



## The EESC's recommendations for a solid reform of the European Semester: The missing voice of adult learning and education organisations

### EAEA's Response to the Public Consultation January 2023

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) urges the European Union that **key areas of the Country Reports and CSRs such as sustainability (and the implementation of the SDGs), green transition and digital transition should be considered more holistically:**

- This means that the **perspective of non-formal ALE must also be included**. Stakeholder consultations at the national and regional level, conducted by European Semester offices, need to take into account the diversity of education sectors and actively seek out ALE umbrella organisations.
- This means that **other European policy initiatives and strategies need to be considered to a much larger extent**, and to promote policy coherence across all initiatives and strategies.

EAEA calls on EU Member States to **provide structural and financial support to civil society umbrella organisations in ALE** to enable a greater voice for ALE providers and learners, and to make the implementation of policy initiatives more relevant, targeted and efficient.

EAEA welcomes the commitment of the European Economic and Social Committee to promote a more participatory approach to the European Semester, alongside a stronger involvement of civil society organisations.

We would like to emphasise that the European Pillar of Social Rights is a cornerstone of the European Semester, and as such also its first principle: "Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning." The New European Agenda for Adult Learning (NEAAL) is a key strategy to make this right to lifelong learning a reality in Europe, and contributes to the implementation of all other objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights, but also other policy initiatives and strategies, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). EAEA has been advocating for greater visibility of non-formal adult learning and education (ALE) in the European Semester process, including through its involvement in the European Commission's Strategic Dialogue on the European Semester until 2020.

However, the Country Reports and Country-Specific Recommendations have remained focused on the formal education sectors and professional up- and reskilling. At the same time, a large majority of citizens are adults who are not in formal education (anymore) and require learning and education opportunities, especially when it comes to sustainability, the green transition and the digital transition, but also addressing migration and labour shortages. Even for those who are in formal



education such as continuing vocational education and training or higher education, non-formal ALE can provide transversal and [life skills](#) – including critical thinking, creativity, citizenship skills, digital and green skills – needed to address key challenges identified in the Country Reports and Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs).

In a recent survey conducted by EAEA, EAEA members said that the issues taken up in the EU Country Reports and CSRs often did not correspond to the subjects of the debates and needs at the national and regional levels. Confronting pressing societal problems daily in their educational work, EAEA's members have noted that the **Country Reports and CSRs have failed to address several key issues, including the state of the ALE sector and its financing (including also the pressing shortage of educators and teachers in some countries), and the important role of ALE in promoting active citizenship and social cohesion.** Moreover, they noted that the **positive impact of ALE in developing transversal and life-skills is neglected:** yet, these skills are crucial for the success of adult citizens both in employment and in society, but also for wider community and societal development.

According to feedback from EAEA's members, the **ALE sector at the national and regional levels has had limited opportunities to contribute to the European Semester and, consequently, to the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans.** In EAEA surveys of recent years, a large majority of EAEA members – umbrella organisations representing ALE at the national and regional levels – said that they were not consulted on the implementation of the European Semester or Pillar of Social Rights, or had not been informed of any consultation processes in their respective countries. In only a small number of countries, including Austria, Belgium, Estonia, and Finland, did EAEA's members report being involved in direct or indirect public consultation processes by European Semester country offices.

The lack of civil society involvement in the Semester process leads many EAEA members to argue that the European Commission's Country Reports and Country-Specific Recommendations reflect the actual situation in their countries only to a limited extent. For the ALE sector, this means that the Country Reports and Country-Specific Recommendations have a limited validity, and, therefore, only contribute to a small extent to policy developments in their countries.

### [For more information](#)

**Contact:**

Raffaella Kihrer, EAEA Deputy Secretary-General and Head of Policy, [raffaella.kihrer@eaea.org](mailto:raffaella.kihrer@eaea.org)  
Davide Muraro, EAEA Policy & Project Coordinator, [davide.muraro@eaea.org](mailto:davide.muraro@eaea.org)

***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.***