



IMPLEMENTING THE RENEWED AGENDA FOR ADULT LEARNING: ARE WE THERE YET?

EAEA Statement
November 2019

On 28 November 2011, the Council adopted its Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning. Aiming to improve adult education policies and provision, it set out an ambitious strategy for the EU Member States to implement by 2020. EAEA demands a strong follow-up strategy for the agenda that builds on synergies with other EU strategies and frameworks.

Europe faces a number of challenges that political institutions urgently need to address over the next years in order to guarantee social cohesion and sustainable growth of the economies. These include, among others, a lack of basic skills among at least one fifth of the adult population, the social and economic inclusion of migrants and refugees, digitalisation and automation of production, media literacy, democracy and European values, sustainability, as well as health and well-being.

However, adult education provides methods and approaches to tackle these challenges. EAEA underlines the importance of European frameworks and strategies for the development of activities, initiatives and policies at national and regional levels. They are indispensable for building robust adult education systems in European countries and ensuring that adult learning is integrated within the lifelong learning continuum.

EAEA members highlight that European strategies can have a particularly strong impact on policy development in countries where adult education does not have a long tradition, or where adult education is not dealt with at the national or regional policy level. European cooperation in adult learning has also significantly contributed to innovation in the sector, from the local to the European level.

The Renewed Agenda for Adult Learning builds on the Communication on Adult Learning (2006), and the subsequent Action Plan on Adult Learning 2008-2010. It was adopted to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy and in particular the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020) from an adult learning perspective.

A consultation of EAEA members carried out in 2019 shows that in countries such as Finland, where the European Agenda for Adult Learning has been fully implemented, adult education structures are comparatively strong. A majority of members, however, states that the Agenda has only been implemented partially in their countries. Furthermore, EAEA's members note that the consultation and involvement of civil society is crucial for a successful implementation of the European Agenda. However, a large number of members say that they have not been involved in the implementation process. This has repercussions on how adult education organisations and providers perceive the political support for their sector – including financing of adult learning and governance structures from local authorities to the national government. At the same time, the National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda have played an important role in the development of national strategies for adult learning.

It is essential that there is a comprehensive European adult learning strategy after 2020. In order to help adult education to develop and use its full potential, EAEA proposes a close cooperation between all European strategies that concern adult education. These include the New Skills Agenda, and especially Upskilling Pathways, the European Agenda for Adult Learning, the European Pillar of Social Rights, and



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particularly its first principle on the right to lifelong learning, the European Education Area, validation and recognition etc. They need to link closely to the existing European structures (EC Working Group, National Coordinators, EPALE, ...) as well as to global frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, and particularly SDG 4 on education.

The European Agenda for Adult Learning should provide a broad framework that targets – and continues to target – the further development of adult learning in Europe through:

1. Increasing participation of adults in learning
2. Promoting all forms of adult education and learning: general and vocational but also non-formal, formal and informal
3. Supporting adult education structures, including civil society that organises and provides adult learning
4. Reinforcing cooperation and partnerships among various stakeholders at the national and regional levels, including, for instance, social partners and academia
5. Extending the knowledge-base, especially of the impact of adult education
6. Improving the funding of adult learning
7. Improving the governance of adult learning

In addition to these general objectives, EAEA proposes the inclusion of key themes that can be taken up by the EU Member States, and, at the same time, could form a basis for Erasmus+ priorities. EAEA's members identified several key themes:

- Life skills
- Digitalisation and new technologies
- Democracy and European Values
- Health and well-being
- Older learners
- Media literacy
- Social inclusion of disadvantaged groups
- Sustainability

Adult education can play a major role in tackling the key challenges in Europe, as EAEA has underlined in its Manifesto. We therefore call on the European institutions and Member States to develop strong and coherent policies and implement them.

More information

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The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 130 member organisations in 43 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.

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