



CONFINTEA VII needs a strong civil society representation

EAEA Statement

December 2021

CONFINTEA VII, the International Conference on Adult Education, is expected to take place in Morocco in June 2022. The conference, held every 12 years, brings together governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental stakeholders from across the globe and is the only global process that is focused on adult learning and education (ALE). Over the years, EAEA has been actively supporting the preparations for each conference, providing a civil society perspective from Europe, taking stock of the commitments made and offering recommendations. In the lead-up towards CONFINTEA VII, EAEA has been regularly consulting with its members on the actions needed to improve ALE in Europe and globally, as outlined below.

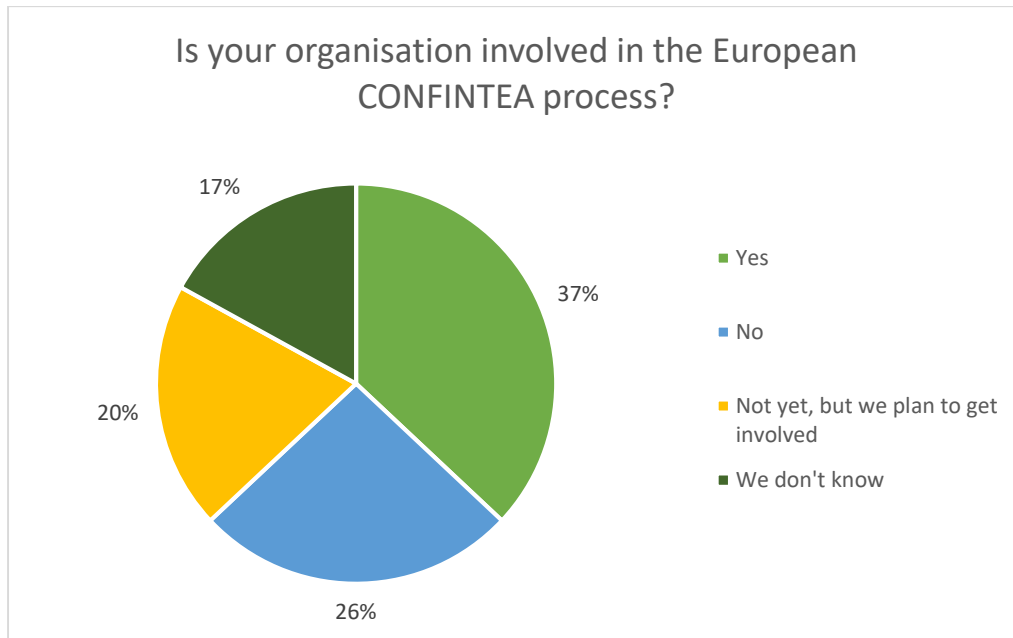
Civil society involvement in the lead-up to CONFINTEA VII: a fragmented picture

EAEA was actively involved in the regional preparatory conference in September 2021, which took place in the framework of the Slovenian Presidency Conference on Adult Education. In preparation, we focused on capacity building of our members: we organised two online meetings with members to exchange national and regional perspectives, we prepared an advocacy toolkit which includes key information about the process, an info brief and a model letter that our members can use for their policy and advocacy work at national level. EAEA's work on international adult learning and education (ALE) is currently also supported by our participation in the global "We are ALE" campaign to give ALE an international branding and clearly show our unity amidst the diversity of adult education.

In 2021, we used an online survey to ask our members if they are involved in the European CONFINTEA process. A large number of our members said they were already involved (37 per cent of all responses) or planning to become active (20 per cent). However, 26 percent also said they were not involved and 17 percent said they did not know if they wanted to or could become involved.



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The subsequent question of whether representatives of our members will join the national CONFINTEA VII delegations is particularly revealing. While 20 percent said they would join their delegation, 20 percent said they would not, and a majority of 60% said they did not know.

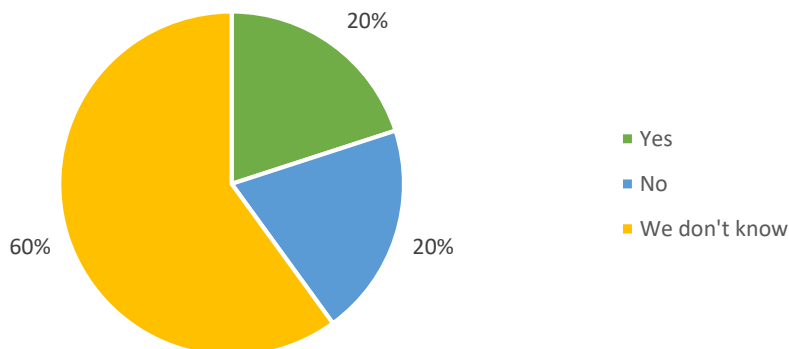
We would like to point out here that the preparation for CONFINTEA VII in Europe has already been underway for several months, and that by the end of 2021, there should already be information on how the national delegations are composed. The national delegations are mostly coordinated by the national UNESCO commissions in cooperation with the respective national ministries of education. As our analysis of previous CONFINTEA delegations and feedback from our members has shown, civil society in adult education is actively involved in the delegations in only a few countries.

We therefore find it all the more alarming that, only a few of our members representing adult education at national level from the civil society side will be involved in the delegations or have not yet been contacted by their national UNESCO commissions to do so as of the end of 2021.



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Will representatives of your organisation join
your national CONFINTEA VII delegation?



Recommendations for CONFINTEA VII

CONFINTEA VII is a unique opportunity to make a global commitment to improving ALE. The following recommendations were shared by EAEA members during consultative meetings in 2021:

- 1. Civil society needs a seat at the table at CONFINTEA VII.** In many European Member States of UNESCO, civil society organisations lack information about the preparatory process for CONFINTEA at the national level and they were not consulted, or informed, when national surveys were being drafted. Civil society representatives in ALE can provide a comprehensive picture of what has been achieved since the last CONFINTEA and offer concrete recommendations on how ALE can be improved. They should also be invited to join national delegations to the conference.
- 2. The CONFINTEA process should become more transparent to allow all stakeholders to have insight into ongoing developments and actively provide input.** More information about the CONFINTEA process on UNESCO websites, including at national level, would be desirable, as well as the possibility of a hybrid conference to allow online participation of those who cannot travel to the conference, while giving CONFINTEA more visibility through greater participation and engagement.
- 3. Non-formal adult learning and education needs political recognition to make a lasting societal and economic impact.** In spite of the commitments made in the Belém Framework for Action in 2009, this is still not the case in many European countries, with some EAEA members reporting outdated legislation, inadequate funding and information gaps. A political commitment to adult learning and education needs to be reflected in structures that support civil society, in a commitment to quality and professionalisation of ALE

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provision, in adequate funding mechanisms for ALE, in binding and updated legislation, and in comprehensive data collection.

4. While many of the commitments made in the Belém Framework for Action have stayed relevant, new issues have emerged in the past years, not least because of the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. **The upcoming CONFINTEA must recognise the complexity of adults' personal and professional pathways and make a strong case for supporting learners in transitions.** Adult learning and education should foster a wide set of life skills, such as learning to change, critical thinking, as well as health, civic, digital and environmental capabilities. More holistic approaches are needed to ensure that adult learning is not reduced to providing a skilled workforce in times of an economic crisis.
5. The ongoing pandemic has also clearly demonstrated that vulnerable groups remain the first ones to lose out on learning opportunities. **CONFINTEA VII must urge UNESCO Member States to identify adults who are consistently left behind and to offer a targeted strategy to reach them.** Recommendations on effective guidance and validation systems, as well as on outreach strategies should be part of an overarching set of commitments to improve adult learning and education in Europe and globally. Learner-centred approaches and learner representation should also be encouraged to ensure that learning provision remains relevant.

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