



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Candidate's presentation form for EAEA PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS ELECTIONS 2021

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 2021

To be returned to EAEA until 22 May 2021

to Gina Ebner gina.ebner@eaea.org AND

Sari Pohjola sari.pohjola@kvs.fi

NAME	Dearbháil Lawless
TITLE	Head of Advocacy
ORGANISATION	AONTAS the National Adult Learning Organisation (Ireland)
NOMINATED BY	Niamh O'Reilly, AONTAS CEO
RUNNING FOR	Board member

Please attach your ID picture to the e-mail.





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1. Please describe your current position.

AONTAS Head of Advocacy

In this role, I design advocacy campaigns, develop evidence-based policy submissions, and I'm responsible for political and stakeholder engagement. I work directly with members to inform our advocacy and policy work and ensure it is needs-led. My mission in this work is to advocate for educational equality. I lead the Advocacy team and we manage the European Agenda for Adult Learning and all EU funded programmes, the Community Education Network, member and learner capacity building, and the One Step Up Information and Referral Service.

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

As an adult educator by profession, I have taught in community education, Further Education and Training (VET in Ireland), and Higher Education. During this time, I have had the privilege of working with a wide diversity of learners who helped build my understanding of the needs and experiences of people in adult education. Learner voice is integral to our sector and I will encourage and support the Board of EAEA to engage with learners as a mechanism to inform all advocacy and policy work, and showcase role models from diverse communities across Europe at EAEA events. In AONTAS, I develop policy submissions, design advocacy campaigns, and represent the organisation at regional, national and international level influencing policy, promoting adult learning, and advocating for members, learners, and the needs of underrepresented groups.

In addition, I have nearly 10 years' experience designing and project managing EU funded programmes including leading the European Agenda for Adult Learning project in Ireland. This has been a tremendous experience, for me, working collaboratively with my European colleagues and I value my European identity and the opportunities we receive as European citizens. In EAEA, I will support EU programmes, help with networking and cooperation, and identify new ways to support non-EU organisations to engage and benefit from this work.

Relationships are a key part of our work in the adult learning community. I will use my time strengthening the relationships between members to support a thriving adult learning community.



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I was co-opted to the Board of EAEA in 2020 and I have attended every meeting in addition to supporting two working groups; Europe is more than the EU, and The Future of Adult Learning. I have enjoyed this time and can use this experience, if successful, to jump back into the work immediately. I have also joined the Board of ELM Magazine (adult learning) and I can foster open communication between the magazine and EAEA in the future.

3. What are your motivations as a candidate?

I grew up in a working-class lone parent family in Ireland. I understand the barriers imposed on people from these circumstances and the transformation adult learning can provide for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Adult education changed my life and this is the reason I have such a passion for educational equality.

EAEA, like AONTAS, proudly stand by their core values and principles that inform and guide their work. I want to support EAEA in this work and to help the growth and success of the organisation and our EAEA community.

In addition, governance in an organisation such as the EAEA is paramount to its success. I will be a dedicated Board member that is guided by ethics, and the sustainability of the organisation.

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

EAEA and AONTAS have had a strong relationship for many years. The two organisations in structure and approach are very alike. We represent over 500 organisations and individuals in Ireland, including community education members that provide non-formal education. I will bring the capacity, support, and expertise of AONTAS and our members to support EAEA and the EAEA community. I have great respect for this community and if I am successful in this position, I look forward to working more closely with members across Europe.

I will work to strengthen policy, advocacy, EU projects, learner voice, and EU collaboration while raising the profile of EAEA and the sector. Advocating for non-formal education, community-based learning, sustainable funding, continuation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning, and flexible free learning opportunities.

Thank you for taking the time to read my nomination form.