

## Candidate's presentation form for EAEA President and Executive Board elections 2023

Please introduce yourself with this form and make your motivation known to the members of EAEA, who will elect the new Executive Board in Zagreb, Croatia on 6 June 2023. We kindly ask you to submit the nomination latest on 30 April 2023 so that we can include it in the EAEA General Assembly papers, to be shared with members in early May. Please note that the information that you include below will be displayed on a dedicated page of the EAEA website.

**Full name of the candidate**

Dearbháil Lawless

**Title**

Chief Executive Officer

**Organisation**

AONTAS, the National Organisation (Ireland)

**Nominated by**

AONTAS, the National Organisation

**Email address (of the member  
introducing the nomination)**

dlawless@aontas.com

**Running for**

Board member

**Please upload an ID picture.**



## **Please describe your current position.**

Chief Executive Officer

As the CEO of AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation in Ireland. I lead a membership based advocacy organisation that represents the voice of adult learning in Ireland. Designing evidence-based policy submissions and advocating for equality in education, I seek to represent the needs of the sector, at national and European level. I'm the designated National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning in Ireland and a representative on the new European Social Fund monitoring group. My mission is to advocate for an equitable adult and community education system.

## **How would you like to contribute to the work of EAEA, based on the 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 AONTAS, I started as the EU Project Officer managing the European Agenda for Adult Learning project and other Erasmus+ programmes. I'm passionate about Europe and my European identity. Recognising the value of collaboration and shared culture. Last year, as the Head of Advocacy in AONTAS, designated by our Ministry, I represented Ireland as a National Delegate at CONFINTEA in Morocco. In 2022, I was appointed the CEO of AONTAS and have brought my passion and experience forward in this role.

This is my second time running for a position on the Board of EAEA. I'm currently one of three Vice-Presidents. In this role, I have increased Learner Voice in EAEA activities. In 2022, I supported an adult learner, who experienced the refugee process, to speak at our EAEA Belgium conference about their learning journey. This year, I am bringing two women from rural Ireland to share their experience in adult education. In addition, I represent EAEA on the Editorial Board of ELM Magazine and have shared best practice to maintain good Governance at EAEA Board meetings.

If re-elected, I will advocate for improvements in Erasmus+ funding and EU adult learning policy, help with networking and cooperation between members, and continue to integrate learner voice in EAEA activities.

## **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 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.

## **What other information would you like to share with 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 400 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 re-elected 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.