



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

## Reaction to the Green Paper on Ageing

EAEA Statement  
March 2021

**EAEA welcomes the European Commission's interest in the demographic change and its effect on Europe. Further, EAEA agrees that it is essential to support the elderly during these challenging times and whilst recovering from the pandemic ([EAEA 2021](#)<sup>1</sup>), and advocates for a resourceful utilisation of adult education and learning to support this recovery.**

Non-formal and informal adult learning and education are strong instruments to foster critical thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity and civic engagement and can provide a low threshold to formal and accredited education – means necessary to successfully overcome today's challenges. **For this, it is crucial to base future ALE initiatives and programmes on an integrative dialogue between the EU institutions and CSOs. Therefore EAEA highly values the possibility to participate in the process and hopes for a fruitful exchange.**

### An inclusive and comprehensive view on ageing is needed

Considering the references to working, respectively workforce, compared to the mentioning of well-being<sup>2</sup>, it is noticeable that the Green Paper shows a strong focus on the employability of the elderly and their factual and potential integration in the labour market. Against this background, **EAEA underlines the importance to choose a more comprehensive and well-balanced view on ageing and the demographic change in Europe.** Acknowledging that the labour market is the very foundation of the European economy and that a regular, decent income is one cornerstone for a good life, **EAEA advocates for the consideration, especially of mental and physical needs of the elderly independently from the labour market. Further, we encourage the European Commission to not limit the consideration of physical impairments of the elderly to the care-sector, caregivers or the costs associated with health care but to incorporate a potential-oriented view on support when discussing ageing.** For this, including the elderly and CSOs in the discussion is of utmost importance to ensure an inclusive and comprehensive insight on ageing that reflects the diversity of this group.

### Ageing and Learning

EAEA highly appreciates the consideration of education and training in a lifelong learning perspective and fully agrees with the multitude of positive effects of investments on an individual, as well as on a

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<sup>1</sup> [Conclusions of the Council of the European Union on Human Rights, Participation and Well-Being of Older Persons in the Era of Digitalisation](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Green Paper on Ageing refers to “work/ing”, “workforce”, and “workers” 93 times throughout, whereas it refers to “well-being” 14 times.



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societal level. Building on this, **EAEA encourages the Commission to more prominently recognise the benefits of learning as the premise for the ability to successfully face the challenges of the 21st century as well as active and responsible participation in society.** Trying to overcome the current crisis, the need for responsible citizens, equipped with the tools to understand increasing complexity and to identify false information has become clear. In that ALE is a powerful tool to combating the aftermath of the crisis, especially in the areas of fake news but also in health education, new forms of working (home office) or in re-entering the job market after a period of unemployment. **In this context, EAEA addresses the urgency for an extended dialogue on the learning needs of the elderly, not only in regards to physical impairments but in regards to learning habits and their changes over time.**

By further promoting learning throughout the third age and expressing its benefits, the Commission can modernise the view on learning, shifting it towards a right-based view and supporting the idea of learning as an end in itself. Against this background, **EAEA invites the European Commission to broaden the discussion of the long-term benefits of ALE, while underlining the importance to use inclusive language to empower people to take on learning opportunities.** Additionally, the discourse on the benefits of learning in older age must also remain wary when discussing the responsibility of lifelong learning efforts, in order to keep a productive balance between the empowerment of learners and the allocation of the responsibility of continuous learning.

As expressed in our [Campaign for a continuation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning after 2020](#) **EAEA is advocating for carrying on and strengthening of the prior European Agenda for Adult Learning, which came to an end in 2020.** The EAAL is a strong tool to cope with an ageing society and needs to be continued within any future endeavours to react to the demographic change in Europe. Additionally, EAEA is advising the Commission to include ALE as an important part of the European Education Area, acknowledging non-formal and community learning as a potential entry point into vocational or formal education and training.

Finally, **[EAEA asks the Commission to assure close cooperation between all European initiatives and strategies on adult education.](#)** Enabling the successor initiative of the European Agenda for Adult Learning to join forces with the New Skills Agenda, Upskilling Pathways, the first principle on the right to lifelong learning of the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as the European Education Area. Avoiding to develop silos of ALE and ET programmes, EAEA recommends investing adequate resources into the exploration of overlapping and potential to streamline initiatives, as they need to link closely to existing structures such as the EC Working Group, National Coordinators, EPAL, etc. as well as to global frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

[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 124 member organisations in 43 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.*

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