

## Concept

## Forum

### The Power of Adult Learning and Education (ALE): A Vision for the EU Neighbourhood

28 – 29 May 2020, Kyiv

**Venue:** Volodymyrska Str. 49A, “Inveria” space

#### Objectives:

- To raise awareness of the existing European and global frameworks that are relevant for non-EU members of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA);
- To bring the problems of the EU-neighbouring European countries on the agenda of EU-stakeholders in the adult education field;
- To exchange on (some of) the five areas of the Belém Framework for Action: policy, governance, financing, quality, with special attention paid to participation;
- To support civil society organisations in the region in contributing to the International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA) process and to build grounds for a regional report.

#### Relevance and Programme

The world is constantly changing, at an accelerating rate, and the new challenges each person confronts are becoming increasingly complex and multifaceted. Most people anticipate strong, confident leaders are better able to make decisions in a person’s interest than the person on his/her own, despite the fact that it can lead to raising new conflicts within societies. It is very difficult and sometimes even painful to choose another way of thinking, to find a strong support within ourselves for a confident life and constant development.

The role of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) as a key component of lifelong learning in this respect proves to be crucial. “Adult learning and education represents a valuable investment which brings social benefits by creating more democratic, peaceful, inclusive, productive, healthy and sustainable societies” (Belém Framework for Action).

The fourth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) underlines: “Education is a fundamental human right, a precious public good and an indispensable tool in building peaceful, sustainable and fairer societies”. The central challenge described by this report is that opportunities to engage in ALE are shockingly unequal. Some groups in society have access to a multitude of learning opportunities throughout life, while others have very little prospect of engaging in ALE. It paints a picture of uneven participation rates

and inadequate progress and shows that in very many cases we simply do not know enough about who is participating. All too often, adult learning and education is inadequately funded. And where interventions do make a positive impact on participation, too often they are simply not widely shared or properly understood.

The report also emphasizes the significance of the focus on participation, inclusion and equity, and underlines the importance of these issues for policymakers in Member States and international organizations. It also identifies the major barriers hindering adults' participation in ALE.

At the same time, the GRALE report considers the SDGs, and specifically SDG 4 (including the key targets 4.6, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.7), in relation to ALE. It formulates the main challenge to the international policy-making community and to stakeholders across sectors of putting ALE at the centre of our efforts to achieve sustainable economies and societies and recognize its key role in developing integrated, holistic solutions to the problems we face.

The EU offers its neighbours a privileged relationship, building upon common values (democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development). Ambitions for the relationship depend on the extent to which these values are shared. Launched in 2009 as a joint policy initiative, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) aims to deepen and strengthen relations between the European Union (EU), its Member States and its six Eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Over the past decade, the collective efforts of the EU and the partner countries have brought considerable benefits to the citizens including more trade, mobility, increased economic development and better quality of life. Despite the large-scale support to the reform in the educational sector of the EU Neighbourhood countries, including immense financial provision, the EU pays very little attention to the promotion (development of the framework) and further improving of ALE in this region.

The Forum will gather member organisations of the EAEA, experts and policy makers from countries outside the EU (Eastern and Southeastern Europe), representatives of stakeholders and ALE providers and broader learning communities.

It aims at intensifying advocacy activities and raising the awareness of various stakeholders regarding European adult learning and education (ALE) outside the EU. The challenges of the European countries neighbouring the EU shall be brought on the agenda of existing global/EU frameworks that are relevant for EAEA non-EU members in the field. The discussions will focus on the diverse aspects of support to civil society organisations in the region in contributing to the CONFINTEA process and building grounds for a regional report on relevant topics of the Belem Framework for Action (BFA): policy, governance, financing, quality, participation.

During the forum, overviews on national ALE systems from partner countries will be presented and best practices/success stories and actual challenges will be jointly reflected.

One of the goals is to stimulate discussions and to raise awareness of national and local governments about the necessity to include support to AE structures in their strategies and social-economical plans. The attention will be paid to the involvement of relevant stakeholders on national level to develop framework conditions for the establishment of ALE Centres/CLC, awareness raising campaigns popularising LLL and ALE as a human right and value, and a resource for local development.

The topical issues for discussions will include the efforts which could be taken for building strong local structures for the provision of educational programmes that respond to the needs of learners, with a special focus on vulnerable groups.

Based on the Belem Framework for Action, the UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, and GRALE IV the organizers propose to focus on the main topics of ALE promotion through the discussions in four working groups:

### ***Policy and Financing***

According to the BFA, “policies and legislative measures for adult education need to be comprehensive, inclusive, integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective, based on sector-wide and intersectoral approaches, covering and linking all components of learning and education”. The importance of a systematic focus on disadvantaged groups in all educational policies and approaches is underlined. It may include programmes that are provided free of charge or subsidised by our governments, with incentives for learning such as bursaries, fee remission and paid study leave. Significant financial investment is essential to ensure quality provision of adult learning opportunities.

We propose to emphasize the discussion in this working group on best practices of effective and efficient ALE policies, especially on the factors which guarantee the implementation of policies approved. With regard to financial support, it would be beneficial to find out the appropriate balance between public and private funding for formal, non-formal and purposeful learning activities. Taking into account rapid development and expansion of digitalization in our lives we plan to stimulate debates on which role should investment in new learning technologies have in an overall national ALE strategy.

### ***Governance***

The GRALE IV report stresses that “representation by and participation of all stakeholders are indispensable in order to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of all learners, in particular the most disadvantaged”. It also underlines the status aspect? of decentralizing ALE: the involvement

of public authorities at all (national and local) levels of government, and increased decision-making for ALE policy planning and implementation at lower levels of government, are also important to facilitate the implementation of ALE policies.

This working group will focus the discussion on existing governing structures and will pay attention to networking as one of the key factors of success in turning competition into cooperation of stakeholders, taking into consideration the capabilities of national and local policies. Considering perspectives for the development of non-formal ALE centres it would be vital to discover the ways of overcoming the monopoly of the formal (education / non-education) sector (institutes of advanced training, employment agencies' training centres, cultural institutions like libraries, museums, etc.). One bright example of successful cooperation is the Learning Cities concept, implemented in many regions of the world. We are looking forward to presenting and analysing the factors that influence the cooperation between all stakeholders in Learning Cities.

### **Quality**

As stated in the BFA, "quality in learning and education is a holistic, multidimensional concept and practice and demands constant attention and continuous development", which should be regularly tracked and evaluated for improvement. Quality requires relevant content, delivery and assessment so that provision can empower individuals and communities.

The interconnection between quality, impact and funding creates a vicious circle for ALE, which is difficult to break: "low funding leads to low quality and a lack of impact, which, in itself, leads to low funding". We would like to initiate a professional discussion on different factors which could promote higher quality in of ALE: what educational programmes guarantee a high level of training successful adult educators, which methods and tools are used for designing an effective training programme for adult learners. A special focus is required on the ratio between accessibility of non-formal ALE for disadvantaged groups and its quality, and which of them is a key factor for a learners' choice in favour of non-formal education. In this respect, participants are invited to present the best examples of quality management systems that have been developed and introduced.

### **Participation**

Guided by the BFA recommendations, improving participation is seen as an inclusive process that involves learners, providers, policy-makers and other stakeholders and should result in accessible ALE provision. Participation is a key indicator for monitoring whether or not provision is accessible and people are actually enrolled and, hopefully, benefiting from ALE provision. Quality is key to effective ALE, considering, in particular, both the process of provision as well as outcomes for participants from this process.

It is also underlined that “there can be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment”. At the same time, communities and decision-makers are not always aware of existing barriers which hinder equal access to ALE. We invite participants to present best practices in overcoming such barriers and encouraging diverse disadvantaged groups to take part in ALE programmes. With regard to the involvement in education and measuring its outcomes, we set a task to define the most effective instruments for receiving reliable data.

ALE plays a significant role in balancing interests and needs of citizens and interests and needs of communities (societies at large). We intend to explore to which extent ALE should follow the needs or impose new visions through innovative educational programmes, and thus influence the raise of interest.

We also encourage participants to debate on the sensitive issue of outreach to participants through positioning ALE only as an instrument for skills development and better employability or strengthening its role in self-development and active citizenship.

### **The Forum is organized by:**

**DVV International** – the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, DVV). As an association DVV represents the interests of the approximately 930 Adult Education Centres (or as they are called in Germany: “Folk High Schools” / Volkshochschulen) and their state associations, the largest non-formal education providers in Germany. German Adult Education Centres have been an effective community centres model with an extensive experience of activity for many decades. DVV International provides support for the establishment and development of sustainable structures for Youth and Adult Education in Asian, European, African and Latin American countries (around 35 countries in total); facilitates exchange of information and expertise at international level through conferences, workshops and publications; promotes lobby work and advocacy for the human right to education and for lifelong learning. In its activity the organization orient itself on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNESCO World Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA).

**EAEA** – the European Association for the Education of Adults 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. 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 are policy advocacy for lifelong learning at European level;

development of practice through projects, publications and training, international cooperation and provision of information and services for members.

**UAEA** – the Ukrainian Adult Education Association is the umbrella organization in Ukraine for a country-wide network of local Adult Education Centres providing non-formal education for different layers of population. The purpose of the Association is the establishment and the development of adult education in Ukraine, building a lifelong learning society. UAEA contributes to forming the policy of adult education and lifelong learning in Ukraine, including the drafting of legislative acts; supports the capacity development of its members and their activities; creates databases and distributes information on ALE in Ukraine and other countries; conducts research and educational activities.

#### **Forum format:**

The Forum will serve as a communication and discussion platform for interested specialists working in adult education and lifelong learning fields with an emphasis on non-formal education sector.

The Forum will last two days and will be held in a form of plenary sessions with panel discussions and group work. It will offer an opportunity to exchange on the achievements and challenges in the field that are specific to EU Neighbourhood countries, as well as to explore global and regional perspectives in more detail. The outcome Kyiv Declaration will constitute a joint civil society statement, acknowledging the role of Adult Learning and Education in EU Neighbourhood countries and identifying the areas which call for more action.

#### **Working languages of the Forum:**

Working languages of the Forum will be English and Ukrainian (simultaneous interpretation will be provided).

*The Forum is sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).*