

## 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**

Dina Isabel Mendes Soeiro

**Organisation**

Coimbra Higher Education School - Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra CHES/PIC (ESEC/IPC)

**Nominated by**

APCEP - Associação Portuguesa para a Cultura e Educação Permanente

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

disoeiro@esec.pt

**Running for**

Board member

**Please upload an ID picture.**



**Please describe your current position.**

I am a Professor at Coimbra Higher Education School - Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Portugal, where I teach Adult Education and Educational Gerontology using an on-Service Learning approach. Students, teacher and communities learn together. The impact of on-Service Learning on the involved students is very significant in the development of vocational skills and in learning for life, while at the same time, in a reciprocal relationship, it benefits individuals and communities. My work contributes to

fostering reciprocity between higher education and communities. I also do applied research on non-formal adult education and education with older learners.

As a Board member of APCEP – Associação Portuguesa para a Cultura e Educação Permanente / Portuguese Association for Culture and Permanent Education, the umbrella association in Portugal, I take an active role in promoting lifelong learning for all, adult education and adult literacy on the political agenda.

I learn so much and I am so happy coordinating “Letras prá Vida / Letters for Life” (EAEA Grundtvig Award 2017), a project with five dimensions of action: community intervention, applied research, training, community of practice, and policy.

This Adult Literacy Community-Based Project develops workshops to promote literacy, family literacy, critical digital literacy, empowerment, and social inclusion. The project also fosters social participation through the conscious and critical use of ICT, by learning how to use smartphones, computers, Internet, social media, and artificial intelligence. ‘Literacy with the heart’ is the motto because affections are at the center of all andragogic dynamics. Music is a powerful tool in this Project, particularly with older learners affected by cognitive impairment. Letters For Life organizes an annual meeting of Adult Education for Life to promote adult education for all and to disseminate good practices in Portugal, by bringing together political actors, experts, students and participants, in a participatory reflexive dialogue. The project builds a community of practice and provides training in adult literacy and non-formal adult education. The project also promotes Stories for Life, intergenerational storytelling sessions, where older people share powerful and inspiring stories of hope and empowerment with younger people. The most recent one was about social transformation and education, where women told stories about their fight for democracy and freedom, against the dictatorship and showed how they keep fighting. Another important activity is Books for Life, open libraries in social institutions for older people, where books are not an object of luxury but are free for everyone.

Currently, I’m also part of the amazing team of Erasmus+ “Citizens Xelerator” project that “aims at strengthening the democratic and civic literacy and social empathy of adult learners and contributing to a systemic change on the regional/national/European approach and strategies fostering adults’ participation in democratic life, embracing the common values and civic engagement.”

“Literacy for Democracy” (Active Citizens Fund - EEA Grants, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Fundação Bissaya Barreto) was another project promoted by APCEP, which intended to “educate for citizenship and democratic literacy in order to develop the self-efficacy of communities.” In this one, I was an active element of a fantastic team!

The Project “National Plan for Adult Literacy” led by the Portuguese Government, with the support of the European Commission and in partnership with EAEA for technical support, is an urgent and necessary response to the needs of Portuguese adults with very low levels of literacy. The Plan was developed in a participatory methodology in which I was involved. I was a member of the Stakeholder Advisory Group and also a facilitator of a Development Group focusing on “methodologies for working on Literacy with Seniors”. I expect to contribute to its implementation soon.

As an EAEA Board member since 2019, it has been a privilege for me to share my experience and join my voice to raise the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. I’ve participated and engaged as much as I could in the EAEA initiatives to contribute, but also to learn how to advocate better with preparation and confidence. I hope I can continue to give a constructive contribution to EAEA.

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

As a teacher, researcher and practitioner who works on non-formal education with communities, organizations, and also political actors at local and national levels, my contribution to the work of EAEA is bound to increase cooperation, collaboration, and learning among practices, research, training, and policies.

Europe is facing very demanding challenges, so we need capacity-building, critical thinking, as well as innovation, not just to adapt but also to transform in this digital, uncertain, and complex world.

Given my expertise in Educational Gerontology, I am deeply concerned with the participation of older people. It is never late to learn but there is no time to waste! Therefore, I want to continue to contribute to providing high-quality and equal learning opportunities for older learners, enhancing intergenerational learning and promoting awareness of the importance of learning at an advanced age and, as a

consequence, demonstrating that, at this stage of life, educational offers are not an expense but an investment.

I want to continue to contribute to EAEA with my commitment, my experience, my will to learn and share, and with my passion for Adult Learning and Education (ALE).

### **What are your motivations as a candidate?**

Europe and the EAEA have a huge impact in the development of adult education in Portugal, as the Project "National Plan for Adult Literacy" (NPAL) shows, so Portugal needs to be represented in the EAEA Executive Board to continue this work and contribute to implement the NPAL.

We need to fight for a steady and solid public investment in Adult Education in Europe and in Portugal, strengthen and broaden adult education policies, beyond narrower qualification goals: Adult Education for Life, not just for economy!

I stand for adult education integrated in a lifelong learning strategy that considers and equally values formal and non-formal learning.

If elected, I will continue my participation in diverse working groups, which will result in various initiatives, from policy documents to discussion and training opportunities. I intend to empower adult education practices by promoting training and opportunities for sharing experiences. My objectives include also to strengthen the national and European political influence for the recognition and valorisation of education for all; to strengthen the communication, sharing and partnership networks between members and to involve more Portuguese organisations and educational agents in this mission, and to facilitate the constitution of consortiums for international projects.

I wish to learn more from all the voices that EAEA gives expression and from its experience, to make new critical friends and to expand my current community of practice.

Older people are now a large and growing sector of the European population, but there is still an invisible cloak concerning adult education for older learners. Older people are agents of development, of transformation. There is no healthy ageing without ALE!

Those who could benefit from ALE the most, the most vulnerable continue to be left behind. To bridge the digital divide, we have to work on digital inclusion of people with low basic skills.

I will advocate the right to learning and education for all, as a public good, no matter their age, background and/or personal circumstances. I want to guarantee more means to open up opportunities of participation, especially for those who have lost hope in education. My dream: create a "Learning Europe" where no one is left behind and learning is a valued path for peace, active citizenship, happiness, and well-being!

### **What other information would you like to share with EAEA members?**

I am co-convenor of the European Society for Research on Education of Adults (ESREA)

Transformative and Emancipatory Education Network, so I will contribute to building bridges between research, policy, and practices, to the valorisation of qualitative research and greater involvement of adult education practitioners in research and policy.

I believe in advocacy for Adult Education with a heart, with an enthusiastic passion for ALE for All, which is capable of engaging and committing politicians and society.

With gratitude and friendship, Dina.