the labour market.”

Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic warned against seeing Vocational Education and Training (VET) as the enemy of general adult education.

In support of that point Dana Bachmann said that there are a lot of possibilities of interplay between the two sectors: “I think we should use the synergies between general adult education and VET much better.”

She admitted that lifelong learning has been “sliced into different departments”, but she expressed the hope that the new programme, ERASMUS+, will partly solve this problem.

Having the last word from the floor, Berni Brady from AONTAS, Ireland, told the participants not to be smug: “Non-formal adult education is not the only learning sector that takes care of the whole person. Stop parallel thinking about the sectors. The persons must be at the centre, and they want jobs and security. Most of us in this conference have a good education and a job. Who are we to say that it is not important?”



## ARALE WEBSITE:

<http://www.eaea.org/arale>

On the website you can access all submissions to the survey plus the articles published in this magazine. For each submission and each article you will find relevant links to further information on each case.

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## PARTNERS

European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) - Representing 116 member organisations in 43 countries, EAEA is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a transnational, non-profit association whose purpose is to link and represent European organisations which are directly involved in adult learning.

Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA) - An umbrella organisation (NGO) catering for 34 countrywide member organisations, all working with non-formal adult education

Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association - A non-governmental, national umbrella organisation in the non-formal adult education field associating education-orientated NGOs



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