

# The new Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century

## Summary of nine key focus areas

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), in its [manifesto](#), proposes creating a Learning Europe: a Europe that can shape its future positively and with all necessary skills, knowledge and competences. With 120 members across 43 countries, EAEA calls for a Europe-wide effort to address contemporary challenges through adult learning and education (ALE).

The manifesto highlights how ALE transforms lives and societies, fostering confidence, social connections, better health, and more. It also celebrates the joy of learning, emphasising its value as a part of everyone's life.

Let's build a Learning Europe where we all benefit from the power and joy of learning!



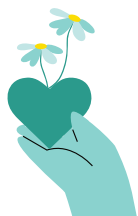
### Peace and democracy

Adult learning and education provide safe spaces to develop active citizenship. It also has a long tradition of building bridges and connecting people across borders as well as promoting reconciliation.



### Environmental sustainability and green transition

Adult learning equips individuals with skills and knowledge to support sustainability. ALE provides information, spaces for debate, and creativity to develop new lifestyles, projects, and approaches necessary for the green transition and sustainable development.



### Well-being and resilience

Participation in learning activities offers adults the opportunity to acquire important well-being and resilience skills to take control of their own lives and bring about personal and social transformation. [Research](#) shows that ALE makes people more confident and self-effective.



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## Life skills

Adult learning provides essential skills like literacy, and numeracy. However it also provides digital, language, and other daily life competences, including financial, health, and media literacy.



## Inclusion, empowerment and social justice

Adult learning and education play a major role in enhancing social justice, embracing diversity, and promoting inclusion. ALE offers disadvantaged individuals opportunities to improve education, job prospects, and quality of life.



## Employment and work

Learning workers are more creative and productive. ALE helps individuals develop new skills and competences, advance professionally, and transition smoothly into employment or better jobs.



## Digitalisation

Adult learning bridges the digital gap by teaching essential digital skills for personal growth, employability, and social participation. Digital skills will be and are necessary for active participation in society, teaching, and the future.



## Demographic change and migration

Adult learning supports active ageing by maintaining cognitive and social skills in older adults. It also provides affordable education for migrants and asylum seekers, aiding their integration.



## Adult learning and education and European & international policies

Adult learning is crucial for achieving European and international policy goals, contributing to areas like employment, innovation, equity, social cohesion, active citizenship, poverty reduction, climate change, migration, peace and more.

## EAEA Policy recommendations

- Recognise the benefits and importance of non-formal adult learning and education for individuals, communities, and society – for democracy, labour markets, health systems, and other key areas.
- Recognise that the major challenges Europe is facing cannot be solved without adult learning and education.
- Recognise adult learning and education as a key political priority for Europe.
- Recognise that the concept of “skills” contains a wide range of learning for work and life.
- Use the European Semester as a key instrument to support and develop ALE.
- Turn the European Education Area into a true European Lifelong Learning Area with all sectors having equal status and priority.
- Approach the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights from a citizen-centred perspective with a strong lifelong learning aspect.
- Promote cooperation with, and support for, lifelong learning in the European Neighbourhood countries and other parts of the world.
- Increase cooperation, collaboration and learning between policy, practice and research.
- Establish and/or increase civil dialogue for adult learning and support civil society organisations.
- Develop and implement adequate governance and funding systems, which are necessary to enable outreach, quality provision and increase participation in lifelong learning.
- Invest adequate financial resources into ALE and see this as an investment and not as an expense.
- Establish coherent lifelong learning systems that enable progression, also through validation and recognition.
- Fund and support learning in communities.
- Create financial incentives for ALE institutions to develop and offer climate literacy courses for adults.
- Promote climate education programmes that empower adults to take actionable steps to address climate changes in their communities.
- Support community-led initiatives that engage adults in sustainability projects, such as community gardens, energy efficiency retrofits, and waste reduction programmes.
- Provide ongoing professional development for adult educators, focusing on pedagogical methods that promote transformative processes, democracy and peace.
- Support peer learning networks and mentorship programmes to share best practices and innovation in ALE.

