



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Candidate's presentation form for EAEA PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS ELECTIONS 2019

Please introduce yourself with this form and make your motivation known to the members of EAEA who will elect the new executive board in June 2019

To be returned to EAEA until 26 May 2019

to Gina Ebner gina.ebner@eaea.org AND

Sari Pohjola sari.pohjola@kvs.fi

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|---------------------|--|
| NAME | Benjamin Hendriksen |
| TITLE | Advocacy Lead |
| ORGANISATION | AONTAS, The National Adult Learning Organisation (Ireland) |
| NOMINATED BY | Niamh O'Reilly, AONTAS CEO |
| RUNNING FOR | <input type="radio"/> President <input checked="" type="radio"/> Board member |

Please attach your ID picture to the mail or add it here:





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1. Please describe your current position.

Ben (Benjamin) Hendriksen is the Advocacy Lead with AONTAS, The National Adult Learning Organisation in Ireland.

In this role Ben is responsible on a regional, national and European level for leading AONTAS' member advocacy while leading the development of evidence-based policy positions that respond to members' needs. This work happens while managing organisation engagement with partner organisations across Ireland and Europe in an effort to ensure that adult education and lifelong learning, particularly as it relates to community education in Ireland, and non-formal learning broadly, is considered and included in policy development and evaluation.

Over the past years Ben and the AONTAS team have worked to highlight the importance of lifelong learning, while identifying the barriers to education, as well as the wider benefits of adult and community education to the development of adult learning policy in Ireland. Examples of our work can be found on the AONTAS website <https://www.aontas.com/knowledge/publications/>.

2. How would you like to contribute to the work of EAEA, based on your experience in your organisation?

As the Advocacy Lead with AONTAS, The National Adult Learning Organisation focusing on adult and community education advocacy in Ireland, I work nationally to achieve many of the same outcomes which the EAEA works to achieve at a European level through advocacy in Brussels. Between my current employment and advocacy work with AONTAS, as well as my past-experience working as a Board Advisor for a state agency in Canada, I believe I can provide a unique combination of professional experience that focuses on the advocacy issues that matter to EAEA members while giving governance support to the EAEA based on my experience advising the administration of a high-functioning Board of Directors of a state agency.

3. What are your motivations as a candidate?

I have two motivations for seeking a position as a Board Member of the EAEA Executive Board. One is organizational and Irish specific and the other is personal.

Firstly, as Europe continues to face an uncertain future with the increasing prevalence of extremist politics, and the ongoing lack of clarity that results from ongoing Brexit discussions, I believe that it is important that Ireland has a seat on the EAEA Executive Board. As the largest majority English speaking country that will remain inside the European Union [assuming a UK withdrawal



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agreement is complete], and as a country physically separated from the rest of Europe by the UK and two seas, I believe that it is important that Ireland has a seat at the table when discussions about policy and the focus of the EAEA come about. To ensure that all corners of Europe are considered in the EAEA strategic policy decisions it is important that Ireland be represented on the EAEA Executive Board.

Secondly, from a personal perspective I am interested in seeking a position as a Board Member of the EAEA Executive Board as I want to take this chance to develop my own skills and capacities regarding governance and leadership. While I have been an Advisor to a Board of Directors during my time with the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission in the northern Canadian territory of the Northwest Territories, I have not had the chance myself to act in the capacity of a Board member of an independent organization. Considering my role as Advocacy Lead with AONTAS, an active and engaged member organization of the EAEA, I believe now is a great opportunity to develop my own skills, while also providing my own experience and insights regarding governance processes and structures to help guide the strategic development and plans of the EAEA.

4. Which other information would you like to share with the EAEA members?

Many EAEA members are aware of AONTAS' work within Ireland and across Europe as we have supported the EAEA and its previous structure the European Bureau of Adult Education for many years. Recently AONTAS has had representation on the Board of the EAEA through our CEO Niamh O'Reilly, and currently through our former President Liz Waters, Director of An Cosán, an amazing and powerful provider of community education in west Dublin, and across Ireland through its newer virtual community college. AONTAS has been actively involved in the EAEA, and its forerunner, the European Bureau of Adult Education, for more than 25 years. A selection of its contributions and supports to the EAEA include: hosting 2 EAEA assemblies (2000 & 2009), participation on the EAEA Executive Committee (John Ryan, Brid Connolly, Niamh O'Reilly, and Liz Waters), and actively supporting the advocacy work of the EAEA, most recently through a letter writing campaign organized by the EAEA to hear from candidates for MEP across Ireland.

The EAEA is the voice of grassroots advocacy for the non-formal adult learning sector in Europe. AONTAS is the voice of the adult and community education sector in Ireland. With the same purpose at a European and national level our aims are to influence the policy making and evaluation processes so that everyone who is a stakeholder, learner, and potential learner in adult education can experience the benefits that come from education.

AONTAS has been lucky to have representation on the EAEA Board for many years since John Ryan was a member. I believe that AONTAS' position as an authentic, grassroots voice for providers of



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adult education and learners themselves means that our role in Ireland and Europe is necessary. Further, at this uncertain time in Europe caused by ongoing uncertainty from Brexit and positive results for anti-EU political parties, representation from Ireland is important to have during discussions that might otherwise neglect our small but influential island at the edge of Europe.

I thank you for your time reading my nomination form and considering me for the Board of the EAEA. I hope that I can count on your vote to support my bid for a position on the EAEA Executive Board. If you elect me to the Executive Board you will be showing support not only for me but also for AONTAS, our members, and for the volunteers and staff across Ireland who are working to make a grassroots offering of adult education in one constituent country in Europe a reality.