



FuturelabAE policy recommendations for change-oriented adult education

Text: EAEA and the project partners

Publisher: The FutureLabAE Erasmus+ project consortium, August 2021

Layout: EAEA

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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Executive summary

This document provides a list of recommendations for European, national and local policymakers who wish to foster and promote change-oriented adult education in their contexts. Less known and used change-oriented adult education is based on proactive thinking (instead of reactive) and could thus significantly help to solve many challenges in society.

The recommendations were drafted in the framework of the FutureLabAE project, which aimed to provide, policymakers and practitioners (staff and trainers of adult learning and education (ALE) organisations) with the knowledge, expertise, and tools to become more change-oriented in their adult learning provision and practices. In the FutureLabAE project, change-oriented adult education is defined as follows:

Change-oriented adult education encompasses an approach, philosophy and set of teaching and learning methods that seek to create individual and/or social change. Learners can also move beyond individual transformation to a collective empowerment based on critical awareness, new ways of thinking, and active participation. This model facilitates a process of conscious realization for learners as they work together taking action, including potential acts of resistance, towards a more democratic, equal and ethical world.

In particular, the project addresses two main challenges Europe is currently facing, where adult education could play a crucial role: the erosion of democracy, as there is an increasing number of citizens who are discontent with politics and start leaning towards xenophobic and populist parties or choosing not to vote; and the problems caused by digitalisation, as in addition to good outcomes, it has also created room for spreading of fake news, hate speeches and other challenges linked to poor media literacy. Also, there is a high number of people in Europe who need support with (basic) digital and civic competences and this project aims at empowering learners to acquire them with change-oriented methodologies.

This document gathers learning points and outcomes of the FutureLabAE project and lists key and forward-looking policy recommendations so that:

- Change-orientation in adult education in general can be implemented more easily, especially related to digitalisation and democracy
- There is an increased understanding of the benefits of adult education when it comes to these two topics

- Policy-makers and stakeholders start cooperating or increase their cooperation with adult education organisations in order to achieve positive impacts on individuals, their communities, and the society as a whole
- Policies on adult learning linked to digitalisation and democracy are more effective and meet people's needs.

The document begins with a short definition of change-oriented adult education and then lists recommendations for policymakers working at various geographical levels. The second part digs into the concept of change-oriented adult education and its benefits, as well as the preconditions needed to design and implement it. At the end of the document, readers could also learn more about the FutureLabAE project.



1. Change-oriented adult education in a nutshell

In the FutureLabAE project, change-oriented adult education is defined as follows:

Change-oriented adult education encompasses an approach, philosophy and set of teaching and learning methods that seek to create individual and/or social change. Learners can also move beyond individual transformation to a collective empowerment based on critical awareness, new ways of thinking, and active participation. This model facilitates a process of conscious realization for learners as they work together taking action, including potential acts of resistance, towards a more democratic, equal and ethical world.

As demonstrated by the [FutureLabAE analysis report](#), (adult) education has always some political aims.

According to Picon (1991)* all education has one of the following political options: (1) maintenance and conservation of the traditional ordering of the society, (2) peaceful reform to improve the society, or (3) radical structural transformation. Picon describes these in the following way: From our historical experience we have learned that the actors involved in adult education do not have a neutral posture. They have ideologies and fundamental interests which they are attempting to legitimize [...] these actors are guided by and support one of the following basic political

options: maintenance and conservation of the traditional ordering of the society, however unjust and unequal it may be; reform to improve the system and make the necessary adjustments for more equity; structural transformation leading to a new national order, whether by progressive steps or radical changes through revolutionary processes.

The FutureLabAE project focuses on adult education that aims at the second (peaceful reform to improve the society) and third (radical structural transformation) options.

Most of the courses and programmes matching the first Picon's option are not necessarily consciously organized to meet this political goal, but practically they do. Conservative, not-change-oriented adult education is easier and cheaper to organise. It is a kind of 'default setting' for courses, adult educators, community and organization developers, and policymakers – but change-oriented oriented learning processes are more demanding as they require questioning of own attitudes, values, and ways of behaviour.

Kirchgaesser (2019)** argues that change-oriented adult education initiatives evolve and exist outside the official education system and often are organised by individuals. She writes:

Within institutional frameworks, there seems to be little space for what could be seen as one of the most fundamental purposes of education: enabling people to become critical and creative co-shapers of society, capable of navigating a complex world that is facing unprecedented social and ecological crises.

The report highlights how this marginality is one explanation why change-oriented adult learning methods and practices are less known and used.

Therefore, the purpose of this document is to allow change-orientation in adult education for both digitalisation and democracy to be implemented more widely and easily.

* Picon, C. (1991). Adult education and popular education in the context of state and NGOs. *Convergence*, 24(1/2).

** Kirchgaesser, A. (2019): Renewal from the margins – change-oriented adult education in do-it-yourself learning spaces. Paper presented in ESREA Triennial conference, September 19-22, 2019, Belgrade, Serbia.



2. Recommendations

Recommendations for EU policymakers

1. Recognise the role of change-oriented adult education in transforming learners and society (especially in the fields of digitalisation and democracy).

In the [FutureLabAE analysis report](#), the authors state that:

“In policy documents, political discourse, and common thinking adult learning and education are usually seen as mechanical tools helping society, organizations, and individuals to adapt to the changes caused by external forces and causes. This kind of thinking is based on the conception that citizens have no say nor possibility to discuss, plan and have an active role in making these changes”.

There is a need to move on from the concept of education as a tool to equip individuals with survival skills, which enable them to adapt to society, and to be employable, but do not develop their agency and active role as shapers of their life and community.

2. Consider adult education organisations at the European and international levels as crucial cooperation partners in reaching European policy objectives that are not commonly linked to adult education.

The majority of the change-oriented good practices collected in the first phase of the FutureLabAE project deal with equality and fairness of society, environment and

sustainability for communities, and critical thinking and safety applied to the digitalisation transformation. Involving European and international adult education organisations in the design, monitoring, and implementation of policies related to those (and other) topics non-directly related to education is fundamental for achieving concrete progress.

Policy Kitchen

Policy Kitchen is a method developed by Foraus - Forum Foreign Policy to generate concrete solutions for urgent foreign policy challenges. Policy Kitchen is based on a digital innovation platform and physical workshops, so-called Policy Cooking Days. Committed to the bottom-up principle, Policy Kitchen enables the participation of a wide variety of thinkers in the political process. Based on pilot projects in Switzerland, Policy Kitchen connects the international "Open Think Tank Network" and other actors. This enables comprehensive transnational cooperation in relation to global challenges. The vision is to use this method to strengthen democratic participation in international politics.

3. Monitoring and quantification of adult education should cover the whole wide range of ALE.

Change-oriented adult education provision often takes place in non-mainstream courses and programmes. Comprehensive data collections are needed on a quantitative and qualitative level to monitor it and identify its benefits. All adult education sectors and providers should be taken into consideration while measuring the achievement of the ambitious indicators set in the European Skills Agenda (47% participation of adults in LL) and the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (60%).

4. Monitor allocation of resources to make sure change-oriented, non-formal and non-vocational adult education is well sustained.

Investment in ALE could be better examined at the European level to understand how it is distributed among various sectors and providers. Combining that with an analysis of the progress on the existing ALE benchmarks could motivate the EU Member States to widen the scope of adult education and learning, allocate funding more fairly, and invest more in outreach and inclusion strategies.

“As civil society we always advocated for holistic approach to learning. We have enough evidence that change-oriented approaches really work. We have to develop a policy that is truly inclusive. Skills oriented approach is not”.

Niamh O'Relly, panellist at the FutureLabAE final conference

5. Increase cooperation and learning between policy, practice, and research.

Closer cooperation and mutual learning in respect of policy, practice, and research can lead to improvements in adult education and learning provision. By raising awareness, including specific priorities in research projects, and organising events on transformative learning, progress can be achieved. The results should then be shared with the national and local levels, perhaps via the Working Groups and structural dialogue opportunities already existing at the European level.

6. Include change-oriented adult education and transformative learning as a priority for the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

The European Agenda for Adult Learning has been central for improving adult learning structures and increasing participation in adult learning but has not yet been fully implemented in all countries ([EAEA statement July 2020](#)). The inclusion of change-oriented adult education in the priorities of the Agenda is essential to achieve the European Union's objectives as well as to deliver on the implementation of the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals](#), not only related to education but also – and especially- those related to a more just, equitable and sustainable society.

Change Makers Project

Change Makers aims to raise awareness of local and global development issues with adults across County Donegal (Ireland). Over the last nine years, they have organised workshops, accredited learning, ETB tutor education, community arts projects, horticulture, and environmental projects. They have an experienced panel of local passionate and committed Development Education facilitators to support the project across all of their activities. They work with local communities to help them become Fairtrade Towns. They currently offer three accredited learning opportunities in Local and Global Development Awareness, Intercultural Diversity, and Global Development.

7. Recognise the importance of change-oriented adult education in achieving the goals of the Skills Agenda.

Action 7 of the Skills Agenda proposes to create a strategic framework for the recognition of transversal skills, such as working together, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving. As the communication says, these skills are “often developed outside formal learning, at work and throughout life”: non-formal change-oriented adult learning and education certainly play a great role in empowering people to acquire those.

8. Recognise the role of non-governmental organizations, social movements, and self-organized citizen’s learning spaces as potential change-oriented adult learning and education opportunities.

Many change-oriented learning activities take place outside adult education organizations and are organized spontaneously by local citizens (for example, as social meeting places for different age groups, therefore promoting also inter-generational learning). These learning activities can be very important and beneficial for individuals and communities, but take place “in the margins”. Thus they are not necessarily recognised by policymakers and lack funding.

Kaikkien Vaalit

Kaikkien Vaalit (Our Election) is a democracy education activity developed by the Finnish Network of Multicultural Associations, Moniheli.

KaikkienVaalit aims to promote the participation and influence of immigrants in Finnish society through workshops and panel discussions.

In the workshops, participants learn about voting and elections in Finland, the role of the parliament, information about political parties, the main themes discussed during the election, and ways to influence.

The questions formulated in the workshops are presented to the parliamentary candidates taking part in the panel discussions.

Recommendations for national policymakers

9. Widen the scope of adult learning and education.

Change-oriented provision and practices are mostly offered in non-formal adult education centres, NGOs, organisations operating at the grass-root level, and social movements. Those organisations tend to be more innovative and transformative than formal adult education providers and should be better supported. Their role in transforming communities and reaching out to disadvantaged groups through adult learning is crucial and should be acknowledged by national stakeholders.

Community Facilitator Programme

WRDA works regionally to advance women's equality and participation in society in Ireland. This programme provides training for women within communities to directly support other women within their community.

The women are recruited from geographical areas that have been identified as areas of low uptake of the screening awareness. They have gained experience over the years and designed training that is as accessible as possible, considering facilitation methods, the timings of training sessions, length of the course, and providing childcare and travel costs. Once trained, the Community Facilitators deliver to a range of community groups, including many that are located in areas of deprivation serving socially marginalised groups.

10. Recognise the role of change-oriented adult education in transforming learners and society (especially in relation to digitalisation and democracy).

There is a need to move on from the concept of education as a tool to equip individuals with survival skills, to enable them to adapt to society and to be employable.

“Adult education is often considered as a “repair shop”, fixing things that have gone wrong in school education. We need ambition also in policy. As adult educators, we need to stand up and show the valuable work we are doing”.

Gina Ebner, EAEA Secretary General, in her closing speech at the FutureLabAE final conference

11. Provide more (financial and structural) support to change-oriented adult education.

Acknowledging the role of change-oriented adult education providers, NGOs, and social movements should lead to more funding and structural support for those organisations. Accreditation and funding schemes for providers should consider their capacity to provide benefits for individuals and communities. More investment should also be considered for community-led and grass-root organisations active at the local level. Moreover, including these organisations in dialogue processes is vital, especially when related to designing, implementing, and monitoring national policies and practices.

Campus Demokratie

Campus Demokratie is a national platform that aims to promote political education and participation throughout Switzerland and thus strengthen democracy. It connects people and organisations, offers courses and events, provides an online information platform, and carries out projects to promote public dialogue and democratic values. One of their main goals is to support children, young people, adults, and residents without Swiss citizenship in their political education and participation so that they develop an understanding that their commitment is essential for the continued existence of democracy in Switzerland and elsewhere. Their work is supported by the federal government and the cantons as well as by private individuals.

12. Enable a certain level of flexibility for providers and curricula.

A certain level of flexibility in the curriculum design and the development of their work will give providers the possibility to create change-oriented programmes and include change-oriented methodologies into the existing courses. That would lead to an increased personal development for learners and more social outcomes for their communities.

Principles and guidelines for basic education provision in Austria

This framework was the basis for all projects and courses for basic skills and Basisbildung funded by the national and regional governments from 2011 to 2019. The position paper had a semi-legal status and was replaced by a retro-pedagogical curriculum in May 2019.

The principles are strongly oriented on the works of Freire, Gramsci, and partly Spivak. It put the learner at the centre of all pedagogical work with languages, ICT, and maths. There are no levels, and it centred the work with learners on their needs and wishes, taking their situation in society as a starting point of literacy work. The so-called filters should “control” the view on the individual learning fields from the perspectives of “pedagogical relations”, learning, the political situation and the contexts.

Basic education generates cosmopolitan perspectives for transcultural views and makes societal processes of exclusion and discrimination visible in order to reflect them critically. It enhances active participation in society. It also encourages the individual create and change the world instead of "just living in it".

13. Provide better and more in-service and pre-service training for adult educators.

The FutureLabAE report underlines that ALE practitioners are not always familiar with change-oriented adult learning theories and learning and teaching methods. Therefore, there is a clear need to raise awareness of these existing tools in adult education organizations, associations and other potential actors, including policy makers. In particular, as one of the most important points for change-oriented adult education is that adults engage in dialogue and discussions (communicative learning), enhanced and further training opportunities for ALE educators are necessary. Change-oriented learning processes are more demanding for learners as they require questioning of their own attitudes, values, and ways of behaviour. More support for them is needed, and adult education and staff are better placed to guarantee so.

14. Consider national and local adult education organisations as important cooperation partners in reaching policy objectives that are not commonly linked to adult education.

The majority of the change-oriented good practices collected in the first phase of the FutureLabAE project deal with equality and fairness of society, environment and sustainability for communities, and critical thinking and safety applied to the digitalisation transformation. Involving national adult education organisations in the design, monitoring, and implementation of policies related to those (and other) topics non-directly related to education is fundamental for achieving concrete progress.

15. Support mapping and promotion of change-oriented adult education initiatives and approaches.

Many of the change-oriented initiatives and approaches are project- and locally based. A mapping process at the national level is necessary to identify and promote those widely. Support for transferring and upscaling them in other parts of the country or other education sectors is also desirable.

“There are always things happening under the radar, in really interesting ways. The results of the FutureLabAE project show that there are extraordinary capacities. It's a massive resource of hope”.

Dr Fergal Finnegan, Keynote speaker at the final FutureLabAE conference

16. Improve and broaden ways to measure benefits of learning and learner's progressions.

Measuring learning outcomes embedded in national and fixed curricula might hinder getting a clear picture of the wider benefits of learning and the authentic progression of each learner. If funding is only connected to the achievement of certificates or high grades, change-oriented providers that work daily to improve the living conditions of adult learners and the well-being of communities are penalised. More criteria should be added in the evaluation of learning providers, and a broad reflection about this should be carried out with ALE stakeholders and learners at the national level.

“From what I've experienced and my family and those around me, this recommendation is crucial. I think about the pathway that people take, for instance: some people start with a hobby-related course, then get the learning bug, build momentum, and then they're in

something like a certificate course that could lead to employment. The intangible benefits of different learning opportunities are hard to quantify and don't show up in government balance sheets: it would be great to see these benefits put more at the centre".

FutureLabAE focus group participant from Ireland

17. Recognise the role of non-governmental organizations, social movements, and self-organized citizen's learning spaces as potential change-oriented adult learning and education opportunities.

Many change-oriented learning activities take place outside adult education organizations and are organized spontaneously by local citizens (for example, as social meeting places for different age groups, therefore promoting also inter-generational learning). These learning activities can be very important and beneficial for individuals and communities but take place "in the margins". Thus they are not necessarily recognised by policymakers and lack funding.

das kollektiv - critical educational, advisory and cultural work by and for migrants

As a place for critical educational activities addressed to migrant women, das Kollektiv offers literacy courses, preparatory courses for external school-leaving exams, cultural events, political activities concerning feminist issues of migrants, theoretical work on critical education and literacy, organisation of conferences, authoring of books and political grassroots work, teacher training courses in cooperation with other feminist and migrant NGOs, and partnerships with universities.

Recommendations for local and regional policymakers

18. Recognise the role of change-oriented adult education in transforming learners and society.

When integrated into local policies and adapted to communities' needs, adult education and learning multiply their benefits. There is a need to move on from the concept of education as a tool to equip individuals with survival skills, to enable them to adapt to society, and to be employable. Change-oriented provision and practices are mostly offered in non-formal adult education centres, NGOs, organisations operating at the grass-root level, and social movements. Recognising their role and, thus, including them in dialogue processes to the designing, implementation, and monitoring of ALE policies and practices is crucial.

Not in our city.

The civic platform "Not in our city" contributes to the promotion and development of tolerance in the city of Banska Bystrica (Slovenia) through social, cultural, and educational events. The final goals of this process are reducing polarization in society, building relationships, questioning negative social aspects such as racism, xenophobia, extremism, hatred, and hate crimes. The platform also supports the active participation of citizens in the public decision-making process. It gathers community-based organizations, volunteers, human rights activists, and representatives of civil society.

19. Provide more (financial and structural) support to change-oriented adult education.

Acknowledging the role of change-oriented adult education providers, NGOs, and social movements should lead to more funding and structural support for those organisations. Accreditation and funding schemes for ALE providers should consider their capacity to benefit individuals and communities. More investment should also be considered for community-led and grass-root organisations active at the local level.

Tous Homonumericus

Tous Homonumericus is a series of informal workshops focused on digital communication and addressed to people that suffer from a digital gap (elderlies, socially excluded, people with disabilities). During a whole day, they discover the common ways to use numeric tools, but beyond the technical skills, they reflect how the digital environment challenges society. The final objective is to empower people by emphasizing their critical skills and awareness toward digitalisation from economic, political, social, and technical perspectives.

20. Enable a certain level of flexibility for providers and provide them with what they need to implement change-oriented activities.

Flexibility for providers might mean the possibility to use public spaces and to engage with the local community. Local policymakers can make the difference in the implementation of change-oriented adult education by contributing with resources, spaces or promotion of initiatives and activities organised by providers.

Developing digital competences in basic education with migrants

This document aims at developing digital competences together with migrants in a way that includes experience-based learning and empowerment. It lowers the threshold for migrants to use ICT in an emancipated way. The most interesting aspect of the document is the fact that ICT is not only the medium of learning but also the subject. The activities use real-life situations (such as how to buy a public transport ticket) as starting points for discussing specific topics, which include apps, QR Codes, using audio and video resources, and making videos.

21. Consider adult education providers as important cooperation partners in reaching policy objectives.

The majority of the change-oriented good practices collected in the first phase of the FutureLabAE project deal with equality and fairness of society, environment and sustainability for communities, and critical thinking and safety applied to the digitalisation transformation. Involving local adult education organisations and

providers in the design, monitoring, and implementation of policies related to those (and other) topics non-directly related to education is fundamental for achieving concrete progress.

Digital Skills Passport

The Programme for Digital Inclusion and Literacy is an initiative of the Lisbon City Council that seeks to demystify the use of technology by helping citizens, simply and engagingly, to take advantage of its daily use. Through gamified and informal workshops, learners are challenged to explore the internet's democratic and creative potential in a critical way. They earn badges and micro-credentials based on the Open Badges standard which form an online portfolio, the Digital Skills Passport, allowing skills to be shared or included in a CV.



3. Preconditions for change-oriented adult education

Adult education can be change-oriented if there are certain conditions in place.

Governance and partnerships

It is very well known that adult education is fragmented at various levels: heterogeneity can be observed within the EU countries, and differences can be seen between EU countries. Adult education needs holistic and coordinated governance within its sector and a more overarching and comprehensive approach to influence various policies and cooperate with different sectors. By integrating adult education into existing initiatives and policies, these will, in turn, be improved, and learning can be mainstreamed.

Furthermore, policymakers at all levels should adopt (or improve) legislation to strengthen structures for the non-formal sector and support it financially to contribute to the challenges society is confronted with.

Cooperation structures need to be supported by policymakers from all geographical levels to build and maintain partnerships between adult education providers, being them non-formal or formal, officially recognised or not. More connections with public services, employers, and other sectors are also desirable. That will lead to less fragmentation, more sustainability, and an increased innovation of the adult education provision.

Target groups

Policymakers should support ALE providers and organisations to do more and better in reaching out to people that need learning the most. They should also invest more resources in tackling the various barriers groups such as migrants, refugees, the elderly, people with disabilities face in their learning journey. It should be acknowledged that successful learning paths for vulnerable learners need constant support and guidance: these measures (including in-service training for teachers) are not only a crucial investment for individuals, but also for their communities and the society as a whole ([The Outreach, Empowerment and Diversity \[OED\] policy recommendations](#)).

That said, the FutureLabAE consortium believes that change-oriented adult education should not only address vulnerable groups and people with low qualifications. Indeed, also those who might have reached high levels of educational attainment might need (basic) skills to face the current challenges of our society. In this complex and rapidly changing world, skills and competences should be constantly updated and nourished, especially those required to handle the problems brought by digitalisation (like the spread of fake news) and to maintain and renew democracy.

Learners' needs and provision

Adult education should be supported (structurally and financially) to adopt a learner-centred approach. Learners' voices need to be taken into account in all phases of the learning process. Start planning the provision from their needs is a must and will enable real progression for them.

However, it should be kept in mind that adults do not always recognise their learning needs: thus, change-oriented adult education methods can and should be used to help them become better aware of their shortcomings and potentialities and to sensitise them on the challenges of their community (and the society as a whole). The provision should be flexible enough to enable trainers and providers to accommodate learners' interests and include topics essential to living their personal life fully and participate in their community and society.

The provision should be affordable, accessible, and well-known. Policymakers can support that by creating adequate funding schemes and promoting various learning opportunities widely via different channels (including festivals and campaigns).

Providers and trainers

Adult education organisations are often compelled to help adults, communities, and society to adapt to the changes that have already taken place (reactive), rather than capable of anticipating future situations (pro-active) or creating new competences and practices necessary for any change and development to take place (change-oriented).

Adult education staff and trainers are frequently themselves not prepared for changes in societies. They are often busy adjusting to changes in society and have little resources and competences needed to reorganize training provision in a more change-oriented way.

Policymakers could help by investing in research, involving ALE organisations in structural dialogue, and increasing and improving in-service and pre-service training opportunities for adult education staff and trainers.

Preconditions for change-oriented adult education and digitalisation

Today's society is in the process of responding to the fourth industrial revolution: digitalisation. It is disrupting labour markets and fundamentally altering the nature and future of work and education and training. Understanding the opportunities, challenges and impact of digitalisation on work and learning is important for every adult engaged in lifelong learning. It is key to supporting personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship. Everyone now needs to have a sufficient level of digital competence in order to play an active part in society. (..) Technology is also altering the future of teaching and learning, providing a myriad of tools to enhance the way we educate, teach and learn (EAEA Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century).

To empower learners, communities, and society to engage in and shape the changes brought by digitalisation, the FutureLabAE partners identified few specific requirements that should be in place:

- **Citizens should be able to access the digital space:** policymakers at all levels should work jointly to reduce (and close) the digital gap by providing digital infrastructure and broadband connectivity for all and foresee financial support for disadvantaged groups to afford it.

- **Potential learners and adult educators should be aware of the digital transformation of our society:** policymakers should organise information campaigns, increase the available opportunities to acquire digital competences, and provide more in-service training on the topic for ALE trainers and staff.
- **Policymakers should recognise the importance of more actors/sectors/populations engaged in the digitalisation transformation of our society:** adult education organisations should be involved in the policy-making, implementation, and monitoring processes on the topic.

Conspiracy theories

Conspiracytheories.be (English version) and theoriesducomplot.be (French version) is an online tool that includes 20 videos and one pedagogical booklet (64 pages, available in French and soon in English) available for free access. It is a training tool for educational workers (teachers and educators) who would like to animate or teach about conspiracy theories from the perspective of media literacy.

Preconditions for change-oriented adult education and democracy

We believe that democracy, intercultural dialogue, social justice and cooperation are key for a Europe of respect, participation and cohesion. Democracy and European adult education have common roots and a common history. Adult education significantly influenced the development of democratic societies in Europe, but at the same time, democratic movements influenced the development of adult education institutions. Many adult education organisations were established as the result of emancipatory movements (workers, women, religious organisations, etc.). Adult education is the tool for the development of critical thinking and empowerment, a lively and inspired civil society, and knowledge and know-how. Adult education also provides the space to develop active citizenship (EAEA Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century).

To enable providers and trainers to successfully implement change-oriented adult education and contribute to the democratic challenges of our times, the FutureLabAE partners identified few specific requirements that should be in place:

- **Put more emphasis on learning for active citizenship, democracy, sustainable development, and cohesion:** due to the various crises, Europe (and the world) has been confronted with, the focus on employability is (still) predominant in adult education policies adopted at the European and national levels. More recognition and support for learning for active citizenship, democracy, sustainable development, and cohesion are necessary to enable individuals to engage in changing our communities and society for the better.
- **Potential learners and adult educators should better understand the democratic challenges of our society:** Policymakers should invest more resources to sensitise public opinion on these issues, make sure constructive debates take place at all levels and in various channels, increase the available opportunities to acquire civic competences, and provide more in-service training on the topic for ALE trainers and staff.
- **Involve adult education organisations and citizens into the policy-making, implementation, and monitoring processes:** Engagement and participation can be fostered by increased transparency and more consultation opportunities in the policy-making processes. Policymakers should set up structures to strengthen the dialogue with the population and adopt measures to involve ALE stakeholders and citizens in all phases of the process.

The city of Saillans

In 2014, a group of citizens of Saillans – 1 200 inhabitants in Drôme, France – concerned about acting directly for their city, and in the light of increased well-being, presented themselves, apolitically, for the mayorship of the city. They won the elections and paved the way for a new type of city governance. The city governance focuses now on three main pillars: collegiality, participation and monitoring of the participatory process. Since then, a social, political and cultural event where inhabitants from all ages are able to participate in discussions, conferences, workshops and theatre plays about the subject of local democracies takes place every year. The event consists in political and cultural meetings to provide citizens with all the necessary tools to become more proactive and engaged in the democratic decision making of their own community.



4. The FutureLabAE project

The FutureLabAE project provides staff and trainers of adult and learning education (ALE) organisations with the knowledge, expertise, and tools to become more change-oriented in their adult learning provision and practices.

In particular, the project addresses two main challenges Europe is currently facing, where adult education could play a crucial role: democracy, as there is an increasing number of citizens who are discontent with politics and start leaning towards xenophobic and populist parties or choosing not to vote; and digitalisation, as there is a high number of people in Europe who need support with basic skills, especially digital skills, and are not able to benefit from it.

In the last three years, the project developed the following outputs:

- A collection and analysis of change-oriented practices in the fields of digitalisation and democracy, which is a source of inspiration not only for ALE organisations, staff, and trainers but also to policymakers at different levels,
- Two online courses on change-oriented adult education and digitalisation/ democracy addressed to ALE organisations, staff, and trainers,
- Two hands-on methodologies for change-oriented workshops on digitalisation and democracy,
- Guidelines for ALE organisations and staff on how to work more pro-actively and more effectively with the topics, to successfully reach out to and support people with low digital and civic competences.

This document includes the project's conclusions and recommendations to allow policymakers and stakeholders (on European, national, regional, and local levels) to support the ALE sector in the challenges above-mentioned and draft more coherent and impactful policy initiatives on digitalisation and democracy.

FutureLabAE is financed with the support of the Erasmus+ programme and gathers the following partners:

- Institut National de Formation et de Recherche sur l'Education Permanente (INFREP) – France (Coordinator)
- European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) – Belgium
- National Adult Learning Organisation (AONTAS) – Ireland
- Asociacia institucii vzdelavania dospelých v Slovenskej republike (AIVD) – Slovakia
- Kvs Foundation (Kansanvalistusseura Sr.) – Finland
- University of Eastern Finland (UEF) – Finland
- Amar Terra Verde, LDA. (EPATV) – Portugal
- Die Wiener Volkshochschulen GMBH (VHS) – Austria
- Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (SVEB) – Switzerland



