



**ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE 2017**  
**A Civil Society View**

## **Adult Education in Europe 2017 – A Civil Society View**

European Association for the Education of Adults

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Dear Reader,

We are proud to present to you the fourth edition of EAEA's country reports. The reports outline developments in adult education in different European countries over the past year, giving insight into the state of adult education across Europe and allowing comparisons between countries. Over the past few years, this publication has become an established tool for advocacy and policymaking at the European level, and it aims to complement reporting published by the European Commission.

We would like to highlight the fact that this is not a scientific analysis. The report is based on a survey sent to EAEA's members, through which members can express their views about adult education in their country. The national representativeness of the views expressed may thus vary depending on members' geographic reach, the level on which they operate and the extent of consultation they conducted before responding to the survey.

The report offers a civil society view, drawing from EAEA's vast network. It gives professionals working in adult education across Europe a platform to express their perspective on the field and the possibility to relay learners' views. The report thus bridges the gap between citizens involved in adult education and EU institutions creating adult education policies.

Given the publication of major policy and strategy documents in recent years, such as the Upskilling Pathways and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an important focus of the survey EAEA conducted this year was asking our members about the impact of these initiatives on their work. This year's country reports have thus focused on the links between national adult education provision and broader European and international policy/strategy contexts. Additionally, the European Agenda for adult learning has now been in place since 2011 and its impact can now be verified in this report.

Although priorities for the coming year vary between members and countries, a point highlighted by numerous members is the importance of raising awareness about non-formal adult education: making the field better known among policymakers and potential learners, but also ensuring its current support is maintained in countries where the sector already receives governmental support.

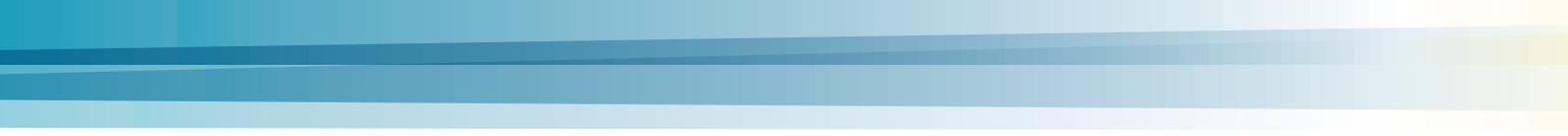
We would like to thank all our members who contributed to this report, allowing us to have a better understanding of recent developments in adult education across Europe.

Per Paludan Hansen, EAEA President



Gina Ebner, EAEA Secretary General





# ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE 2017

## A Civil Society View

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# A summary of the situation of non-formal adult education in Europe

## European overview

The following report is based on a survey sent to EAEA's members, asking them about the state of adult education in their country. The views expressed come from a variety of contexts. EAEA members are often umbrella organisations representing their country's adult education providers, and can have the status of a non-governmental organisation representing providers to the national or regional government. The focus of work may be on research in adult education, or more oriented towards policy advocacy. Some members work on a local level as adult educators, and their work may focus on a particular sub-area of adult education such as basic skills provision or vocational training.

Through the survey, these national, regional or local organisations share the knowledge they have gathered

about the state of adult education in their country throughout their own work within this field. In addition to this insight gathered over time, they could also consult providers within their network and reflect their views in the survey responses. In some countries the report is based on the account of one EAEA member; the national representativeness of the views expressed may thus vary depending on the geographic reach of each participating organisation within their country, the level on which they mainly operate (as national institutions, NGO umbrella organisations, regional or local providers), and the extent of consultation they conducted before responding to the survey. A list of contributors is included at the end of the report.

There are some trends that can be perceived when reading this report:

## The impact of European and international adult education policies

A specific characteristic of the survey conducted this year was asking our members about the impact different EU and international policies and strategies have on their work, in particular the EU's European Agenda for Adult Learning (2011)<sup>1</sup> and Upskilling Pathways (2016)<sup>2</sup>, as well as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (2015)<sup>3</sup> and particularly Goal 4, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

Many EAEA members highlight various initiatives to implement the European Agenda in their country, be it at the national level or by civil society organisations.

Several members (in Germany, the Netherlands) note that the European Agenda for Lifelong Learning is a useful tool for advocating for adult education. Referring to this document allows them, as practitioners or as regional or national representatives of practitioners, to influence education policies and strategies within their country. Several members (in Sweden, Austria, French-speaking Belgium) also highlight a kind of tension in the impact European or national adult education policies have on their work: policies set certain standards for adult education, which allows this field to be better recognized. At the same time, having external standards for providers' work "formalizes"

<sup>1</sup>European Council (2011), "Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning. 2011/C 372/01", in Official Journal of the European Union, available on: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501756608119&uri=CELEX:32011G1220\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501756608119&uri=CELEX:32011G1220(01)).

<sup>2</sup>European Council (2016), "Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (2016/C 484/01)", in Official Journal of the European Union, available on: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501757293132&uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501757293132&uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)).

<sup>3</sup>United Nations (2015), "Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", available on: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E).

adult education, making it less non-formal although historically this has been an important component of adult education in many countries. In other words, formalization brings the challenge of limiting providers' autonomy to choose the contents of the teaching they provide.

The Upskilling Pathways strategy will be a key document for the adult education sector in the next

few years. It intends to provide basic skills training – supported by skills assessments and validation and recognition – to many Europeans. The EU member states are currently meant to identify their key target groups for this initiative and come up with an implementation plan. Taking into account that Upskilling Pathways is a relatively recent policy (December 2016), most EAEA members responding to the survey noted that its effects are not yet noticeable within their work.

## Key topics: refugees and engaging new learners

Many EAEA members continue working with refugees, and while language training remains one of the key issues, new areas are now becoming important: vocational training, family learning, civic education and intercultural learning with the host communities.

In parallel and complement to the European Commission's Upskilling Pathways strategy, many members are keen to engage new learners and make adult education more accessible and attractive for disadvantaged groups.

## National Qualification Frameworks and Validation

A number of countries are working on validation and the development or implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks. Validation is the formal recognition of the results of non-formal education and informal learning. Reactions to these developments vary across the EAEA membership: many members welcome the opportunities that NQFs provide but others remain sceptical about its restrictions: they can limit the freedom of non-formal adult education providers to choose the contents of the teaching they provide, if all teaching contents need to be aligned with specific outcomes in terms of qualifications.

EAEA and its members have done considerable work when it comes to validation and have also put together a number of recommendations on how to implement NQFs and validations systems that would put non-formal adult education at equal footing with formal education, put the learner at the centre and avoid a formalisation of the non-formal<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.eaea.org/en/projects/eaea-coordinated-projects/ava.html>

## A more comprehensive approach to adult education is necessary

A number of EAEA members think that adult education in their countries (or at least the public support for it) is too limited. In some countries, it might be a strong focus on basic skills, in others on employment related training. Some EAEA members (Austria, Greece) highlight the importance of democracy education: raising more awareness about democratic principles

and institutions and fostering critical thinking. EAEA members are therefore supporting an adult education approach that comprises and supports the different sectors of adult education: from basic skills to VET, civic education and active citizenship, personal development and liberal adult education.

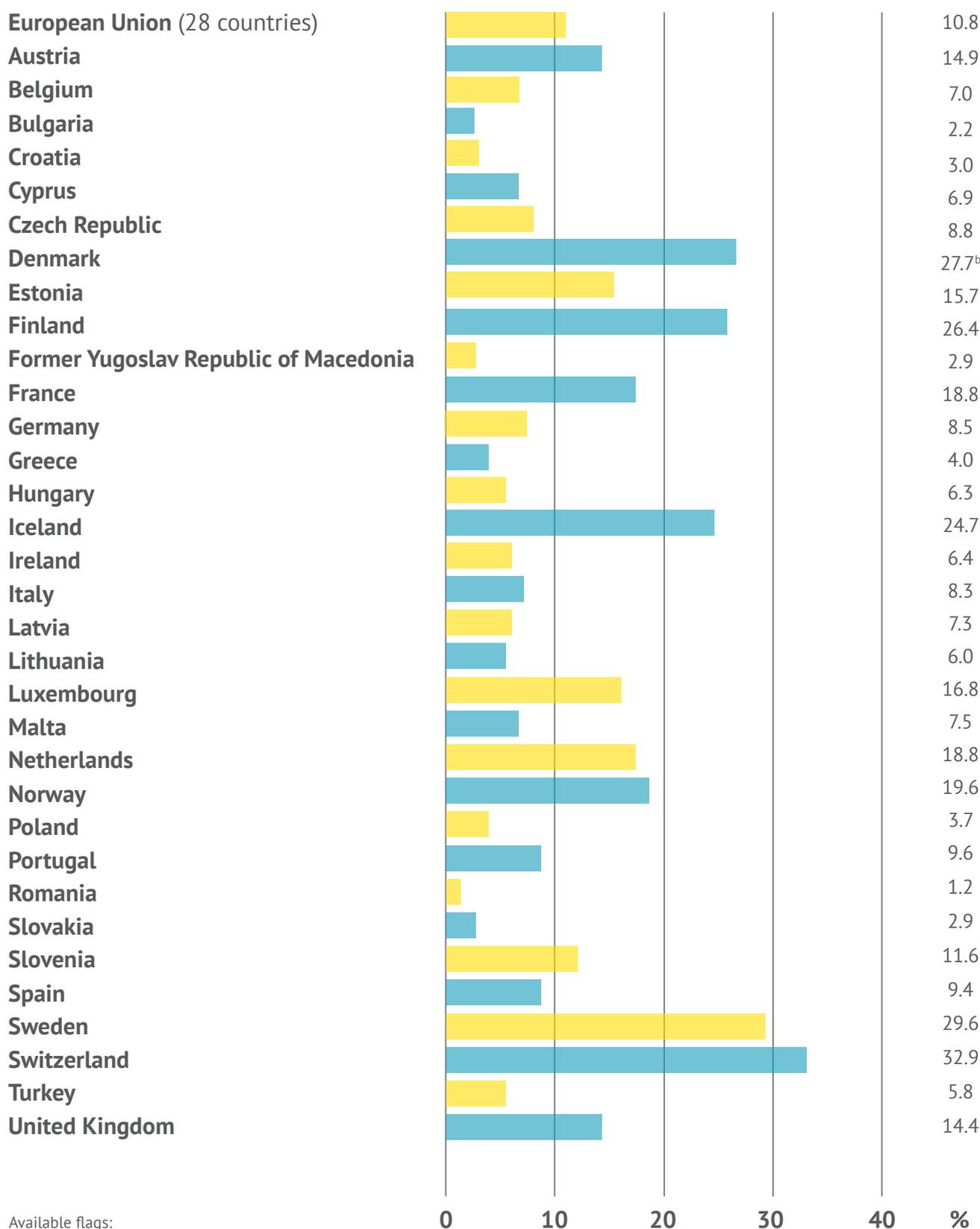
## Visibility and recognition of the sector

A common challenge for adult education providers across Europe is raising awareness about the value of their field: making policymakers but also citizens more aware of what adult education is and what its benefits are; making the field better known and better supported. This is especially important in countries where participation in adult education is low, where the field is not well-known by politicians or citizens and has little financial means. Indeed, funding remains a key challenge for many EAEA members.

Advocating for adult education is also considered important in countries in which adult education is already largely recognized and receives funding from the government. EAEA members from such countries often note that governmental funding is insufficient to cover needs, and that education does not reach the most disadvantaged segments of the population. Advocacy towards policymakers and raising awareness within the general population therefore remain important.

***“Funding remains a key challenge for many EAEA members.”***

# Adults (aged 25-64) participating in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey (%), 2016



Available flags:

<sup>b</sup> break in time series

Eurostat, Online data code: trng\_lfse\_01, data extracted October 2017.

# Austria

**National and European adult education policies bring challenges to the Austrian adult education field: improved recognition but reduced autonomy. In terms of the contents of teaching, adult education providers in Austria insist on the strong social need for more teaching in democracy education and media literacy. This is crucial in the current context of increasing doubt about the democratic process, and adult education can provide a significant social role by providing teaching in this field.**

## Recent developments

Participation in adult education is relatively high in Austria, with an encouraging upward trend. Austria nearly reaches the EU benchmark of 15% participation in adult education with the current participation rate of 14,9%. Adult education providers in Austria note that people with low or intermediate educational attainment are participating significantly more in adult education, with a participation rate increasing from 4,5% in 2015 to 5,1% in 2016. Providers note this increase is due to various educational measures, one of which is the national Initiative for Adult Education, which offers free courses in basic education and compulsory education. The Initiative has been prolonged for another four years. Statistics from Austrian Adult Education Centres show an 8% increase in the number of courses and participants.

The biggest increases are observed in the areas of basic and compulsory education, access courses to Higher Education (Berufsvorbereitungsjahr) and courses supporting the learning and school progression of

children from socially disadvantaged families.

A central theme within Austrian adult education is welcoming refugees. This includes state-funded German language classes, basic education classes as well as “train-the-trainer” courses about teaching refugees. Refugees are one of the beneficiary groups of the Initiative for Adult Education, which offers training in basic skills, especially literacy, for younger refugees above the compulsory school age<sup>6</sup>.

Digitization is another important topic within adult education. In terms of teaching methods, a MOOC about digital teaching methods was created in Austria in the spring of 2017, by and for practitioners. There is certainly a need for digital skills on the labour market: according to the 2017 results of the annual Continuing Education Survey<sup>7</sup>, Austrian companies perceive a strong need for teaching digital skills through continuing education, the top priority being IT security and data security.

## Links to EU and international policy

Austrian adult education policy has many links to European policy. The European Key Competences for Lifelong Learning form the basis of the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy LLL: 2020. The national Initiative for Adult Education is one of the central measures the Austrian government has undertaken to implement the EU's Upskilling Pathways. Some key issues in Austrian adult education policy are professionalization, quality assurance and development, and guidance and

counselling. Various initiatives have been created in these areas, some of which are co-financed by the European Social Fund. These are in accordance with the priorities for the adult education sector set out in the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

Quality is high on the agenda in Austria and linked to the European Agenda for Adult Learning. As an example, EAEA members have created / contributed to

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2017) Country Report Austria 2017, available on [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-austria-en\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-austria-en_1.pdf), p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> EPALE/DG Education and Culture (2017), “Continuing education survey 2017 (Austria)”, available on <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/content/continuing-education-survey-2017-austria>.

a certified quality management system and an AT-Cert certification (a quality framework for adult education). The member also runs the Austrian Continuing Education Academy within the Co-operative System of Austrian Adult Education. This Academy validates adult educators' competences in teaching, guidance and counselling, programme planning and information management.

An Austria-wide "Core Programme" for Adult Education Centres is currently being developed by the Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres and its members. Just as the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy, this programme is based on the framework of Eight

European Key Competences in Lifelong Learning<sup>8</sup>. In comparison to the European framework, the Austrian framework groups communication in the mother tongue and communication in foreign languages into a single linguistic competence, and adds health competence onto the list of key competences.

With regard to Sustainable Development Goals, Austria has a national strategy but its educational section focuses mainly on schools, not adult education. The topic of sustainability is also included in the "Core Programme" for Adult Education Centres currently being developed.

## Challenges and recommendations

EU policies pose certain challenges. The Initiative for Adult Education is an important component of Austria's strategy for the EU's Upskilling Pathways, but one EAEA member notes more funding for implementing Upskilling Pathways, as well as large scale strategies, would be necessary to cover needs. The member also calls for a closer cooperation between practitioners and researchers for developing educational measures.

An Austrian EAEA member estimates that the European Agenda for Adult Learning has a significant impact on adult education. Certain measures set specific standards, which has the benefit of allowing the adult education sector to be better recognized. At the same time, external standards also put pressure on providers, as having more and more standardization and formalization would reduce providers' autonomy to decide on the contents of the teaching they provide.

In terms of the contents of teaching in the field of adult education, the Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres, an EAEA member, notes that while democracy, as a form of governance and a way of life, is largely accepted, this acceptance is steadily declining. Doubt about the democratic process is higher amongst people with low literacy and people with low educational attainment, who feel insecure and helpless. The member notes that there is therefore a strong social need for democracy education and media literacy. Non-formal education should provide teaching in these fields, giving this sector an important social role. The topic of democracy education and media literacy should be a strong future focus and should not be overlooked despite the current context of other EU policy priorities such as employability.

***"Statistics from Austrian Adult Education Centres show an 8% increase in the number of courses and participants."***

<sup>8</sup> European Parliament/European Council (2006) "Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)" in Official Journal of the European Union, available on <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962>.

# Belarus

Education providers in Belarus feel that their interaction with the national government has improved in recent years, but building stronger cooperation remains a challenge for expanding the sphere of adult education, as is gaining sufficient funding. Changing the way adult education is perceived in Belarus would be a way to respond to these challenges: adult education should be presented as a “common good” and reach as many people as possible.

## Recent developments

The educational sector in Belarus is undergoing some changes. Among recent developments, adult education providers note that the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework and the implementation of the National Strategy of Lifelong Learning are currently underway. Another important development in 2016 has been the review of legislation concerning

education: the state presented a draft of amendments to the Education Code, which would also affect the field of adult education. Discussions concerning the amendments are still in progress and the amendments have not yet been ratified by the parliament; it is therefore too soon to assess the impact they may have on non-formal and civic education.

## Links to EU and international policy

Belarus has established links between the national education sector and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, through the creation of new structures in charge of working towards SDGs and monitoring progress. A National Sustainable Development Strategy has been created for the period until 2030, and the position of National Coordinator for Sustainable Development was established in May 2017. The Coordinator’s role will be to analyse national indicators to assess the progress made by Belarus towards achieving SDGs, and to direct the Council on Sustainable Development, composed of deputy heads

of state bodies as well as other organisations. Working towards Goal 4 in particular (“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”) is a responsibility of the Ministry of Education, which has created an Advisory Board on Education for Sustainable Development. A Coordination Centre on Education for Sustainable Development was set up in 2016 at the M. Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University, the result of cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the association Education for Sustainable Development.

## Challenges and recommendations

An EAEA member in Belarus notes that interaction between different actors of formal and non-formal education and the ministry concerned has improved over the past few years. Building fruitful cooperation, especially between civil society organisations and the state, remains nevertheless one of the challenges for expanding the field of adult education.

Funding is another challenge within the sector. Insufficient funding and the risks of it being cut are an issue for formal and non-formal adult education institutions, both public and private. The central question

is therefore: What kinds of models and approaches can ensure financial stability of the education system, while achieving the highest possible level of citizen participation in educational programmes? One EAEA member highlights the need to promote adult education as a “common good” and to win the support of different population groups, including those who are currently not involved in lifelong learning. Such a change in how adult education is perceived would be beneficial to the sector, and could alleviate the current context of shrinking external and internal funding.

***“Interaction between different actors of formal and non-formal education and the ministry concerned has improved over the past few years.”***

# Belgium (French-speaking)

Adult education providers in French-speaking Belgium highlight a number of issues in Belgian adult education policies. A new law organising non-formal vocational training in Wallonia has a strong focus on quantitative elements and neglects qualitative data which would also be useful in assessing quality and accountability in adult education. In the field of basic skills provision, setting obligatory classes for particular target groups can have a negative effect on learning processes and can limit access to courses. The strong focus on employment in European adult education policies affects Belgian policymaking: the focus on employment may cause other benefits such as citizenship and social cohesion to be overlooked.

## Recent developments

In terms of recent policy developments in French-speaking Belgium (Wallonia and Brussels), a new law organising non-formal vocational training has come into effect in Wallonia in 2013. It sets a new series of regulations for training providers concerning quality control and accountability. One EAEA member finds that the law is not quite meeting its objectives because of its focus on quantitative rather than qualitative data: the type of research used to monitor the implementation of the law mainly focuses on numerical results (e.g. number of hours of training, data on learners' social status), with little analysis of developments "on the ground" which would also be relevant to policymakers. Having only quantitative indicators for success of a programme is only a very partial representation of adult education providers' work. The law also requires

providers to refer to common frameworks in terms of skills and knowledge when setting goals for training programmes, which the EAEA member sees as an indication of trying to integrate non-formal training even more into the frameworks of formal training.

Another important development is a reform of the system of sponsored employment (Aides à la Promotion de l'Emploi, APE), which will come into effect in the second half of 2017. This will have an effect on non-formal education because a large proportion of its staff is financed through the APE system. In the field of literacy, there will be an inter-ministerial conference on adult literacy in the French-speaking community, gathering all the ministers involved in this complex issue to discuss public policy in the field.

## Links to EU and international policy

Belgian adult education policies are linked to the European Agenda for Adult Learning, with a major conference organised in May 2017 by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation dealing with the European stakes of lifelong learning and education (ET2020). Belgian policy developments such as the setting up of an institution for skills validation, the creation of a Qualifications Framework, and an attention to the issue of quality, seem to link to the European Agenda. For the moment there is no strategy to implement Upskilling Pathways in Wallonia and Brussels, but this is under discussion at the political level. One EAEA member regrets the concept of "skills guarantee" has been abandoned in the "Upskilling Pathways" document

and the ambitions and scope of the initiative have thus been reduced.

Adult education providers in Belgium find that the EU's strong focus on employment has affected Belgian policies. Because of this focus, other benefits of non-formal education such as citizenship and social cohesion are not taken into account in policymaking. While these other benefits are mentioned in EU documents, authorities fail to translate them into concrete policy initiatives, focusing solely on employment. This is a reductive view of non-formal education, mainly perceived as an instrument for the labour market.

## Challenges and recommendations

An EAEA member working in the field of literacy notes that there is a policy trend of targeting particular groups of learners for basic skills courses. For instance, people benefiting from the “income for social integration” (the lowest safety net provided by the Belgian welfare state) are obliged to sign up to an “Individualized Project for Social Integration”, and may have sanctions if it is not followed. The Individualized Project may include job seeking, training or other activities, and basic skills training can be part of it. The EAEA member highlights the fact that when education is used as a condition to gain access to a given welfare provision or legal status, that goes against the idea of universal access to basic skills. This happens for a number of reasons. One of them is that people do not learn efficiently when constrained: they may not want to learn, or may want to but have to do so in a climate of pressure or fear of sanctions. Another reason is the fact that making it obligatory for certain people to attend courses sometimes leads to other people not finding places because everything is full. It is worth noting that obligatory literacy courses have led to an increase in demand without a corresponding increase in funding.

A third reason is the categorization of learners: authorities increasingly create programmes for specific target groups, using different funding for different target groups. Individuals then need to be part of a particular target group in order to attend courses. For providers, programmes set out certain requirements (number of hours, compulsory attendance or not, which target group) and providers which depend on multiple sources of funding feel pressured to adapt their learning offer according to the programme

requirements set out for target groups. The learning offer is thus different from one target group to another (following the authorities’ programme requirements), instead of offering to all learners a “universal”, i.e. identical, literacy training based on what providers believe is appropriate (in terms of methods, content, etc.). As all of these reasons show, when individuals are obliged to attend literacy courses and attendance is used as a condition to access a welfare provision / legal status, this can in fact limit the possibility of all individuals to develop their literacy skills.

In terms of other challenges, a long-term challenge in the adult education field is taking more into account the needs of people lacking literacy skills in policies which concern them. The specificity of this group of learners should be better taken into account, for instance by proposing non-linear pathways made of alternating periods of work and training, and allowing sufficient time to achieve satisfying literacy levels. Adequate validation systems should be in place to recognize individuals’ existing professional skills, and access to vocational training should be ensured.

Concerning data collection in the field of adult education, one EAEA member notes there should be data at the level of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation concerning participation levels of people lacking basic skills in the non-formal sector. Funding could be given, for instance, for carrying out a PIAAC study in French-speaking Belgium. The member also notes that the data currently collected by Eurostat is not precise enough to show the educational attainment of low-skilled people: the ISCED 0-2 used by Eurostat should not be presented as a unified category as it is now.

***“Adult education providers in Belgium find that the EU’s strong focus on employment has affected Belgian policies.”***

# Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina's complex political situation has a significant impact on adult education, which is currently overlooked. Providers note that existing adult education policies are not implemented, and the process of law adoption is very slow. The adult education sector is in its infancy and exists through the initiatives of civil society organisations. Providers are able to secure funding by making their activities more commercial and participating in European projects. Pathways towards developing the sector further would be the implementation of governmental policies in the field, and a further recognition of the role adult education can play in tackling Bosnia and Herzegovina's high unemployment rate and poverty.

## Recent developments

Adult education providers in Bosnia and Herzegovina highlight the significant impact of the country's political context on their field of work. The country is in a deep political crisis which hampers all segments of society. One EAEA member notes that most reform processes are stopped and national politics deals mainly with issues such as the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina's NATO membership and the possibility of seeking allies in Russia and Arab countries, while leaving aside major concerns in the population's daily life such as high unemployment (at 41% according to the B&H Statistics Agency), a mass emigration of the working-age population, a collapse of the education sector and the increase of poverty. The latter issues are not mentioned in public political life.

Within the country's current political context, the process of educational reform and the field of adult education are overlooked. Two recent policy documents on adult education in Bosnia are the "Principles and Standards in the field of adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Official Gazette n.39/14) and "Strategic platform development of adult education in the context of lifelong learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014-2020" (Official Gazette n. 96/14). These documents issued by the Council of Ministers present certain principles for the field of adult education, and serve as an incentive, a recommendation for how the sector should operate. The documents were welcomed by adult education providers, but have not resulted in concrete changes. Educational policy is created at the level of counties and entities, who are not obliged to follow the Council of Ministers' recommendation. For the moment the above-mentioned policies have not been implemented.

Laws are not uniform across the whole country of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the process of law adoption is very slow. Cantons that have adopted laws face the problem of a lack of other legal acts such as regulations concerning their practical implementation. In the entity Republic of Srpska for example, a law on adult education exists since 2009, stating that particular regulations will define who can work as a trainer in adult education. These regulations have not been adopted so far, and because of this trainers are not required to have any andragogical knowledge, which has a big impact on the quality of adult education.

Providers find that the Bosnian adult education sector is marginalized and still in its infancy. For the reasons detailed above, the impact of policies or strategies for adult education is not visible in their work, and the sector receives no public funding. One EAEA member notes that until 2016, its educational activities were co-financed through project funding, which made the price of courses a lot lower for learners than what their real costs were for the provider. This made courses more accessible to learners. For the moment, the member is not financially supported by educational authorities, which has led it to a situation in which all educational services must have a commercial character in order to finance the organisation's work. There is thus a dilemma between providing courses with a higher fee which enable the organisation to survive financially, and providing courses with a lower fee which generate less income but are more accessible for learners. Participating in KA2 projects of the EU's Erasmus+ funding programme is another source of funding, but this is insufficient to cover all of the member's costs.

Providers note that some of their main fields of work are to invest in promoting adult education in the context of lifelong learning, and defining quality standards and indicators in adult education. Some target groups

are socially vulnerable persons, young people, women over the age of forty as well as professional staff in health, education and the social sector.

## Links to EU and international policy

One EAEA member notes they do not know any national initiatives to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, but strive to contribute to the sustainable development of their country through active advocacy on the importance of adult education, networking locally and regionally. They find that the acquisition of new knowledge and the development of new skills can contribute to sustainable development, as well as

the fight against poverty, the creation of new jobs and of an inclusive society. Adult education providers do not see an impact of the European Agenda for Adult Learning or Upskilling Pathways on adult education within their country, as these are not implemented through national policies. It is mainly civil society organisations' initiatives that promote adult education and try to show its importance for social development.

## Challenges and recommendations

Challenges in the adult education field are a lack of resources and support. Providers consider gaining new knowledge and skills as a major way to tackle the 41% unemployment rate and poverty, but over the past two years there has been almost no state budget which would encourage professional training for individuals. The rate of people migrating due to unemployment is

also higher and higher, and adult education would be a way to respond to these challenges. This value of adult education should be further recognized to encourage the development of the field. The sector would also benefit from the implementation of existing national adult education policies, a better defined structure of the sector and governmental funding.

***“Providers find that the Bosnian adult education sector is marginalized and still in its infancy.”***

# Croatia

Adult education providers in Croatia highlight quality standards and procedures as an important component of their current work. The European Agenda for Adult Learning has had an impact on the adult education sector, shifting national policies towards a focus on learning outcomes as a basis for policy, and on basic skills provision. The Agenda has also helped raise awareness about lifelong learning in general and issues such as the importance of training adult education staff. A long-term challenge for providers is the low participation rate in adult education.

## Recent developments

Adult education in Croatia is promoted in several national strategies, the most recent of which is the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology. The Ministry of Education has submitted a proposal to change the 2007 Act on Adult Education, but the impact of this development is not yet visible. Another recent development has been the creation of a professional standard and a qualification standard for both trainers in adult education and andragogues<sup>9</sup>. This has an impact on providers' work, as several EAEA members note quality standards and procedures as an important component in their current work. One member wants to develop qualification standards together with social partners and considers this as a way to align vocational, higher and adult education with labour market needs. The member also wishes to develop a

quality management system and establish a database of providers and services in adult education. Another member is working on ISO standards.

Adult education providers mention e-learning and train-the-trainer programmes as part of future activities. Target groups include migrants, women and youth. One EAEA member is developing study curricula for new occupations in the adult education field (trainer and andragogue), and organises international scientific conferences bringing together scientists and expert practitioners in adult education, representatives of government agencies and ministries, professional associations and other stakeholders both from Croatia and abroad.

## Links to EU and international policy

EU policy documents influence national adult education policies in Croatia. A two-year project to implement the European Agenda for Adult Learning was implemented by the Ministry of Science and Education, partly financed by the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). A Call for Proposals has also been launched to implement Upskilling Pathways through EU funding.

The project to implement the European Agenda, ending October 2017, aimed to create a draft for a new curriculum for elementary adult education, based on key competencies and specific outcomes, which will

educate participants to tackle important situations in everyday life. Elements of the European Agenda present in this project are its focus on basic skills provision, and the development and implementation of an outcome-based approach to adult education, in other words using learning outcomes as a basis for developing adult education policies. The project has promoted Croatia's adult learning system and the importance of lifelong learning, helping to popularize lifelong learning in Croatia. It has also raised awareness about the need to train adult education staff, helped decrease the illiteracy rate and reduce the number of high-school dropouts.

<sup>9</sup> The term "trainer in adult education" refers to an andragogical employee who primarily works as a trainer, an educator for adults, whereas the term "andragogue" is a wider term referring to any person having expertise in the field of adult education and working in this sector. An andragogue can be for instance a career advisor, an education institution principal, a professional manager, etc. An andragogue can also be a researcher in adult education

Adult education providers see the European Agenda's impact within their work: they now focus on developing key competences of adults and have implemented an outcome-based approach to provision programmes. They provide education for the elderly, have provided free education and training to vulnerable groups through European co-funding, and have participated in mobility programmes for students and trainers. Adult education providers in Croatia consider national strategies to be in line with Sustainable Development Goals by promoting quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. Some national targets in

Croatia are to reduce the share of early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) to 4% by 2020 and for 35% of people aged 30-34 to have a degree in tertiary education. The national Strategy of Education, Science and Technology promotes and seeks to develop lifelong learning and adult education. The labour market programmes implemented by the Croatian Employment Service also include measures related to training the unemployed, measures which mainly aim to upgrade individuals' existing knowledge and skills as well as provide new ones.

## Challenges and recommendations

A challenge for adult education providers' future work will be to raise the participation rate in adult education, which has stayed around 3% for the past decade<sup>10</sup>. Providers consider increasing public funding for the sector as a way to encourage participation. Low participation rates in lifelong learning are highlighted by the European Semester report on Croatia, which

notes that only 3,1% of adults aged 25-64 report having participated in lifelong learning. The report underlines the fact that this makes it difficult to upskill and re-skill<sup>11</sup> – in other words it is difficult to improve basic skills through adult education as outlined in the EU's Upskilling Pathways strategy, when adult education reaches only a small proportion of the population.

***“A challenge for adult education providers' future work will be to raise the participation rate in adult education.”***

<sup>10</sup> Eurostat, Online data code: trng\_lfse\_01, data extracted September 2017.

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2017) Country Report Croatia 2017, available on <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-croatia-en.pdf>, p. 36.

# Denmark

Welcoming refugees, life skills, and health and wellbeing are central themes in the Danish adult education sector. In terms of recent policy developments, a proposed reform concerning second chance opportunities for young people risks reducing the number of young people participating in adult education. A recent revision of the Act on Non-Formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity is another threat for the sector, as funding can now be cut if an individual linked to an organisation expresses anti-democratic views. This ban restricts freedom of speech.

## Recent developments

In terms of current activities, welcoming refugees remains a central focus for adult education providers in Denmark. Health and wellbeing, as well as life skills, are other central work topics. The life skills approach aims to improve basic skills provision by broadening the notion of basic skills to that of “life skills”: basic skills provision should include not only literacy and numeracy skills, but also digital skills, health skills (e.g. knowing how to access health care services, how to have a healthy diet), civic skills (e.g. understanding government services and institutions, the role of voting) and financial skills (e.g. managing family finances). Another current work topic is capacity building within the field of public affairs.

In terms of policy developments in Denmark, a significant reform currently being discussed concerns second-chance opportunities for young people. The target group of the reform is young people (from age 15-16 on) who are leaving primary school but are not able to continue directly into ordinary secondary education for various reasons. Most of them do not have the required qualifications to start secondary education, others may have social or psychological issues and a few of them are simply confused and uncertain about their future pathway. At the moment, this group of young people has

many opportunities for further learning. At the same time, having different options also makes it difficult for the young people, their parents, mentors, etc. to know which option to choose. For this reason, the Danish government wants to simplify the type of schooling available to them. The proposal made is to create a formal school where young people must go after leaving primary school if they do not go into ordinary secondary education. The new formal school would have three different pathways: production schools, general education and vocational education and training.

Production schools are a type of non-formal education, and the proposed reform thus recognizes the value of non-formal learning and links it to the formal system. On the other hand, the negative side of the proposed reform is that other types of non-formal education (day folk high schools, residential folk high schools, independent schools for practical life learning and craftsmanship and youth schools) will no longer be accessible for young people leaving primary school. This limits the opportunities available to young people and would reduce the number of pupils in non-formal education. The reform is not yet definitive and is currently being negotiated with opposition parties.

## Links to EU and international policy

The Danish government’s work is linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, with a national action plan on the topic. According to the action plan, Denmark is meeting its requirements for implementing Goal 4 (“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”). The focus of implementation will be on improving possibilities for early school leavers – for example through the creation of a formal school with different pathways as outlined above – and on gender equality in primary and secondary

education. Lifelong learning for adults is not mentioned in the action plan.

Considering the impact of EU adult education policies, one EAEA member notes that the European Agenda for Adult Learning influences adult education in Denmark: because of this document’s focus on growth and employment, active and democratic citizenship – which is also a major component of adult education – is being overlooked.

## Challenges and recommendations

Challenges highlighted by Danish adult education providers are a continued fall of public funding. The reform concerning second chance opportunities available for young people is also a challenge for the adult education sector: with the reform, young people without a secondary education degree would only have access to production schools, so other non-formal schools would no longer have participants from this group of learners.

A recent national development in Denmark has been the revision of the Act on Non-Formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity<sup>12</sup>. This Act deals with governmental support for non-formal adult education, voluntary activities in democratic associations, day folk high schools and the University Extension. The Act has recently been modified so that it now bans funding from organisations considered anti-democratic in acts or words – a move the Danish Adult Education Association considers problematic. Previously, measures to limit anti-democratic acts or words were for instance the fact that anti-democratic organisations – meaning, with an anti-democratic purpose or an anti-democratic ideological background – could not receive funding from the government. There are also laws prohibiting anti-democratic actions such as using violence or actively fighting Denmark’s democratic society, and such actions can be directly punished. DAEA considers that such measures were sufficient.

Debate around governmental funding emerged when television programmes in Denmark alleged that certain Muslim organisations were using governmental

funding for religious purposes instead of educational ones. This was later proven wrong, but in the meantime it put pressure on politicians to react. The Act on Non-Formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity was therefore modified: it not only bans funding from organisations if they are anti-democratic in purpose or ideology, but also instructs to take away funding from organisations if individuals linked to them express anti-democratic points of view. Such individuals could be not only teachers or board members, but also guest lecturers of the organisation.

In terms of what is considered “anti-democratic”, an example given in the revised Act is that it is anti-democratic to advocate for barring women from the labour market in general, but not anti-democratic to advocate for barring them from particular jobs such as that of a priest. The line drawn between what is or is not anti-democratic is thus unclear. Although it gives several such examples, the Act does not define the term “anti-democratic” or give information about who decides whether a point of view is anti-democratic. This makes the term open to interpretation and gives local authorities/politicians the power to decide what they consider as anti-democratic, in the absence of clear rules by which to abide. DAEA considers that beyond anti-democratic actions, the revised Act also “punishes” anti-democratic points of view, which are not given any space to be expressed through the threat of cutting organisations’ funding. DAEA considers that this limits freedom of speech. In terms of the impact on adult education, the revised Act is a threat for the sector as it limits providers’ activities, limits the possibility of expressing and discussing different points of view.

***“Welcoming refugees remains a central focus for adult education providers in Denmark.”***

12 For an English translation of the initial version of the Act, see: Danish Ministry of Education (2011) “Consolidation Act on support for non-formal adult education, voluntary activities in democratic associations, day folk high schools and the University Extension (the Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity)” (English translation by A. Jørgensen), in EPALE, available on: [https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/the\\_act\\_on\\_non-formal\\_education\\_and\\_democratic\\_voluntary\\_activity.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/the_act_on_non-formal_education_and_democratic_voluntary_activity.pdf).

# Estonia

A strong focus in the Estonian adult education field is the education of disadvantaged groups, but the lack of a national strategy concerning this group of learners is a challenge for providers and causes service provision to be fragmented in the absence of national coordination. The European Agenda has raised awareness about lifelong learning in Estonia, and especially shifted focus onto outreach and engaging adults with a low educational level or little qualifications into the labour market.

## Recent developments

The education of disadvantaged adult learners remains a strong focus in adult education providers' work, as it has been in previous years. The European Social Fund is an important funding source for providers' projects.

One EAEA member notes they are piloting an initiative to reach out to new learners through community activities, for instance in community houses and libraries.

## Links to EU and international policy

The European Agenda for Adult Learning has an impact on adult learning, by giving attention to outreach and engaging adults with a lower level of education or with little qualifications into the labour market. Providers feel that the Agenda has a positive impact and has raised awareness about lifelong learning. A national strategy for implementing Upskilling Pathways is currently being discussed at the Ministry of Education

and Research. The "Sustainable Estonia 21" Strategy seeks to implement Sustainable Development Goals at the national level. The SDG 4 dealing with education is mentioned indirectly in this document. Lifelong learning opportunities and quality education are also promoted through a Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 dealing with lifelong learning and quality issues.

## Challenges and recommendations

Providers consider that the general adult education strategies in their country are in line with the needs of society. A challenge highlighted by providers is, however, the fact that there is no national strategy

for the education of disadvantaged adult learners. Reaching disadvantaged target groups is currently in providers' hands and initiatives are fragmented.

***“Reaching disadvantaged target groups is currently in providers' hands and initiatives are fragmented.”***

# Finland

**A reform concerning vocational education and training has recently been developed in Finland. The reform makes training age-neutral and sets competence-based qualification as a new standard: in order to obtain a given vocational certificate, individuals need to show they have a particular set of competences, without regard to how they were obtained. Other recent developments in Finland include developing the provision of integration training and literacy training for migrants. Adult education providers in Finland highlight the importance of advocacy work to ensure the financial support they receive from the government is maintained.**

## Recent developments

During 2016-2017 an important reform concerning vocational education and training (VET) has been prepared in Finland, which will have an effect also on learning institutions providing non-formal adult education, as many of them provide vocational training. The reform will make training age-neutral (no boundaries between education for young people and adults), and training will be based on competence-based qualification. This means that a certificate/a proof of qualification is awarded on the basis of proven competences. Individuals are tested on concrete situations of production and services required in the workplace, and need to show that they possess a particular set of competences required in such situations. Training is often organised prior to this type of testing in order to acquire the particular competences. However, if an individual has already acquired the competences through other means, such as work experience, studies or other activities, they are also able to go through the testing and be awarded the same qualification. Funding principles for VET will also change and the network of learning institutions will become less dense.

Adult education providers in Finland consider adult education policies in their country to be somewhat in line with the needs of society. Regarding the participation of disadvantaged groups in non-formal adult education, promising steps have been taken to increase the participation of migrant adults thanks to a specific working set group by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Education for migrants has been examined and developed over the past year, and main priorities have been literacy training and the funding of integration training. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has set up a working group to work on these topics, which includes representatives from the non-formal adult education sector.

Future work themes highlighted by adult education providers include the development of migrant education and training, preparations for the implementation of the vocational education and training reform, and advocacy to ensure public funding for non-formal adult education is maintained.

## Links to EU and international policy

The European Agenda for Adult Learning has been partly implemented in Finland through three programmes focusing on young adults' skills: the Young Adults' Skills Programme (NAO 2013-2017), Improving the Competences of Adults (ENO 2015-2016) and Vocational Education of Migrants (MAO 2017-2018), currently being implemented. One EAEA member notes the Agenda gives adult education providers in Finland a wider European perspective and provides them with important viewpoints and areas to emphasise, which Finnish adult education can draw from.

Concerning Upskilling Pathways, the Ministry of Education and Culture has set up a working group to investigate development needs within lifelong learning. The working group will assess conditions for and possible obstacles to implementing lifelong learning within the Finnish education system, and will prepare short- and long-term suggestions to improve current conditions. It is also expected the working group will provide suggestions on how to develop the skills and competences of individuals with low qualifications and a lack of basic skills, or those marginalized from the education system. The working group is expected to complete this work and provide conclusions by the end of 2017.

There is also a programme named Taito ("Skill"), which is a series of projects selected by the Ministry. Projects focus on the improvement of basic skills such as ICT, numeracy and literacy of adults, for instance adults re-entering the labour market after being unemployed. Within the Taito programme, the Taikoja ("Magic") project aims to coordinate and form networks between the other projects, to collect good practices and operation models from them, and spread these into the educational structure.

The Finnish government is committed to the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and several non-formal adult education institutions are also committed to implementing the programme. The Finnish Adult Education Association for example, an EAEA member, has signed a commitment to being involved in the implementation. A national strategy and implementation plan concerning education for sustainable development has been compiled in 2016-2017. It has been proposed that the strategy and plan should develop measuring systems in order to evaluate effectively the implementation of sustainable development. Work around the strategy has sought to find the right and adequate.

## Challenges and recommendations

In terms of future challenges, education institutions are preparing themselves for the implementation of the reform on vocational education and training. A new system concerning the funding of migrant integration training will also be implemented, and literacy training for migrants is being developed at

the level of learning institutions. Public funding for education is an ongoing topic of discussion due to the shortfall of public funds in the Finnish economy. This makes it important for adult education providers to advocate for ensuring the public funding they receive is maintained.

***“Promising steps have been taken to increase the participation of migrant adults thanks to a specific working set group by the Ministry of Education and Culture.”***

# Georgia

**A recent development in adult education in Georgia is the development of a system for validating non-formal and informal learning. There is some attention to adult education at the policy level, and its importance has been emphasised by officials, but this positive attitude towards adult education should be translated into concrete strategies in order to strengthen the field. One of the challenges highlighted by Georgian adult education providers is the need for more research and data concerning their field, for example to evaluate the rate of participation in adult education.**

## Recent developments

A policy paper has recently been produced in Georgia concerning the development of a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). The methodology for validation of non-formal/informal learning for the levels I-III of vocational education was piloted last year. In order to make the validation of levels IV-V possible as well, the related legislation on vocational education and training is currently being reviewed. The methodology and guidance are also being evaluated on the basis of the results of the piloting. Intensive capacity building activities have been carried out for colleges, sector committees, sector associations, vocational guidance staff and non-formal education providers.

Adult education providers in Georgia note advocacy work should be intensified in order to give non-formal adult education a place within the present education policy agenda. The Vocational Education and Training Strategy 2017-2020 and Work Plan mention the importance of lifelong learning and adult education, an integral part of it. The importance of non-formal adult education has also often been emphasised by officials of the Georgian Government. One EAEA member notes these positive developments need to be strengthened and developed by creating a concrete strategy for adult education. A strategy based on research should underline the main priorities for non-formal adult education.

A new adult education centre has been opened in Amprolauri Municipality in the fall of 2016. In terms of important events, The Annual Adult Education

Conference and Festival took place in July 2016, gathering many organisations working in the field of adult education and receiving wide media coverage. This was an important event to raise awareness about the importance of the sector. The Adult Education and Development Conferences were organised in October 2017 by DVV International with support of its partners, to address topics of global relevance and strategic importance for further promoting adult education. Currently in its fifth year, the conference dealt with the set-up, management and benefits of adult education centres as key structures for development. Over a hundred international stakeholders and experts presented and discussed their approaches and the challenges encountered.

In terms of current work themes, one EAEA member is working on capacity building for adult education centres across regions of Georgia. This includes structural training provision for staff, education module development and training of trainers. Cooperating and sharing experiences with other adult education institutions in the EU is an important aspect of the capacity building programme. Other work themes include strengthening the provision of entrepreneurial education, by strengthening training for trainers and developing guidelines for provision methods. One of the goals of this work is to make entrepreneurship education accessible to the most vulnerable communities. In addition to these topics, work themes for the coming year will be to strengthen advocacy work for adult education, and increase regional and international cooperation within the field.

## Links to EU and international policy

The Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN have resulted in several development documents being elaborated in Georgia: the EU-Georgia Association Agenda on Social and Economic Development, Strategy “Georgia 2020”, the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights in Georgia, and the Public Administration Reform Roadmap and its Action Plan 2015-2016. Policy priorities set by the government in its work towards achieving SDGs include education reform; other priorities are economic reform, spatial development in terms of regions and infrastructure, and reform to governance. Adult education providers note that their work provides non-formal education opportunities for the most vulnerable communities, in order for them to acquire relevant skills for employment, career advancement and entrepreneurship. This also contributes to sustainable development.

The work of adult education centres is in line with various priorities set in the European Agenda for Adult Learning. Providers note they put great effort into improving the quality and efficiency of education and training by improving the quality of adult education staff. The centres cooperate closely with local government to make their own operations

productive. Centres have also been engaging new learners in adult education and providing access to learning for the most underrepresented communities. There have been projects to enhance learning opportunities for older adults, including intergenerational learning. Centres also create an innovative non-formal learning environment in very remote areas, and promote transversal key competences of the European Key Competence Framework.

Upskilling Pathways is another key strategy present in adult education centres’ work. A recent project on entrepreneurship by the Georgian Adult Education Network has been designed to develop the main steps of the upskilling pathway. The project gives adults from the most vulnerable regions the opportunity to assess their entrepreneurship skills, and provides flexible non-formal learning on entrepreneurship. At the end of the project, the entrepreneurship skills acquired by adults will be validated and recognized. These steps correspond to the three steps outlined in Upskilling Pathways: assessing skills, providing a tailored and flexible learning offer, and validating and recognizing the acquired skills.

## Challenges and recommendations

Adult education in Georgia is faced with a number of challenges. There is a lack of policymakers and academic personnel within non-formal adult education. The capacity of trainers working with adults is in need of improvement in terms of methodology, programming, assessment and evaluation. The Georgian Adult Education Network (GAEN), an EAEA member, notes there is also a lack of reliable research data in the field of adult education. Research is mainly conducted by funding organisations and then mostly deals with the particular issues the funding organisation is interested in. There are no reliable statistics available

concerning participation in lifelong learning in Georgia, and in the absence of reliable data, it is difficult to know what percentage of adults is engaged in education. GAEN notes that based on their work experience, public awareness of adult education as well as participation rates remain low, and it seems unlikely Georgia will reach the EU benchmark of a 15% participation rate in adult education by 2020. Another challenge for the adult education field is the lack of state funds for non-formal adult education, both at local and central levels. Adult education programmes are mainly implemented by international funding organisations.

***“Adult education providers in Georgia note advocacy work should be intensified in order to give non-formal adult education a place within the present education policy agenda.”***

# Germany

**The integration of refugees within German society remains a central role of non-formal learning in Germany. Other central themes within the adult education sector include literacy and basic skills provision, as well as digitalization.**

## Recent developments

Providing learning opportunities for refugees remains an important component of adult education in Germany. The contents of teaching are, however, shifting: language acquisition was a priority in 2015-2016 when the number of refugees arriving in Germany was high, but teaching is now increasingly focused on vocational training for refugees. EAEA member DVV highlights the need for cooperation between different adult education sectors, such as languages and vocational training, but also civic education, health education and cultural education, as all of these elements contribute to the process of integrating refugees within German society. DVV also proposes to initiate common education processes for refugees and the “host society”, which would focus on their common needs in order to foster social cohesion. The topic of establishing links between different education areas will be the focus of a DVV conference in June 2018. In addition to migrants and refugees, EAEA members list young people and people with basic skills needs such as literacy as target groups for 2017/2018. Central work topics are integration, social inclusion and strengthening democracy, basic skills provision, as well as digitalization.

At the national level, a focus is put on basic skills provision and especially literacy. The German Federal Ministry of Education has declared a Decade for Literacy 2016-2026, based on a National Strategy for Adult Literacy and

Basic Education and Training in Germany. Although these initiatives are separate from the EU's Upskilling Pathways, they are largely in line with its aim to strengthen basic skills provision within Member States (literacy, numeracy and digital skills).

Learning with digital media is another policy priority in Germany. The German Federal Ministry of Education organises a Digital Summit every year and has published a national strategy concerning digitalization and education in 2016. One EAEA member finds, however, that these national initiatives do not yet give an adequate role to adult education. There is a digitalization of learning environments, meaning that digital media is used more in educational environments, which has an impact on learning processes. At the same time, the overwhelming presence of digital media in society creates a need for digital competences and information literacy amongst learners. These seem to be important themes within the German adult education sector, as several EAEA members mention digitalization and learning with digital media as an important theme of their activities. For example, “Digital participation for all” was the motto of the Adult Education Conference held in Berlin in June 2016, gathering around 1500 participants. The German national focus on learning with digital media is coherent with the focus of the European Agenda for Adult Learning on this theme.

## Links to EU and international policy

EAEA member Bayerischer Volkshochschulverband (VHS) notes it has been working with the German national coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning to raise awareness about the objectives and content of the Agenda amongst politicians and education providers in Bavaria. These activities have

been successful in involving the Ministry of Education. VHS notes the Agenda is an efficient advocacy tool in the organisation's work as it enables VHS to have an impact on regional policies and strategies, in addition to setting up public access conferences on the national priorities.

## Challenges and recommendations

A shortage of skilled professionals is an issue in Germany in general, and also within the adult education sector. Adult education trainers at public adult education centres are not always easy to find, although this varies from one region to the other. Trainers are usually self-employed, a status which comes with its challenges linked to social security, as well as a financial instability when teaching is trainers' main source of income.

One EAEA member notes there is a certain scepticism from stakeholders within the formal education sector regarding the quality and comparability of the non-formal sector. These topics are currently being discussed by a German Qualification Framework working group.

***“At the national level, a focus is put on basic skills provision and especially literacy.”***

# Greece

The political context in Greece is still marked by the financial crisis which started in the country in 2009. Institutions are under strict financial supervision and political discourse focuses on the public debt. Adult education providers find that their field of work is given little attention in this context. A positive recent development is the recognition of the Greek city of Larissa as a UNESCO Learning City. An initiative to upskill individuals has recently been established: a voucher system which fosters employability and re-entrance into work for the unemployed. In terms of future work themes for civil society organisations, several EAEA members highlight the importance of democracy education and critical reflection as tools for individual and social transformation.

## Recent developments

Greek cities have recently participated in the UNESCO Learning Cities initiative. UNESCO considers as a learning city a city which promotes lifelong learning in various ways: by promoting inclusive learning from basic to higher education, revitalizing family and community learning, facilitating learning for the workplace, using digital learning methods, improving the quality of learning, and encouraging a culture of learning throughout life<sup>13</sup>. The UNESCO Learning City Award was initiated in 2015 and is now distributed every two years to cities across the globe that have made significant progress towards the above-mentioned characteristics, referred to as “Key Features of Learning Cities”. A remarkable development for adult education providers in Greece is the fact that a Greek city, Larissa, has been given the 2017 UNESCO Learning City Award and is thus recognized as being an innovative city in the field of education. Several other Greek cities are also part of the Global Network of Learning Cities and are thus committed to developing into a learning city over time.

In terms of current developments within the adult

education sector, the Hellenic Open University has developed into a key player within the field of adult education and has announced many new subjects in its course provision. A new voucher system has begun running, which targets people aged 29 to 64 who are unemployed, aiming to foster their employability and re-entrance into work. Participants in the voucher system are offered training and job consulting, and a certification exam is organised to verify/validate the qualifications they have acquired. Certification exams are held by organisations licensed by the EOOPEP, the National Qualifications Body.

Greek EAEA members note that a central theme in their future work will be the issue of democratic awareness and critical reflection as a tool for individual and social transformation, to foster a shift to an open, collaborative and reciprocal society. Another future focus highlighted by providers is the integration of refugees in society and the labour market. Structural unemployment (NEETs and individuals over 50) and the upskilling of the workforce are also priorities given the current context of high unemployment.

## Links to EU and international policy

The new voucher system for unemployed people is linked to certification exams reflecting the National Qualifications Framework. This is in line with the EU’s Upskilling Pathways, which highlights

the importance of validating and recognizing the skills acquired by learners through use of national qualifications frameworks<sup>14</sup>. There is no national strategy to implement the European Agenda for Adult

<sup>13</sup> See §(16), §9 in European Council (2016), “Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (2016/C 484/01)”, in Official Journal of the European Union. Available on: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501757293132&uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501757293132&uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)).

<sup>14</sup> UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2017), “UNESCO Learning City Award”, available on <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/unesco-learning-city-award>.

Learning, but the work of civil society organisations contributes to its implementation by sharing some of its priority areas. An EAEA member in Patras notes, for instance, that involving learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in education is key to their work. The member is developing a partnership with a local group of trainers and has introduced them to methodologies for reaching out to and empowering learners from

disadvantaged groups<sup>15</sup>. The cooperation aims to involve the local community in school matters, foster respect and tackle racism and prejudices, in order to address issues arising between parents at school, new migrants in the area and Roma students, among others. This type of work is in line with the European Agenda's focus on reaching out to disadvantaged groups<sup>16</sup>.

## Challenges and recommendations

In municipalities across Greece, LLL Centres (“Κέντρα Διά Βίου Μάθησης”) announce free courses in several subjects (free based on certain social criteria), but one EAEA member notes these are not well promoted and would benefit from a campaign to give information about available courses to the most disadvantaged groups. Second Chance Schools would also benefit from being developed further, the main problem being the long bureaucratic procedures linked to hiring new adult education staff<sup>17</sup>.

One EAEA member notes there are differences in the participation levels in adult education depending on individuals' level of prior education. Information about the benefits of lifelong learning is not sufficiently available to individuals with a low level of qualifications and their participation in adult education is low. These individuals mainly link adult education to employment: if the knowledge acquired through education helps them get a new or better job, then they consider participating in education is worth their time and efforts. For the moment, as finding employment is difficult in a period of crisis, people do not see the benefit of participating in adult education and are discouraged from participating. The EAEA member notes the wider benefits of lifelong

learning are not sufficiently well known. Such benefits are for example creative thinking, peer learning, self-employment strategies, taking initiatives, creating social networks, and understanding individuals' social context better. Learning can also make people happier. By contrast to people with a low level of qualifications, people with a medium/high level of education have a strong interest in lifelong learning, for instance by participating in the courses of the Hellenic Open University for a fee.

The Greek political context and austerity measures affect the work of Greek EAEA members. The impact of the 2009 financial crisis is still visible: the financial supervision under which Greece has been since the financial crisis restricts the government's activities, and political initiatives in Greece focus on the issue of public debt. One EAEA member notes that in this context adult education, and especially liberal or civic adult education, is heavily neglected. It is not seen as a priority, funding is insufficient and little attention is paid to initiatives such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning. More attention is paid to strategies and reform within formal education. The lack of funding is an important challenge for adult education providers.

***“The Greek political context and austerity measures affect the work of Greek EAEA members.”***

<sup>15</sup> These methods are based on lessons learnt from the Outreach, Empowerment and Diversity project with EAEA.

<sup>16</sup> This is mentioned in the European Agenda's priority areas. See §3. in European Council (2011), Annex to the “Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning. 2011/C 372/01”, in Official Journal of the European Union, available on: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501756608119&uri=CELEX:32011G1220\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501756608119&uri=CELEX:32011G1220(01)).

<sup>17</sup> iPaideia (2017) “SOS για τα Σχολεία Δεύτερης Ευκαιρίας Θύτης η γραφειοκρατία”, available on: <http://www.ipaideia.gr/paideia/sos-gia-ta-sxoleia-deuteris-eukairias-thitis-i-grafeiokratia>.

# Iceland

A major development in Iceland is the recent launch of a National Qualifications Framework, which is a direct result of the European Agenda for Adult Learning. The Framework should make it easier for individuals to move between formal and non-formal education and will foster validation of individuals' prior competences. Providers consider funding for adult education to be largely insufficient, for instance for language provision for immigrants.

## Recent developments

The Icelandic National Qualifications Framework (ISQF) was launched in October 2016, which adult education providers see as a milestone for the visibility of lifelong learning. The Framework is especially useful to allow the general public to connect between formal and non-formal learning. Its purpose is to increase

transparency within the country's educational system and the transparency of European educational systems overall. Adult education providers note that validation of prior competences is growing and will expand thanks to the Framework. New laws on adult education may be launched in the near future.

## Links to EU and international policy

The European Agenda for Adult Learning is implemented by the Education and Training Service Centre of Iceland. The Icelandic National Qualifications Framework is a direct result of the European Agenda, and providers

believe many European projects result from it as well. Adult education providers have not seen the effect of the EU's Upskilling Pathways in their work so far.

## Challenges and recommendations

A challenge for the adult education field is the increasing number of immigrants and asylum seekers, which calls for a new strategy in the adult education sector. Such a strategy should focus on mutual adaptation and preventing social isolation. Providers also note that increasing tourism is a challenge for Iceland and will be beneficial to educational opportunities.

Providers consider public funding to be largely insufficient. A field in which providers highlight the

need for more funding is language learning provision for immigrants, which has not evolved over the past decade. One EAEA member highlights the fact that the Icelandic society needs immigrants who speak Icelandic, as does the labour force, yet Icelandic language learning is not promoted by the authorities. Another issue for immigrants is the fact that the education they have received in their homeland is often not recognized in Iceland and they encounter difficulties when trying to study in the country.

***“The Icelandic National Qualifications Framework (ISQF) was launched in October 2016, which adult education providers see as a milestone for the visibility of lifelong learning.”***

# Ireland

EAEA members in Ireland highlight the importance of equitable access to adult education: a national and EU-level focus on education towards employment should not exclude people not involved in the labour market from adult education, and should not overlook the wider benefits of learning. Furthermore, a difficult financial situation in the community education sector should not penalize the most disadvantaged learners.

## Recent developments

There have been a number of changes to the Irish landscape of adult education in recent years. These include the creation of a national Further Education and Training authority (SOLAS) in charge of implementing the 2014-2019 Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy, as well as the establishment of Qualifications and Quality Ireland as the certification body responsible for the National Framework of Qualifications. An Irish EAEA member notes that the impacts of these new

structures are beginning to be felt now that a few years have passed since their creation. In order to implement the FET Strategy, a National Further Education and Training Forum has been established, led by AONTAS. Other new initiatives in 2016-2017 are the Action Plan for Education 2017, and the new National Skills Council the purpose of which is to foster Ireland's ability to anticipate and respond to the rapidly changing skills needs across all sectors.

## Links to EU and international policy

The Irish government's current work largely shares the goals of the EU's Upskilling Pathways, but the government will also be developing a plan specifically for implementing and reporting on Upskilling Pathways towards the end of 2017, for initial implementation in 2018. EAEA member AONTAS is national coordinator

of the European Agenda for Adult Learning, which has been successful in bringing together a variety of stakeholders from across the Irish state, education institutions and civil society, stakeholders whose communications with one another have been limited in the past.

## Challenges and recommendations

The Irish national 2014-2019 FET Strategy focuses on skills development and employability, but some stakeholders within the adult education sector highlight the risk that the implementation of this strategy cause other benefits of adult education to be overlooked at the national level: learning also has benefits for health, personal development, social engagement and community development. Adults who are not involved in the labour market because of personal circumstances or age would also benefit from these aspects of learning, and should not be excluded from national adult education provision. In addition, AONTAS notes that focusing exclusively on education for the purpose of employment will not be sufficient to reach the EU benchmark of 15% participation in lifelong learning.

Reduction of the funding streams for community education continues to be a challenge for adult education providers, as it has been in recent years. Irish community education organisations are funded through a variety of sources. Research in 2011 based

on 48 members of the AONTAS Community Education Network found that 10 government departments and over 70 funding streams were accessed by community education providers. These funding streams have been reduced in recent times.

Securing funding for learning opportunities for disadvantaged adults is especially important for improving their access to learning. AONTAS maintains its stance of lobbying for the waiver of the QQI re-engagement fee (about 5000€) for community education providers which have a history of providing accredited programmes under the previous FETAC structure. Decreasing funding in the community education sector over the past ten years makes it difficult for providers to take on this new fee, and the cost will likely be passed on to learners. This will greatly decrease accessibility of accredited learning programmes for a public predominantly composed of early school leavers and unemployed – which will be detrimental for them as well as for their communities.

***“Securing funding for learning opportunities for disadvantaged adults is especially important for improving their access to learning.”***

# Liechtenstein

Liechtenstein's adult education sector receives important support from the State, and government subsidies for providers enable course fees to be lower. Engaging new learners, and especially adults with a lower level of education or from disadvantaged backgrounds, is a challenge for providers. A voucher system and better counselling services are therefore being developed to facilitate access for new learners. An important recent national initiative was the "Education instead of the screen" series of events, organised collaboratively by all accredited adult education institutions in Liechtenstein.

## Recent developments

Adult education providers in Liechtenstein note that lifelong learning is very important in their country. There is no clear national strategy in the field, but accredited adult education institutions are controlled by the State and receive an important amount of funding from it, which makes course fees significantly lower than they would be without any State subsidies. Providers note that State subsidies and control ensure a wide and interesting course offer.

An important recent initiative was the organisation of a series of events under the slogan "Bildung statt

Bildschirm" ("Education instead of the screen"). This was the first time all accredited adult education institutions in Liechtenstein (seven institutions for the moment) organised together a series of events. The events aimed to make adult learning more visible, as well as create discussion around a relevant topic. Over the year 2017, each institution organised an event and focused on an aspect of the topic related to their own work. The Eltern Kind Forum (Parent-Child Forum), for example, invited an expert on sociology of the internet to give a presentation entitled "Father, mother, tablet, child".

## Links to EU and international policy

The noticeable impact of the European Agenda for Adult Learning is small. Its National Coordinator is the Liechtenstein Adult Education Foundation, which has widened its course offer in the field of basic skills and runs courses in the work environment. Upskilling Pathways has not been implemented so far due to a lack of capacity, but adult education providers try to

include aspects of it into their planned activities. The EAEA member considers Upskilling Pathways has influenced their perspective on adult learning towards a more resource-based approach: individuals all have their own "resources", their skills and talents, and the role of adult education is to make these visible.

## Challenges and recommendations

Engaging new learners is a challenge for adult education providers, and the EAEA member notes this will be a focus in their work during the next two years – especially engaging adults with a low level of education or from disadvantaged backgrounds. As mentioned above, the member is convinced everyone has their own talents, a certain potential. The role of adult education is to support individuals to make these talents more visible and help them develop their potential, which would have a beneficial effect not only on the individual but also on the labour market and the whole society. This focus on individuals' potential is thus at the same time a kind of personal development approach, but also a way to strengthen collaboration with the labour market

and job centres. The member notes they have realised that 16% of the population between 25 and 64 has no formal qualification and has only finished the minimum compulsory schooling. Most of this group has not been integrated in adult learning, and in the next two years the member would like to focus on engaging this group in learning. With this aim in mind, a type of voucher system is being developed as a financial instrument to give new learners an opportunity to participate, and new or better forms of counseling are under construction in order to improve educational guidance for new learners and facilitate access to learning. The EAEA member is also curious about the effect engaging new learners will have on the adult learning offer.

***“Providers note that State subsidies and control ensure a wide and interesting course offer.”***

# Macedonia

Recent developments in Macedonia include the setting up of a new system for validation of non-formal adult education and informal learning. Two major strategies have also been developed in 2016-2017 and their implementation will begin over the next year: the national Adult Education Strategy and Strategy for Lifelong Learning. As a candidate country for EU-accession, Macedonia seeks to align its reforms and strategic priorities with the EU's goals and policies. National adult education policies are therefore in line with the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

## Recent developments

Macedonia is currently setting up a new functional system for validation of non-formal adult education and informal learning. The process of preparation began at the end of 2015, receiving a strong support from the European Training Foundation (ETF). The current setup of the system is supported by DVV International and its Macedonian partner Lifelong Learning Centre. Validation will continue to be a focus for national policymakers' work, the challenge being the creation of an effective and efficient validation system.

2016 and 2017 have been important years for adult

education and lifelong learning in Macedonia: a variety of reforms have taken place in the fields of vocational education and training and adult education, thanks to the EU-IPA project "Enhancing Lifelong Learning". Among the outcomes of this project are a new Adult Education Strategy and the development of a national Strategy for Lifelong Learning (to be completed by the end of 2017). Providers see these two strategies as big steps forward for the Macedonian educational system. Their implementation will be an important component in providers' work over the next year.

## Links to EU and international policy

Adult education providers consider national policies and strategies to be in line with the European Agenda for Adult Learning. Macedonia is a candidate country for EU accession, which gives it a strong incentive to align its reforms and strategic priorities with the EU's goals and policies. It has sought to do so over the past few years.

One EAEA member notes its activities contribute to

the priorities set in the European Agenda, and the organisation will continue to support state institutions in charge of adult education in the development and implementation of national adult education policies and priorities in line with EU trends and standards. The member notes emphasis will therefore be put, as has been the case so far, on widening access to quality education and raising labour market competitiveness for vulnerable and marginalized groups in society.

## Challenges and recommendations

Adult education providers consider the implementation of the recently created Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Strategies to be a challenge for their future work, as is the development of an efficient validation system. Providers' work will also focus on building the capacity of managers, educators and trainers within

non-formal adult education, raising awareness about lifelong learning among citizens, as well as contributing to the development of a learning culture in Macedonia and to decreasing unemployment and combating poverty.

***“Macedonia is currently setting up a new functional system for validation of non-formal adult education and informal learning.”***

# The Netherlands

Adult education providers in the Netherlands seek to increase participation rates and create a stronger learning culture in their country through different measures of the national Skills Strategy. Basic skills provision is a top priority in adult education providers' work and different national programmes in this field have recently been extended. The EAEA member would, however, like the definition of lifelong learning to be widened so that it includes more than basic skills provision.

## Recent developments

In terms of national developments in the Netherlands, the SER advisory board of the Dutch government invited the OECD to complete a survey on the national Skills Strategy, a process in which many adult education stakeholders have been involved. The final report from the survey has recently been published. The Skills Strategy focuses on creating more partial VET certificates, extending the right to deduction for individuals who finished their studies without a Master's degree, and introducing a personal development budget. These measures are intended to contribute to developing a stronger learning culture in the Netherlands, to encourage citizens to engage in learning and thus increase participation rates in adult education. A new Permanent Learning division has also been created within the Ministry of Education. The existing Skills Strategy will now be transformed into an action plan and it is expected that the new incoming government will give a more important role to education.

EAEA member Learn for Life aims to advocate for establishing a new structure for adult education. Together with EPALE and other organisations, Learn for Life will organise a debate with parliamentary bodies responsible for education in order to discuss a new structure which would ensure quality in adult education in the context of its decentralization to local municipalities.

Adult education providers in the Netherlands consider basic skills provision as a top priority within their work, and programmes dealing with literacy and numeracy have indeed been extended. The Taal voor het Leven (Language for Life) programme, for example,

has been extended to more municipalities. The aim of this programme is to train a variety of actors in recognizing individuals with low literacy skills, and to improve literacy levels within this target group. The programme is a collaboration between municipal authorities, Regional Training Centres and other language education providers, public libraries, welfare organisations (housing corporations, food banks, schools, etc.) and volunteer organisations.

The programme forms a network between the various organisations, who develop together a plan to find people with low literacy skills and motivate them to improve their literacy. Organisations are taught different methods of reaching out to individuals with low literacy skills and testing their skills level mainly in terms of language, but also numeracy and computer skills. Individuals can then be referred to learning opportunities. Literacy Hubs have been set up (mainly in libraries) with this aim, giving advice and information about basic skills provision to potential learners. The Language for Life programme also provides language teaching for learners and "train-the-trainer" opportunities to train language directors in elaborating learning programmes and language coaches in teaching basic skills. Learners' progress is monitored.

The programme was initiated by the Dutch Reading & Writing Foundation and ran 2013-2015, and it has now been expanded into a nationwide programme sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Health and Social Affairs, from beginning of 2016 – end of 2018. Dutch adult education providers note that in a developed society such as the Netherlands it is still

taboo to admit your lack of basic skills, and this makes it challenging to find and identify native Dutch people lacking such skills. The Language for Life programme aims to address this issue.

In terms of other programmes providing basic skills, the Language Agreement has been continued and extended, with seventy employers committing to improving the language skills of workers with low literacy skills. The Tel mee voor Taal (Count with

Language) programme has also been continued and extended. Through this programme, three ministries work together to tackle low literacy and stimulate pleasure in reading. Other themes adult education providers are currently working on are health and education, learning opportunities for refugees, learning in later life and campaigning to interest more university students in working in the field of adult education.

## Links to EU and international policy

Dutch adult education providers do not see a direct impact of the European Agenda for Adult Learning or of Upskilling Pathways within their work. One EAEA member notes, however, that the European Agenda

is a good framework for influencing politicians. It is a useful tool supporting the actors in education who wish to transform the current adult education system.

## Challenges and recommendations

EAEA member Learn for Life finds that adult education policies at the national level have too strong an emphasis on basic skills, and that more attention should be paid to general work skills and entrepreneurial skills. This may change, but it will largely depend on the new government, the priorities it sets and the initiatives it undertakes. These will not be implemented before 2018.

The organisation also finds that the definition of

lifelong learning should be widened to include more than basic skills provision. In its Dutch definition, lifelong learning is mainly understood as referring to learning basic skills and particularly literacy, numeracy and digital skills. For Learn for Life, this definition is reductive and should be broadened. The organisation is currently working on a promotion campaign to widen the concept of lifelong learning.

***“In its Dutch definition, lifelong learning is mainly understood as referring to learning basic skills and particularly literacy, numeracy and digital skills.”***

# Poland

Recent highlights in the Polish adult education field include a Forum on Adult Education and informative seminars about adult education and the Erasmus+ funding programme. Employees with low basic skills and disadvantaged groups will be key target groups in providers' work over the next year. Providers note a number of challenges for adult education in their country, in the areas of basic skills, reskilling and key competences, including the validation of prior competences acquired in an informal or non-formal way. Overall, adults should be further encouraged to participate in learning.

## Recent developments

A Forum on Adult Education was held in Poland in November 2016, and informative seminars about adult education and the possibilities of applying to Erasmus+ have recently been organised across the country. Adult education providers in Poland will mainly work with low-skilled adult employees and

disadvantaged groups in 2017-2018. Specific themes include new skills and professions on the European labour market, including standards of professional competences described by knowledge, skills and social competences.

## Links to EU and international policy

Adult education providers in Poland are not aware of any recent developments for the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning in their country, and Upskilling Pathways has not had an impact on providers' work so far. There is some work conducted on Sustainable Development Goals: a publicly-accessible

application "Sustainable Development Indicators" has been created, as a tool for sharing and presenting indicators to monitor sustainable development at different levels of governance. A "Platform SDG – Sustainable Development Goals" is also in place.

## Challenges and recommendations

An EAEA member in Poland highlights a number of challenges within the Polish adult education sector: there should be further recognition of competences acquired via informal and non-formal education, and basic skills and key competences should be developed. There should also be strategies for reskilling,

including career counselling. Overall, the rate of adults participating in lifelong learning should be increased and adults should be encouraged to participate in lifelong learning, which includes the development of educational staff working with adults.

***“The rate of adults participating in lifelong learning should be increased.”***

# Portugal

The newly-elected national government in Portugal has declared its intention to foster adult education, which is an encouraging development for providers. The Qualifica programme has been launched, focusing on vocational training and validation of prior skills. A programme to implement Upskilling Pathways is also currently being developed. There is an acute shortage of resources and a need for long-term policies in the Portuguese adult education field, but there is hope the new government's interest in the sector will help address these challenges. Adult education can play a role in Portuguese society by combating illiteracy, and making learning and culture more accessible for all.

## Recent developments

The newly-elected Portuguese government has declared its commitment to adult education and has launched Qualifica, a new programme aiming to promote adults' skills and qualifications. The programme will be carried out by specific local centres and should reach 300 adults by the end of 2017. The will to strengthen adult education and the launch of Qualifica are a shift from the previous government who had largely overlooked adult education. EAEA member APCEP (Portuguese Association for Lifelong Culture and Learning) has taken part in previous consultations, and notes it is satisfied with the current public interest

in adult education, but disagrees slightly with the strong focus on vocational training of the programme.

For Portuguese EAEA members, key work themes for 2017-2018 include education for citizenship, the role of civil society organisations in adult learning, community education and family literacy. People with a low level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and people in the job market with a need for a certain professional qualification/certification are important target groups.

## Links to EU and international policy

There has been recent work in Portugal to prepare the implementation of Upskilling Pathways: EAEA members APCEP and Escola Profissional Amar Terra Verde have been collaborating on a partnership with ANQEP (the National Agency for Qualification and Professional Learning) and other public and non-profit organisations for a two-year action-research-training programme concerning adult literacy and basic skills. This programme is aimed at implementing the EU's Upskilling Pathways. The contents of the Qualifica Programme also seem to go in the same direction as this EU strategy.

Sustainable development is promoted in Portugal, among others, through civil society organisations' work: one EAEA member will be working in the area of adult literacy for disadvantaged groups, will hold debates on the role of lifelong learning for sustainable development and will organise a Lifelong Learning Festival in 2018 which will among other things promote Sustainable Development Goals.

## Challenges and recommendations

Adult education has the potential to play an important role in Portuguese society. The Qualifica Centres are a significant contribution to adult learning, and their activities could be extended even further: a Portuguese EAEA member notes the Centres should evolve from their somewhat focused current mission of validating previous or newly acquired skills, to become local Adult Learning Centres which cover the whole range of formal and non-formal activities required in Portugal. The member notes their country still has great weaknesses regarding adults' access to learning and culture. The illiteracy rate is currently at 5%, and adult education can contribute to trying to overcome this challenge.

Lack of resources is another challenge, highlighted by several EAEA members in Portugal. Since adult education was neglected by the previous national government, European funds were not used for this sector and there is an acute shortage of resources to implement public adult education policy. If the new government's stated intention to strengthen adult learning is to be put into practice, financial resources will need to be increased and long-term policies will need to be created and implemented in addition to short-term projects and programmes.

***“Adult education has the potential to play an important role in Portuguese society.”***

# Romania

Romanian adult education providers are working to implement the national Strategy for Lifelong Learning, which aims to increase the current low participation rate in adult education up to 10% by 2020. Both at the national and grassroots levels, projects funded through EU funding streams (Erasmus+, European Social Fund) are an important component in developing the adult education field. Important events in the field over the past year include conferences about the promotion of quality education in Romania, the challenges contemporary society brings into education, and the use of the European online platform EPALE.

## Recent developments

The European Commission's online platform EPALE (the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) was recently launched in Romania and a conference promoting the use of the platform was held by the National Qualifications Authority in May 2016. The fourth edition of the conference "Critical Mass for Quality Education. Advocacy through Educational Networks" also took place in April 2016. The Critical Mass conference sought to explore the ways in which to continue the process of promoting quality education in Romania through participatory democracy and the advocacy work of educational networks. The conference also dealt with the way advocacy has helped develop the adult education sector in certain countries, the connection between the politics and subsidies of adult education, and the importance of supporting

and participating in EU initiatives such as EPALE. In November 2016, University of Bucharest and University of Pitesti organised the seventh Edu World International Conference on the topic "Education Facing Contemporary World Issues". One of its sections was dedicated to adult education, and its general aim was to create debate around the challenges contemporary society brings into the field of education, such as globalization, interculturality, partnerships, and qualifications.

An EAEA member in Romania notes they mainly work with Erasmus+ and European Social Fund projects. The member works with disadvantaged groups on themes such as searching for a job, competence assessment, entrepreneurship, information and counselling, as well as formal and non-formal learning.

## Links to EU and international policy

Romania's National Qualifications Authority has been appointed the National Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning, and has received Erasmus+ project funding in this role from the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Thanks to this financial support received in 2015-2017, the National Coordinator has sought to increase adult participation in lifelong learning and to improve the quality of education and training through the development of key competences. Adult education providers note the events and initiatives of the National Coordinator have helped raise awareness about lifelong learning and its impact on adults' life among stakeholders and political actors. One EAEA member notes that the European Agenda has encouraged their organisation to more collaboration.

The EU's Upskilling Pathways is being implemented through certain civil society organisations' projects financed by the European Social Fund. Project topics

include counselling, professional training and assistance for businesses in rural areas, entrepreneurial competences, and certification. The National Strategy on Lifelong Learning is also working towards implementing Upskilling Pathways.

Civil society organisations' work also contributes to sustainable development in Romania, one EAEA member noting they will develop a campaign for promoting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in the framework of a "The Festival of Your Chances" project. At the governmental level, Romania has adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Romanian government supports the idea that the Agenda be implemented by local institutions and respond directly to citizens' needs. Local and national development strategies should be created to respond to these needs. SDGs will be integrated into the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

## Challenges and recommendations

The implementation of the National Strategy on Lifelong Learning (covering the period 2015-2020) will be one of the main challenges for Romanian adult education providers in the coming year. The strategy, adopted by the Romanian government in June 2015, aims to increase participation in lifelong learning and to improve the relevance of education and

vocational training systems for the labour market. The participation rate of adults (aged 25-64) in education is currently at 1,2%<sup>18</sup>, but the strategy sets the goal of reaching a 10% participation rate by 2020. It outlines three pillars: access and incentives for participation, quality and relevance, as well as partnerships for better information.

***“The events and initiatives of the National Coordinator have helped raise awareness about lifelong learning.”***

<sup>18</sup> Eurostat, Online data code: trng\_lfse\_01, data extracted September 2017.

# Russian Federation

The term “adult education” is not commonly used in Russia; the main term used is “additional education” of which adult education is a component. Adult education in Russia can be divided into formal and non-formal education. Formal adult education refers mostly to training linked to employment: vocational training preparing for a job, possibly organised by a current employer. It is mainly this type of education that is fostered by policies and strategies. Non-formal adult education, which is not directly linked to employment, has significant potential to tackle social inequality and foster democratic processes, but there is little attention to this type of education at the policy level. There is some development of non-formal adult education at the local level: a growing provision for the elderly and a development of learning regions.

## Recent developments

Adult education providers in Russia note there has been some progress in non-formal education for people of the third age: folk high schools and universities are a sector of non-formal adult education which is currently growing in Russia. Folk high schools gather learners from different social contexts and occupations, with programmes that appeal to their needs and interests. Their biggest target group is people of the third age, and a number of educational programmes are specifically designed for this target group. Folk high schools and universities aim to link learning and social activities, to develop civic participation and social cohesion, and create favourable conditions for learners to communicate and share with one another. They allow participants to develop personal and social skills for living in a diverse and interconnected world, and attempt to overcome inequalities and exclusion. Folk high schools and universities cooperate with Complex Centres of Social Services for the Population. Created in Russia more than ten years ago, these Centres are now widely developed across the country and are an important component of state services to the elderly. In addition to medical and psychological programmes, they now run non-formal adult education courses for the elderly, cooperating with state, municipal and public educational organisations. Despite this progress,

folk high schools and universities would benefit from legislative and financial support from the state, the lack of which limits their activities.

Learning regions are currently being developed in Russia. A learning region is a community in a region of the country where particular efforts are made to develop education provision, by connecting and coordinating the activities of various formal and non-formal education institutions and public bodies, and developing social institutions for improving the quality of education. The goal is to strengthen education provision in order to give all citizens access to knowledge and skills, broaden their opportunities to participate fully in the life of the region, and improve quality of life.

Target groups with which adult education organisations are planning to work over the next year include mix age communities, people of the third age, and new people moving into Russian cities (mainly from former Soviet Union countries). Significant events in the field of adult education have included the Adult Education Week, held every year and celebrating its twentieth anniversary in 2018. The purpose of this event is to foster recognition of adult education.

## Links to EU and international policy

The European Agenda for Adult Learning does not have a direct impact on Russia as it is not part of the EU. However, an EAEA member working on adult education research notes that the Agenda is a very important reference document for them. It shows the aims and mechanisms set out by the EU, which is important for conducting comparative research and for structuring the Institute's own research.

Adult education providers in Russia are not aware of national strategies to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, but the work of civil society organisations can contribute to this by disseminating the ideas through publications and conferences.

## Challenges and recommendations

Concerning terminology, the main term linked to adult education in Russia is the term “additional education”. The terms “adult education”, “non-formal education” and “informal education” are not common in Russia. They may be used by people working in the field of adult education, having then the meaning defined by UNESCO or other international glossaries on adult education, but these terms are not included in the Russian Federation Law on Education adopted in 2012. According to the 2012 Law, education in Russia is divided into: 1) general education (pre-school and school), 2) vocational education, and 3) additional education and vocational training. Adult education is included in this concept of “additional education”, which includes as subcategories additional education for children and adults and additional vocational education.

“Additional education” does not distinguish between formal or non-formal education, vocational or general education, or between education for children or for adults; all of these categories are included in the concept of additional education. Additional education could be defined as education aimed at satisfying a person's intellectual, spiritual, moral, physical and (or) professional development in a comprehensive way, without increasing the level of education. General and vocational education, by contrast, increase the level of education.

When trying to map out the contents of additional

education, one can divide it into formal and non-formal adult education. Formal adult education refers mostly to vocational training. Across Russia there are over 1350 educational institutions and subdivisions of higher and secondary special educational institutions which offer this kind of training. This area has always been advanced in Russia and is steadily developing. Non-formal adult education, on the other hand, is not reflected on a wide scale in the statistics. The Russian adult education field could benefit from increased data collection, from evaluating the number of non-formal education institutions and people reached by them. Collecting such data would allow there to be statistics showing the development of non-formal adult education.

National education policies and strategies mainly focus on developing formal adult education, and are effective in increasing participation in this type of lifelong learning. One EAEA member finds, however, that there are significant opportunities in non-formal adult education. The member highlights the considerable social and economic shifts taking place in Russia, with an increasing stratification of people based on income. The member considers that adult education, and especially non-formal adult education, can respond to these challenges, that it can and should contribute to achieving equality and sustainable development in the country. The potential of adult education to foster democratization processes should also be developed further.

***“National education policies and strategies mainly focus on developing formal adult education.”***

# Serbia

There were previously no specific legal requirements for working as a trainer in non-formal adult education in Serbia, but this is currently changing: a recently adopted sub-law now defines the requirements that have to be met by trainers who wish to work with publicly recognized or publicly financed providers and programmes. A new regional association of adult education professionals has also been created to improve the quality of education. Adult education in Serbia receives little funding from the government or other organisations, and this lack of funding heavily limits the work of providers. The field continues to exist mainly thanks to the voluntary work of activists. At the same time, there is a will from citizens to mobilize around issues important to them, be it voluntarily, which keeps Serbian civil society life alive.

## Recent developments

Serbia is in the process of negotiating its EU membership, and adult education providers in the country consider their field to be in line with EU membership, particularly through the civic participation and democracy adult education activities can foster. Serbian adult education providers feel the current political context poses a threat to their field of work: the EU Commission's 2016 Report on Serbia is relatively positive, but adult education providers highlight problematic recent developments such as restrictions to freedom of press. Indeed, editors and journalists have denounced government attempts to limit critical reporting and interfere with editorial policy. During presidential elections in April 2017 for example, organisations monitoring the elections noted that media coverage was biased and attempted to blur the line between state and party. Since the election of the new president, protests against dictatorship have been organised in cities across Serbia.

The Serbian participation rate in adult education is one of the lowest in Europe. Marginalized groups in particular are generally excluded from adult education. Civil society organisations have some projects aimed towards disadvantaged groups and towards older learners, but there is no coordinated strategy or cross sectorial cooperation for reaching disadvantaged groups.

Quality assurance has been a central theme within the Serbian adult education field, with the adoption of a sub-law concerning publicly recognized adult education providers. The sub-law defines the requirements, in terms of competences, that need to be met by publicly recognized providers and adult educators working in publicly recognized or publicly funded programmes. This sub-law brings a significant change to the Serbian

adult education field. The requirements for educators working in formal education (including formal adult education) are covered by the general umbrella law on education. For non-formal adult education, so far there have been no specific legal requirements for educators, other than general requirements deriving from the labour law and other related laws. But this situation is now changing: a curriculum and training for certified trainers have been established and the sub-law has assigned the Serbian Association of Andragogues as a national training centre responsible for training and certifying the trainers who want to work in publicly recognized programmes (for training or recognition of previously gained competences) or in formal adult education. Setting common standards through such a curriculum and training should improve the quality of education.

Another recent development linked to quality is the foundation of a regional association of adult education professionals named SERTO. This association was founded in Belgrade, initiated by the Adult Education Society. Its objective is to improve professionalization and quality in adult education within the South-East Europe region, by promoting qualification standards for trainers within non-formal adult education, and implementing a quality system with companies and private providers of adult education. SERTO's competences, curriculum, training system, certification and prior learning assessment system are even more developed and demanding than the curriculum of the Serbian Association of Andragogues, and it is operationalized in more detail.

Adult education providers in Serbia have been cooperating with international organisations, for example through launching in January 2017 the

Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) for the East and South-East Europe sub-region. This event discussed future regional cooperation and the importance of collecting comparative data, and gathered practitioners, researchers and policymakers from the 17 countries of the sub-region. This was a partnership between the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong

Learning (UIL) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), and in Serbia, the national Adult Education Society and the Department of Andragogy at the University of Belgrade. The EPAL platform was also launched in Serbia. Its national coordination will be ensured by the Belgrade office of the European Commission's higher education programme TEMPUS.

## Links to EU and international policy

The impact of EU adult education policies in Serbia is limited. There is some European cooperation of civil society organisations through Erasmus+ and EPAL, and the Serbian government is participating in the European Commission's working group on adult education. Despite this, adult education providers do not see an impact of the European Agenda for Adult Learning on policy development in their country. Financial constraints also prevent providers from creating initiatives in accordance with the Agenda. There is no national strategy to implement Upskilling Pathways, but some governmental efforts are in line with its focus on employment: the development of a National Qualifications Framework and of a dual system in secondary education (a system combining vocational education and apprenticeships at a company) to address

unemployment.

Serbia does not have a specific strategy for implementing Sustainable Development Goals, but NGOs have taken measures to raise policy makers' awareness about SDGs. Some of Serbia's national strategies unrelated to SDGs are in line with SDGs, such as the Strategy for Poverty Reduction and the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma. In line with the SDG 4, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", lifelong learning in Serbia is promoted through the work of civil society organisations, for example through festivals and the Adult Education Society's online portal. The EPAL platform is another way to promote adult education.

## Challenges and recommendations

One EAEA member notes that the privatization of educational providers will be a challenge for the availability of education. The member also underlines the importance of lobbying for giving adult education a place in the Serbian higher education system, and wants to insist on the implementation of the Strategy for Education Development in Serbia 2020, which has not been implemented so far. The member plans to create an internet platform promoting adult education opportunities in order to increase their visibility.

Lack of funding is a major challenge for adult education in Serbia. In recent years, only 0,2% of the education budget has been allocated to adult education – funding which was used for the Second Chance Programme. Adult education providers in Serbia note that the adult education sector is not a government priority and is largely overlooked. It is civil society organisations that enable this field to exist, but they have lost the support of traditional big funders and are now heavily underfunded. Participation in the European Erasmus+

funding programme provides some financial support, but is a challenge for smaller organisations with unstable funding. Furthermore, as Serbia is not yet an EU member, organisations are generally only eligible for the mobility programme of Erasmus+, not the partnerships programme. One EAEA member notes the situation of financial crisis of civil society organisations in Serbia has led them to no longer have the financial capacity to provide office space, pay full-time activists or offer permanent activities. The organisation's work thus depends on voluntary work and members' donations, and it is trying to survive until it is fully eligible to apply for Erasmus+ funding. Because of very limited funding, adult education providers in Serbia also lack the capacity to participate in EU-wide and global comparative studies such as PIAAC.

Adult education providers and civil society organisations in general struggle with lack of government funding, but this does have a silver lining, as the lack of external funding also brings individuals to work voluntarily

and mobilize around causes important to them. Adult education providers in Serbia feel that civil society life in Serbia remains lively, with citizens mobilizing to pressure authorities on different local issues and to

help the large number of migrants and asylum seekers from the Middle East traveling through Serbia.

***“The Serbian participation rate in adult education is one of the lowest in Europe.”***

# Slovakia

“Learning Slovakia”, a National Programme for Development of Education and Learning, has been proposed in Slovakia. Adult education providers are satisfied with the proposals of the programme, but the extent to which they will be implemented is yet to be seen. A new law is expected for 2018 regarding a system of validation/recognition of qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal education. The EAEA member in Slovakia highlights the importance of using a clear definition of the term “qualification” in order for the future system of recognition to be effective. A national Action Plan for Lagging Regions in Slovakia 2015-2020 is currently being implemented, and aims to create employment in Slovakia’s “lagging” regions by developing the fields in which such regions have a comparative advantage.

## Recent developments

A National Programme for Development of Education and Learning called “Learning Slovakia” has been proposed and discussed. This programme aims to improve the Slovak education system over the next ten years. It contains an analysis of the current situation, defines the objectives of the reform and proposes measures necessary to achieve them. Adult education providers in Slovakia are very satisfied with this vision for education in their country. In the area of adult education and learning, the programme sets out the creation of individual education accounts worth 200€ for individuals outside of formal education, and a 25% deduction of staff training expenses from the company tax base. It does, however, remain to be seen which ones of the proposed changes will be given priority and implemented. EAEA member AIVD (Association of Adult Education Institutions in the Slovak Republic) has been involved in the creation of this programme and fully supports it.

A new law concerning further education and the recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning is expected in 2018. The government has stated the law will include systemic changes to further education, aimed at enhancing its quality and increasing participation. The law should create the conditions for a functional system of recognition of qualifications acquired through non-formal/informal education. The system of recognition will be supported

by the National Qualifications Framework. Terminology used in this Framework has been imprecise, making it difficult to use, and some amendments are now foreseen to relevant legislation. The 2018 law is expected to ensure regular monitoring of the skills necessary for the 21st century in order to align training curricula to existing needs. The system of recognition of qualifications will be implemented by the State Institute of Vocational Education and Training.

During the 2016 Lifelong Learning Week, more than 50 activities took place in 19 cities across Slovakia. Since 2000, Lifelong Learning Weeks have sought to raise awareness about lifelong learning and especially adult learning. The event is organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and consists in lectures, workshops, conferences, fairs, etc. in different cities, activities which aim to encourage everyone to participate in education regardless of age, previous education, professional experience or field of work. The event is also an opportunity to present adult education providers’ work and to have discussions about the state of adult education in Slovakia. The 2017 Week focused on Learning Cities, in reference to the UNESCO Lifelong Learning Institute’s Learning Cities initiative, which gives recognition and visibility to cities around the globe that show innovation in the field of education. The topic of the 2018 Week will be Age Management.

## Links to EU and international policy

The Slovakian National Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning has been the National Institute of Lifelong Learning, but the Lifelong Learning Department of the Ministry of Education is set to take over this role in November 2017. Adult education providers in Slovakia are not aware of other recent developments in the implementation of the Agenda.

Initiatives to implement Upskilling Pathways will include projects submitted to a European Social Fund call aiming to support lifelong learning. The new law expected for 2018 concerning the system of recognition of qualifications is also a way of implementing Upskilling Pathways. Furthermore, there is a national Action Plan for Lagging Regions in Slovakia 2015-2020 (the plan may be extended beyond this period), which aims to tackle unemployment. The Law on Support of Lagging Regions was adopted in 2015. As a result, Regional Councils cooperate with experts to prepare action plans for the development of their districts. An action plan selects priorities in the district, outlines specific goals and proposes measures to achieve them. Action plans also outline pilot projects that aim to have a long-term impact on the sustainable development of lagging regions. The projects seek to build on local resources and to create employment in the sectors in which lagging

regions have a comparative advantage. Such sectors include family farming and viticulture, combined with processing of agricultural products, agro-tourism and traditional crafts. Many projects have as target audience long-term unemployed individuals with little or no formal qualifications. Social enterprises supported by municipalities are created for this target audience, in order to help individuals to develop skills and ways of working enabling them to move smoothly into the labour market. Action plans give particular attention to Roma communities, which are often socially and economically excluded due to various types of discrimination or low levels of education or work experience.

The Slovak government has committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, as set out in the national strategy Concept of Implementing Agenda 30 in an International Environment<sup>19</sup>. Slovakian efforts to foster sustainable development will include initiatives within Slovakia but also outside of its borders. The National Infrastructure Plan of the Slovak Republic for 2018-2030 is currently being prepared, and its projects should demonstrate their contribution to meeting the strategic goals of Agenda 2030. The SDG 4 concerning education will also be a topic of discussion during the Lifelong Learning Week.

<sup>19</sup> Rokovanie Vlády Slovenskej Republiky (2016) Konceptia implementácie Agendy 2030 v medzinárodnom prostredí, available (in Slovakian) on: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=26175>.

## Challenges and recommendations

One EAEA member notes there is a need to clarify some of the terminology used in the Slovak adult education field. This task is necessary in order to improve the implementation of policies around qualification: if there is no common understanding of the term “qualification”, it is not possible to create a meaningful national system of qualifications, qualifications standards, the Slovak Qualifications Framework and so on. The qualifications standards created through a national project last year are still not functioning. The member proposes to follow the recommendations of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), noting that most European education policies operate with the concepts of qualification and learning outcome.

Through this shift to a learning outcomes approach, European education policies introduce the necessary tools for an effective and transparent setting up of the education system, which enables the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

Insufficient implementation of adult education policies or the lack of implementation are important challenges for the adult education field. Even if policies are well written, their objectives cannot be met if they are not implemented adequately. Participation in adult education remains low in Slovakia (2,9% <sup>20</sup>) and providers find policies in the field are not sufficiently implemented.

***“Insufficient implementation of adult education policies or the lack of implementation are important challenges for the adult education field.”***

<sup>20</sup> Eurostat, Online data code: trng\_lfse\_01, data extracted September 2017.

# Spain

Adult education strategies in Spain are defined not only by the national government, but also by the governments of Spain's autonomous communities. EAEA members highlight some regional developments in the communities over the past year. These include some collaboration between Labour, Culture and Education Departments of the Catalan government for implementing the European Agenda for Adult Learning, through activities around validation of non-formal/informal learning and basic skills provision for migrants and refugees. There is also a stronger recognition of adult education from the Valencian government. At the national level, Spanish strategies around lifelong learning tend to focus on stages of education other than adult education, and there is a need to give more prominence to this field.

## Recent developments

Spain's autonomous communities have a significant level of autonomy with regard to policymaking. Adult education policies and strategies can be created at the level of these regions, by the autonomous governments. They can also be created at a national level by the central government, spreading then top-down into the autonomous communities and having an impact on the policies and strategies autonomous governments develop. For the period 2016-2017, Spanish EAEA members are not aware of any major changes to adult education policy at the national level, but regional developments are noted.

An EAEA member from the region of Valencia notes the autonomous government of the region has re-established the Council for Adult Education. The autonomous government also takes adult education into account in policymaking by asking for advice from experts and educators, and makes references to this field when publishing educational laws. The Valencian member has created three working commissions: adult education centres depending on local authorities, centres depending on the autonomous government and research on an adult education national network. The member has been giving prominence to adult

education before the autonomous government, but notes it may start campaigns which involve both the autonomous and local governments, as well as every adult education centre.

A member from Catalonia notes they are aware that the Labour Department and Culture Department have agreed to promote basic skills training for migrants and refugees, and have asked adult educators to organise such training, as well as to train the trainers in charge of it. Something innovative about this initiative is that the basic skills courses will take place in villages where there has not been this kind of offer before for this target group.

As future work themes, adult education providers mention life skills, the use of new technologies (especially for those who have little access to them), and testing cognitive and physical abilities through virtual reality. Target groups include early school leavers and adults over 50. In terms of events, seminars linked to the EAEA Year of Adult Education have been organised over the year 2017, as well as Debates around the EAEA Manifesto.

## Links to EU and international policy

Spanish national strategies aim to ensure inclusive and quality education for all, which is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". These strategies also have an impact on the autonomous governments' strategies.

EAEA members in Spain have different views on the impact EU policies such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning have on their work. A Catalan EAEA member notes that the Spanish central government and the Catalan autonomous government both take the European Agenda for Adult Learning into account. There are efforts to implement it by the Catalan

Labour, Culture and Education Departments as well as civil society organisations. The Catalan member wants to promote the agenda through their work.

Several other members also want to use EU policies as guidelines for their work, and note that EU policy documents influence their organisational strategies and plans, which include objectives or activities that are in line with the European Agenda. One member notes their organisation keeps itself up to date with European adult education strategies and tries to put them into practice in their strategy and course offer. However, adult education centres depend directly on a local or autonomous government and on the national government, and therefore have to follow the strategies

these institutions set forth. The implementation of European strategies by organisations can only be limited if European strategies are not already part of the national/regional/local regulations these organisations must follow. European strategies need to be first adopted at a national level, then have an impact on the autonomous and local governments' strategies, to finally have an impact on local adult education centres. Because of this situation, the impact of the European Agenda on providers is low. One EAEA member, who is a small entity at a regional level in Galicia, notes it does not see an impact of the Agenda on its work.

## Challenges and recommendations

Participation rates in adult education in Spain are currently at 9,4%, somewhat below the EU average of 10,8%<sup>21</sup>. Future challenges include giving more prominence to adult education, as Spanish strategies around lifelong learning tend to focus on stages of education other than adult education. There should also be more policies aimed at increasing the participation of disadvantaged groups. For this purpose, one EAEA member considers it vital to have counsellors at adult education centres, giving guidance to learners and helping them decide on their future.

A lack of cooperation between different governmental Departments can be a challenge. EAEA's Catalan member notes that although the autonomous

government takes the European Agenda for Adult Learning into account, there is a lack of coordination in its implementation. A lot of work is carried out by civil society organisations with governmental support, but not all the Departments implied cooperate with each other. Actions are often done twice because of the lack of coordination, and more could be done with a smoother cooperation between Departments. Despite this issue, some positive developments should be noted: the Labour and Culture Departments are cooperating on the training of migrants and refugees, and the Education Department and Labour Department are cooperating on validation of non-formal/informal learning and on labour experience.

***“Spain’s autonomous communities have a significant level of autonomy with regard to policymaking.”***

<sup>21</sup> Eurostat, Online data code: trng\_lfse\_01, data extracted October 2017.

# Sweden

**Integrating refugees into society and the labour market remains a central focus of adult education work in Sweden, along work with other target groups such as individuals with special needs and people having little prior formal education. The adult education sector receives important financial support from the government and formal recognition of non-formal learning is increasing, but this also poses the question of how the sector can maintain its independence and unique characteristics.**

## Recent developments

The number of refugees in Sweden has been increasing steadily during 2015 and parts of 2016. During 2016 folk high schools and study associations received around half of all newly arrived immigrants (about 80 000) as participants in language and introduction programmes all over Sweden. The number of arriving migrants has dropped significantly since the end of 2016 and 2017, but the need for support and trainings is still very present. The contents of non-formal and formal education are expected to change in 2017 and beyond, to focus less on immediate needs such as introduction and language, particularly important during the most intensive period of migrant arrival. They will instead become more aimed towards integrating migrants into society and the labour market.

The Swedish government considers adult education as very important, and a relatively large amount of funding is invested into this field at the national level. One

EAEA member notes that in 2016-2017 there has been a continued and in some cases strengthening political support for popular adult education (Folkbildningen) and adult education in general. The government acknowledges the successful work of folk high schools and study associations with migrants, individuals with special needs and people having little prior formal education, and this acknowledgement has translated into providing financial support especially for work aimed at these groups of learners.

Some recent changes at the national level are the fact that the National Council for Adult Education is presenting a new condition for grants to folk high schools and study associations. General courses at folk high schools have become part of the level 2 and 4 of the Swedish European Qualifications Framework, but the changes this will bring about remain to be seen.

## Links to EU and international policy

Sustainable Development Goals are included within the Swedish government's work, and a proposed communication plan and action plan concerning Sweden's work for Agenda 2030 have recently been presented. The delegation working on these plans proposes among others a national popular education campaign, the contents of which are yet to be defined. Concerning Goal 4 ("Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"), challenges identified by the government include a lack of equivalence between schools, young people who do not work or study, knowledge differences between girls and boys, a need to strengthen teachers' skills, and the need for validation of competences gained through non-formal education. Folk high schools have also mobilized around Agenda 2030, with nearly 50 folk high school staff members receiving training on how to integrate

SDGs into their work. 30 folk high schools also organised a campaign entitled "A Global Day's Work – Folk High Schools Contribute to Agenda 2030".

The Swedish National Agency is responsible for the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning at the national level. Work around the EAAL focuses on validation of prior learning, with a new strategy on the topic submitted to the government in March 2017. One of its goals is to increase access to validation across the country, at all levels of the educational system and for a broader range of qualifications, in order to give validation a similar legitimacy as that of formal education and training. An active work on validation takes place in folk high schools, which are engaged in dialogue with the government concerning the new strategy. It is too soon, however, to judge what its effects will be.

## Challenges and recommendations

One challenge adult education providers face is finding sufficient funding to cover the needs of learners with special needs. Salaries and general conditions for teachers at folk high schools can also be a challenge, and it can be difficult for these schools to compete with formal education when hiring teachers who can teach general courses.

At the national level, governmental support for adult popular education can constitute a challenge. Folk high schools and study associations have long been characterized by their independence and involvement of voluntary work. Getting governmental funding, on the other hand, creates particular demands on their activities in terms of compliance, reporting, monitoring and follow up. Schools and associations are adapting

to this change but it is challenging at times. One EAEA member notes that folk high schools and study associations are increasingly becoming part of the more formal education system, as shown by the fact that general courses at folk high schools are now part of the Swedish European Qualifications Framework. Another aspect of this formalization is the fact that individuals with a folk high school study background will likely be better recognized in the quota groups for enrolling in higher education. Overall, these developments pose the question of how non-formal education will balance its dependence on governmental institutions and the formal recognition this fosters on the one hand, with the need for independence, for maintaining and developing its unique characteristics and historical legacy on the other hand.

***“The Swedish government considers adult education as very important, and a relatively large amount of funding is invested into this field at the national level.”***

# Turkey

The integration of refugees is a major work theme within the Turkish adult education sector; other themes include entrepreneurship education and basic skills training. Digital media is increasingly used in adult learning and participation in distance/web-based learning is growing. A variety of different types of actors are involved in the Turkish adult education sector, and their lack of coordination can be a challenge. As a candidate country for EU membership, Turkey takes into account EU policies such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning in creating national education strategies.

## Recent developments

Adult education providers in Turkey note that entrepreneurship training for adults and young adults is increasing. Practical entrepreneurship training is organised especially by KOGSEB (Small and Medium Business Development and Support Administration), who considers education and training should give individuals an equal chance to contribute to economic growth. There is also an increase in training aimed at improving the professional skills of low-skilled employees. This type of training is organised through national projects, public-private training centres as well as ISKUR (Turkish Labour Agency).

One EAEA member considers that the refugee/migrant crisis and the integration issues linked to it have been the most important issue for adult education across Europe in recent years. The member considers that adult education centres have a leading role in ensuring/facilitating the integration of migrants, and they play this type of role in Turkey. Training for migrants has been one of the most important work themes for adult education providers in the country over the past year. The most common training offered is literacy training, organised by Public Education Centres (PEC) and private providers. There are also courses for integration, increasing vocational competences and helping migrants find employment.

Participation in distance/web-based learning is growing,

and while this is not very common, mobile applications have begun to be used in adult education. Providers find that the use of digital technologies in adult education and unemployment are two factors drawing more and more people toward this sector. In terms of events, there is an increase in learning festivals in order to improve participation and the attractiveness of lifelong learning.

Other work themes have included the development of human resources, capacity-building and increasing the quality of adult education. A new focus mentioned by an EAEA member has been training for low-skilled youth to develop their vocational skills through innovative learning methods. Over the coming year, work will focus among others on global citizenship, integration issues and employability. One EAEA member notes they want to make individuals active citizens, to ensure social integration and to strengthen the status of isolated and disadvantaged groups in society, providing learning opportunities to all adults and especially for disadvantaged groups who need learning opportunities the most. The member also wants to increase employability and competitiveness. For these topics, specific target groups will be migrants, prison inmates, disadvantaged women, unemployed and low-skilled young adults, and adults within the framework of gender equality.

## Links to EU and international policy

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper (2014-2018) has aimed to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Turkish lifelong learning system, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The Lifelong Learning Strategy outlines measures to foster a lifelong learning culture, increase lifelong learning opportunities and access. It seeks to develop various systems within lifelong learning: a guidance and counselling system, a system for evaluating prior learning, and a system for monitoring and evaluating lifelong learning. The Strategy fosters the SDG 4 by aiming to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, prison inmates, domestic immigrants and individuals living far from learning centres. It also contributes to SDG 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”: the Strategy aims to

further involve women in decision-making processes, increase their employment, education and skills. Another aim is to eliminate discrimination and violence against women by increasing social consciousness through formal and informal education, starting from early childhood.

Turkey is among the candidate countries for EU membership, and the European Agenda for Adult Learning plays a catalyst role in defining national strategies to improve the adult education system in Turkey. The themes and target groups institutions work with are shaped by taking into account the priorities of the European Agenda for Adult Learning. National and international projects work both on the Agenda’s priorities and the objectives of national adult education strategies.

## Challenges and recommendations

Many different kinds of actors are involved in adult education in Turkey: public institutions that provide adult education, private providers, municipalities, non-governmental organisations and universities. A challenge highlighted by Turkish adult education providers is a lack of coordination and cooperation between these different actors. Although the involvement of different actors within adult education broadens the sector, it also makes it more difficult to

collect harmonized data and to monitor and evaluate it.

Adult education also suffers from a lack of funding. According to research in the field of lifelong learning, “learning culture” is not very strong in Turkey and individuals are not aware of learning opportunities. Low levels of awareness about both the learning offer available and the benefits of learning cause participation rates to be low.

***“Training for migrants has been one of the most important work themes for adult education providers in the country over the past year.”***

# United Kingdom

Adult education providers in the UK find that Brexit has had an impact on their field of work by intensifying the country's focus on technical education and lifelong learning. Social challenges in the UK include a high number of adults with a low level of literacy and numeracy or who are digitally excluded. Adult education can respond to these challenges, for example by increasing basic skills provision (subject to funding) and creating a UK-wide curriculum on digital skills. Challenges for adult education providers include insufficient funding/co-funding for the sector, and the separation of employment and skills policies which would benefit from being developed together. The impact of EU adult education policies is felt in the UK, but their impact on the UK's four administrations varies.

## Recent developments

The most obvious major political development in the UK is Brexit. The national referendum concerning whether the country should remain in the EU or leave the EU resulted in a win of the "leave" vote and the Government's commitment to dissolve its EU membership by March 2019. The result of the referendum led to a change in Government. Adult education providers find the referendum has had an impact on their field of work by intensifying the focus on technical education and lifelong learning, which remain essential to promote social inclusion, active communities, health and wellbeing and future economic prosperity. The possible impact of Brexit on planning and decision-making in adult learning is not being addressed yet.

When the UK leaves the EU, the European Social Fund investment is likely to end. In England this investment amounts to about £2,4 billion, supporting about 2,4 million people. One EAEA member notes they are

advocating for continued investment at this level through a "Better Opportunities Fund", targeted at those who feel left behind and at the areas of the country which have not fully benefited from economic growth over the past decades.

Work themes mentioned by adult education providers include basic skills provision, family and community learning, supporting young adult carers and care leavers to have access to learning and work, offering support in work progressions and ensuring good quality, accessible and inclusive apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programmes in different sectors. One member is also working on sharing with policymakers the lessons learned from the implementation of an Advanced Learner Loans programme. Highlights in terms of events include the Festival of Learning, seeking to motivate adults to learn something new.

## Links to EU and international policy

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) was appointed UK National Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning in 2012. Renamed in 2016, NIACE is now the Learning and Work Institute. This organisation's work around the Agenda focuses on the topics of basic skills, employability skills for young adults and digital skills for disadvantaged groups. The Learning and Work Institute is also undertaking research across the UK on the impact of adult learning on health, work and communities. The results of the research were the object of a report presented at a European Agenda conference in autumn 2017.

The Learning and Work Institute, which works in research on adult education and provides evidence-based advice to policymakers, underlines the importance of contextualizing research findings. European messages,

research, initiatives and comparisons have a different impact in each of the four UK administrations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and if research findings are used as the basis for creating policies, it is important to base an administration's policies on research specific to that part of the UK. Administrations may also have different interests: one may have a strong interest in health benefits of adult education, another an interest in its benefits on employment. Impact Forums linked to each administration give each of them the opportunity to spread research results and to present their respective policies. Examples of developmental activities, programmes, practices and case studies are thus shared. The Impact Forums have been recognized by European Commission evaluators as key contributors to both national and EU policies.

## Challenges and recommendations

Employment and skills systems are currently led by a range of ministries and agencies across the UK. One EAEA member finds that this fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and a lack of urgency in addressing needs. The government has, for example, committed to bridging the employment gap of people with health conditions and those with disabilities by 2020, but on current rates of progress this will take significantly longer. Another example is that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities set their own local growth strategies separately from how they plan to raise skills and career aspirations in their areas. The EAEA member notes policies linked to employment and ones linked to skills should not be developed separately but together.

There have been significant cuts to public funding for adult education, leading to calls for greater co-investment by employers and individuals. In England, the adult education budget has been cut significantly since 2010, which has led to an important fall in part-time provision. The adult education budget has now been protected in real terms (will be adjusted for inflation) and employers and individuals have been willing to fund their own learning by contributing to co-investment. These measures have been helpful but insufficient to prevent the fall in provision. Despite recent progress, co-investment thus remains a challenge. For the moment, about 10 million UK employees do not access training at work.

On a societal level, low levels of basic skills are a challenge across the UK. 9 million adults have low literacy, numeracy or both, which holds back life chances, prosperity and social inclusion. Adult education providers welcome the Government's commitment to provide free digital training and its choice to consider digital skills as a basic skill alongside literacy and numeracy. One EAEA member finds education in basic skills should be provided in a learner-led way, by tailoring programmes to what people need and want and co-developing course content with learners. A similar approach as that of the Citizens' Curriculum, developed by the member, should be used. This is a framework for basic skills provision which extends the notion of basic skills to that of life skills. The framework builds a holistic approach to learning life skills and considers fundamental skills for everyday life to include not only literacy, numeracy and digital skills but also capabilities in the areas of health, civic participation and finances. More funding is needed for basic skills provision given the considerable number of people having insufficient basic skills: in England, £200 million per year should be invested for 15 years, doubling current rates of investment.

Digital inclusion is a challenge in the UK: approximately 12,6 million adults lack basic digital skills, and the most marginalized/excluded groups are also the groups that are most digitally excluded. For the moment there is no UK-wide digital curriculum for adult learning. It would

be useful to develop one, have it agreed by all four administrations and used by training and education providers. The curriculum should be based on the EU Key Competences Framework, which introduces core digital skills competences into education and training curricula.

Another challenge concerns the provision of impartial advice and guidance to adults wishing to access education and training. Most adults can access the information and advice they need, but those who cannot are also those who experience other forms of exclusion.

***“There have been significant cuts to public funding for adult education, leading to calls for greater co-investment by employers and individuals.”***

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Adult Education Institution Dante - Ustanova za obrazovanje odraslih  
Dante PAR: Association for Promotion and Development of Lifelong  
Education - PAR: Udruga za Promicanje i Razvoj Cjeloživotnog Obra-  
zovanja

## Denmark

Danish Adult Education Association - Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd  
(DFS)

## Estonia

Estonian Non-Formal Adult Education Association - Eesti Vabahari-  
dusliit (EVHL)

## Finland

Finnish Adult Education Association - Vapaa Sivistystyö ry

## Georgia

Georgian Adult Education Network -  
საქართველოს ზრდასრულთა განათლების ქსელი

## Germany

DVW International - Institut für internationale Zusammenarbeit des  
Deutschen Volkshochschul-Verbandes e.V Bavarian Adult Education  
Association - Bayerischer Volkshochschulverband e.V.

## Greece

Hellenic Adult Education Association - Επιστημονική Ένωση Εκπαίδευσης  
Ενηλίκων  
Vocational Training Centre Dafni Kek - Κέντρο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης

## Iceland

Leikn: Association for Adult Education in Iceland -  
LEIKN: Samtök Fullorðinsfræðsluáðila á Íslandi

## Ireland

AONTAS: National Adult Learning Organisation

## Liechtenstein

Liechtenstein Adult Education Foundation -  
Stiftung Erwachsenenbildung Liechtenstein

## Macedonia

Association for Adult Education: Lifelong Learning Center, Skopje  
- Здружение за образование на возрастни Центар за Доживотно  
Учење, Скопје

## The Netherlands

Learn for Life: Dutch Platform for International Adult Learning

## Poland

Institute for Sustainable Technologies: National Research Institute -  
Instytut Technologii Eksploatacji: Państwowy Instytut Badawczy  
(ITeE-PIB)

## Portugal

Portuguese Association for Culture and Lifelong Education -  
Associação Portuguesa para a Cultura e Educação Permanente (APCEP)  
Escola Profissional Amar Terra Verde (EPATV)

## Romania

Euro Adult Education Association - Asociația Euro Adult Education  
(EUROED)

## Russian Federation

Branch of the Institute for Management of Education of Russian  
Academy of Education in St Petersburg

## Serbia

Adult education society - Drustvo za Obrazovanje Odraslih

## Slovakia

Association of Adult Education Institutions in the Slovak Republic  
- Asociácia Inštitúcií Vzdelávania Dospelých v Slovenskej Republike  
(AIVD)

## Spain

Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research - Associació  
Catalana per a l'Educació, la Formació i la Recerca (ACEFIR)  
Valencian Association of Head Teachers and Members of Management  
Staff of State Schools of Education for Adults - Associació valencia-  
na de directores i directors i membres d'equips directius de centres  
públics de Formació de Persones Adultes (AVED-fpa)  
Galician Cultural Association of Continuing Learning for Adults:  
Classrooms of the Third Age of Galicia - Asociación Cultural Gallega de  
Formación Permanente de Adultos: Aulas de la Tercera Edad de Galicia  
(ATEGAL) Asociación ECCA

## Sweden

Swedish Adult Education Association - Studieförbunden  
Association for folk highschoools owned by NGOs - Rörelsefolkhögsko-  
lornas intresseorganisation (RIO)

## Turkey

International Lifelong Learning Association - Uluslararası Hayat Boyu  
Öğrenme Derneği (UHBÖDER)

## United Kingdom

Learning and Work Institute



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

**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.

EAEA promotes adult learning and access to and participation  
in non-formal adult education for all, particularly for groups currently under-represented.

**EAEA'S MAIN ROLES**

- Policy advocacy for lifelong learning at European level
- Development of practice through projects, publications and training
- Provision of information and services for our members
- International cooperation

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