



# Fostering well-being of adult educators in Europe



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS



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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the factors that impact both the positive and negative well-being of adult educators, as well as the result that their well-being has on their teaching effectiveness and quality of education. Three research questions guided the research, and a qualitative methodology involving reviewing related literature and conducting semi-structured interviews was employed. The data was analysed thematically to identify critical factors that impact the well-being of adult educators and the result it has on their teaching effectiveness and quality of education.

**Key findings revealed that autonomy, collegial support and professional development significantly improve the well-being of adult educators, while poor status, compensation, working environment and high workload, as well as precarious employment conditions, lack of job security and low well-being of learners negatively affect the wellbeing of adult educators.**

The study also found that adult educators' well-being directly influences education quality. Educators with improved well-being tend to be more energetic, flexible, creative and capable of providing positive learning, while poor well-being among educators negatively affects teaching performance. Strategies and practices to improve the well-being of adult educators were also recommended based on the findings from the study.

Systemically supporting Adult Learning and Education (ALE) and adult educators is essential for building stronger and more active societies. This requires implementing strategies that ensure sustainable professional development, improve job security, and address workload challenges. Strengthening public investment in ALE is also crucial to providing stable and high-quality educational opportunities. By prioritizing the well-being of adult educators—through fair working conditions, professional growth opportunities, and adequate financial support—teaching can become more effective, ultimately leading to improved learning experiences and better educational outcomes for both formal and non-formal adult learners. In turn, this contributes to more engaged, resilient, and informed communities.

## Introduction

Adult learning and education entails formal, non-formal and informal ongoing learning activities and processes to acquire, recognise, exchange, and adapt capacities that benefit individuals, organisations, communities and societies (UNESCO, 2015), while specifically adult learning and education (ALE) is seen to have a crucial role to play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development goals (UIL & UNESCO, 2019).

EAEA (2024) considers that adult learning and education are necessary to change lives and transform societies and **constitute an essential part of lifelong learning**. ALE involves all types of learning and training that ensure the full participation of adults, not just in labour markets but in life, sustainable development, equality and active citizenship, among others. This is, in line with SDG4 target 4.7, which aims to ensure all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development by 2030. **ALE empowers individuals** to actively participate in addressing issues such as poverty, social mobility, intergenerational solidarity, unemployment, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, gender, environmental protection and climate change. ALE can help people lead decent lives in terms of health, well-

being, culture, spirituality, and other aspects that contribute to human development and dignity (UNESCO, 2015). Werner et al. (2019) see ALE as the most comprehensive component of lifelong learning necessary for a democratic, inclusive, just and sustainable society. Furthermore, ALE has been seen to play a crucial role in empowering adults through basic education, community development and wellbeing improvement (EAEA, 2023).

**At the heart of ALE are professionals dedicated to teaching and learning.**

Adult educators must master specialised knowledge and skills crucial to addressing the learning needs of all adults in ALE. They are pivotal for promoting lifelong learning and helping adult learners achieve personal and professional growth. They are also responsible for the quality of teaching and learning processes and outcomes in ALE.

**Adult educators play a crucial role in facilitating lifelong learning and helping adult learners earn ownership over their lives and potential.** Despite the indispensable role of adult educators in ensuring quality teaching and learning in ALE, **their well-being can be highly disregarded**. Hence this study seeks to understand and present effective strategies to foster the well-being of adult educators in Europe by exploring the factors affecting the well-being of adult educators, as well as the impact of well-being on teaching effectiveness and the quality of education delivered.

## Research Questions

This topic will be addressed by answering three main research questions

1. What are the major factors that impact the well-being of adult educators?
2. How can the well-being of adult educators impact teaching effectiveness and the quality of education they deliver?
3. What are the effective strategies and practices that can foster the well-being of adult educators?

## Methodology

The study was conducted through a non-systematic review of existing literature from scholars and organisations focusing on adult learning, education, and teachers, as well as semi-structured interviews with adult educators from different adult education centres in Europe. The interviews were chosen to support the study since limited studies are focusing on the well-being of adult educators.

The participants of this study were selected through purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling. This method was chosen for its ability to identify and select participants who are most likely to produce appropriate and relevant information, given their in-depth knowledge and experience of the concept or phenomenon being studied. In this study, three adult educators and one policymaker in adult education across different countries in Europe were selected

through purposive sampling. This method ensures a diverse representation of adult educators across various countries in Europe, enhancing the validity and generalizability of the study's findings.

## Literature Review

According to O'Brien and O'Shea (2017), we have to understand that the definition of well-being is multidimensional and draws on the insights of psychology, sociology and philosophy. All members of the education system should understand that everyone experiences vulnerability and the need to be catered for at some point in their lives, which makes their perception of well-being differ from time to time. Well-being is fluid and maintaining good well-being is a lifelong process. Well-being involves realising one's potential, coping with life's challenges, prioritising physical health, and feeling connected to a larger community (Government of Ireland, 2018).

**Wellbeing** is understood as a broad concept that includes the level of satisfaction that people have for their lives as a whole, the existence of a sense of purpose in a person, and the level of control that people feel they have in their lives. (EAEA, Manifesto, 2024).

Viac and Fraser (2020) defined teachers' well-being as their responses to the cognitive, emotional, health, and social conditions of their work and their profession. They also stated that poor teacher wellbeing could negatively impact teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Adult educators, like teachers, are most likely to face diverse challenges, including workload, low status, job security, poor compensation and work-life balance, which affect their well-being and can affect teaching effectiveness and the quality of education they provide. Therefore, it is expedient that the well-being of adult educators is prioritised to foster productivity, innovation, and effectiveness.

Teachers' status, which is reflected in material elements such as job security, compensation, work intensification and professional development, has been identified to impact the well-being of teachers. Findings from the global status of teachers also recorded that teachers are being accorded low status in many countries, which has been a concern for teachers, teacher unions and the education system (Thompson, 2021). Teachers have been said to be poorly paid, have poor working conditions, and have limited autonomy (Hargreaves & Flutter, 2019), all of which harm teachers' well-being.

**Stress and burnout have been largely researched and identified as factors affecting teacher wellbeing** (Split et al., 2011). However, not much has been done to explore the factors affecting the well-being of adult educators in Europe.

The nature of the school environment has been cited to play a key role in fostering well-being in schools (Viner et al. al, 2012). This entails a **positive or good work environment that promotes the well-being of adult educators. In contrast, a hostile environment tends to negatively**

**affect their well-being, which can affect the quality of teaching they can deliver as educators.**

Furthermore, research by Dreer (2023) revealed that teacher wellbeing has a positive relationship with teacher retention, teacher-student relationship, teaching quality and student outcome. Vintila and Istrat's study (2014) concludes that **adult educators reported that on several occasions, they experience burnout and are overwhelmed due to not finding an appropriate work-life balance, attributed to workload.**

**This affects their well-being, leading to diminished work engagement, performance and poor quality of engagement with the learners.**

Despite many studies being carried out on teacher wellbeing, not much research has been conducted to find out the factors affecting the wellbeing of adult educators in Europe and most especially, effective strategies that can foster the wellbeing of adult educators, hence the reason for this research.

## **Factors that impact the well-being of adult educators**

To answer research question 1, three adult educators and one staff that works in policymaking in adult education, based in four separate countries in Europe were interviewed. **The majority of the participants unanimously cited that their well-being and the well-being of adult educators are often neglected and not catered for.** This chapter will discuss the findings of the factors that affect their well-being, and the



implication of well-being on the quality of education these adult educators can deliver. Our findings suggest that factors that affect ALE educators' well-being include: the status of adult educators; the well-being of students; workload; school leadership; political discussion and autonomy.

## Status

**One of the most significant umbrella factors that came up as contributing to workplace well-being is the perceived status of adult educators.**

According to the UNESCO/ILO recommendation concerning the status of teachers (1966), status is used to express the standing given to teachers, which reflects in the level of appreciation of the importance of their function and their competence in performing it, their compensation, working conditions and other material benefits relative to other professional groups (ILO/UNESCO, 2016). While "status" used so far in this paper has referred to research about teachers in other sectors other than adult education, findings from the research **have** also proven that **adult educators question the status accorded to them.** Some of the participants claimed that **the prestige accorded to adult educators is relatively low and is seen in their compensation,** their representation in the media, as well their working conditions. The interviewees noted that it is a challenge which negatively affects their well-being. Paul speaking of the status of adult educators in Spain noted - "(...) *Something else is the prestige that adult educators have, In*

*Spain, I think it is a bit lower compared to other countries(...).In general, educators are a bit exposed to the media, for example in Spain, everybody believes they can teach better than a teacher and feels free to give advice to teachers and this is something that doesn't happen for example with doctors or in other kind of occupations or careers(...) and it may affect the wellbeing of adult educators".*

Another factor that affects the status of adult educators is the compensation. Compensation is one of the factors which reflect the status accorded to teachers including adult educators. According to the ILO/UNESCO recommendation concerning the status of teachers (1966), salary should be given utmost importance among all the factors that affect the status of teachers as their level of standing is largely dependent on the economic position they are placed in, compared to other professions (ILO/UNESCO, 2016).

## Compensation

Most of the participants cited poor compensation as the leading factor that affects the well-being of adult educators. According to them, **their pay as adult educators is relatively low, compared to their counterparts in other sectors. The perceived lower salaries were said to affect teachers' motivation to teach and teaching effectiveness.** For instance, in some countries, these lower compensation and economic cuts reduce the number of people in the profession, increasing the workload of the remaining teachers. This was cited



as the case of adult educators in the folk high school in Sweden. Speaking about the lower compensation of adult educators in Sweden, a participant, Catherine noted *“Our salaries are lower than teachers in the other school system(... )During the last years, we have had quite big economic cuts, so we are few educators working now”*. Similarly, another participant also spoke about the compensation however, she emphasized that the pay is lower in the public sector and suggested as well that their pay should be improved. according to Ahmed *“For example, public school educators are not paid good salary(...) teachers should be [paid] enough money and good salary”*. Another participant explained that the pay of adult educators is low and this could be attributed to poor funding in the sector in the UK. Mariam noted, *“There hasn’t been a lot of funding in adult education in recent years. Funding is not increasing it has been reversed over the past decades so that means that it impacts the levels of pay(...)”*.

## Work environment

The work environment also emerged as a factor that could impact the well-being of adult educators. The work environment is affected by many aspects, but one notable one is school leadership. Paul speaking of the factors that can affect the well-being of adult educators mentioned:

*“It depends on the kind of principal or headmaster you have in the school, it can be more agreeable or less agreeable Paul”*. This further explains that **being in a good work**

**environment where leadership is supportive positively impacts the well-being of adult educators.**

Conversely, a work environment where the school leaders or management in adult education centres are not supportive can negatively affect the well-being of adult educators.

## Workload

**High workload emerged as one of the main causes of stress and burn out of adult educators.**

Ahmed highlighted that *“If educators have too much work, they are stressed, so of course their wellbeing is negatively affected”*. Catherine also hinted that *fewer educators working as a result of the economic cuts equals more work for them. “(...-Because there has been quite severe economic cuts in our sector, so we are fewer educators that have to do [more] work.* High workload in many cases has been seen to cause poor work/life balance.

## Job security

Job security, which is a factor under the status of teachers, was cited as a factor that impacts the well-being of adult educators. From the findings, **job security is not guaranteed for adult educators in some contexts, while it is in other countries.** For instance, besides the interviewee in Spain, all participants mentioned that the job security of adult educators is not guaranteed, which can negatively affect the well-being of adult educators Catherine mentioned that the political discussion of scraping the folk high school in Sweden threatens the job of educators working there.

The political discussion around the folk high school is already leading to uncertainty, threatening the job security of the adult educators working in such institutions. Catherine commented, *"We are also having a political discussion in Sweden, if Sweden should continue with folk high schools and that of course creates some uncertainty that has consequences and negative effects on wellbeing"*.

Another participant mentioned that **low investment in the adult education sector impacts educators' overall employment conditions**.

Precarious employment seems to be common in the sector in the UK, especially those whose main job is teaching in adult education centres. Mariam mentioned that providers of adult education resort more to part-time employment due to the low funding situation in the adult education sector.

Mariam explained: *"[Poor funding] impacts the levels of pay, part-time and casual contract vs full-time post, the quality of work and employment generally is not great... Many of them are part-time and sometimes that's fine because for example they might just teach quite a few specialised courses, they might just teach a few times a week, and maybe their main job is something else. But if you are relying on being an adult educator as your main income then it's very likely you want to see your pay increase in a meaningful way for a long time and with very high increases in standard of living. A lot of providers also told us that they can't afford to create full-time jobs because they don't have*

*more money to do that so they rely on part-time staff. I think that's particularly true in adult education settings... Due to the cuts, the providers do not just have enough money to employ full-time... It is a diverse landscape and there is a difference as I said between people doing part-time work as an adult educator and that suits them and suits their employer but I think as an actual career, it affects the prestige and the professional status is in a bad state, it is under threat"*.

From the above explanation, while precarious employment conditions may not have much impact on adult educators who have other jobs, it has been said to negatively impact the well-being of many adult educators who don't have other sources of income especially because of the increase in the standard of living. Over-dependence on part-time staff brings the question of the level of commitment of the staff, maybe the quality of education they provide and a threat to the teaching profession. Contrastingly, Paul stated that educators, including adult educators, have some level of job security in Spain which has a positive impact on their well-being:

*"Here in Spain in order to teach, you have to pass an exam, the moment you pass and get the post, you have job security (Paul)"*. However, he added that when they experience low student enrollment it could lead to job cuts for the educators.

## Poor well-being of adult learners

Two out of the four participants suggested that the **poor well-being of adult learners harms the wellbeing of adult educators**. For instance, they mentioned that the rise in the cost of living affects these learners financially, and when they are financially burdened, their well-being is affected and it affects their learning. when the learners are not learning, it affects their educators who try to help them. Moreover, **some of the adult learners are refugees, asylum seekers, and financially incapacitated and some of the experiences they have had or experiencing affect their (learners) well-being which can affect their learning and also their educators**.

Other times, adult learners in precarious situations will confide in their educators, who take on the mental burden of their students' situations. For instance, Catherine said that **growing mental health issues among young adults is an issue that affects well being of adult educators if not well managed**. According to Catherine, the impact of the inequality in the society on the learners also affects the educators -

*"Sweden has become a more unequal society and that makes for quite a few of the people that we are working with, it can be quite hard to come back to working more to get the education [the learners] want and it makes our work hard...[Due to the inequality] our learners have a longer street to walk now than before".* A similar concern was raised by Mariam who says that: *"We do quite a lot of learning for migrants and refugees and English language provision for*

*new arrival to the UK and one thing that always comes up is that learners always arrive with a range of support needs. So they need a lot of support, health issues, mental health in particular, difficult legal circumstances around their immigration status and asylum in the UK, the practical issues around housing, getting their children to school, and the rising cost of living, often we find out one of the first points of contact for help for a lot of these learners is their teachers who are probably one of the few people in their network they could feel comfortable and confident to go to ask for their help. And because teachers are very helpful people usually, they want to help but also they are not necessarily professionals in that, they are professionals in teaching, they are not necessarily professionals in all of these things learners may need support with and so what we see is, in terms of the wellbeing of the staff themselves trying to help the students with the range of problems also have an impact on the wellbeing of the staff, because, they want to help but they don't necessarily have the skills or the knowledge to do so and we see the increasing need for professional development for teachers around things like trauma-informed approaches to teaching."*

In short, adult educators can intentionally or unintentionally become burdened with the difficulties of some of their adult students, which can of course take a toll on the educators themselves. **This also reaffirms the need for professional development of adult educators to be able to support students when they can and also refer them to experts where adult educators may not be able to help.**

# Factors that impact the well-being of adult educators positively

## Autonomy

Most of the adult educators cited that they have a degree of autonomy / freedom in the adult education sector. Unlike their colleagues in other sectors, **they experience a great level of autonomy in their work, leaving room for creativity and helping them to effectively teach their learners.** Catherine describing the level of autonomy experienced in the Folk High School system noted:

*“We have a large degree of freedom in our work which makes up for the possibility of creativity in our work”.* Similarly, Paul mentioned that adult educators are not being monitored like in other sectors and they have a level of freedom in their work.

## Collegial Support

Findings revealed that having support from other educators impacts the well-being of adult educators positively. When educators with a common **goal come together to support each other, educators have a sense of community.** Catherine reflects that: *“We have good collegium, we all work very well together, so you can be dependent on one another without having the feeling that it is a problem. That dependency creates our community... I can say I’m very lucky to have such colleagues that I have, and that makes it possible for me to often be the teacher I want to be”*

These support groups in many adult education centres have been seen to help reduce stress for educators. For instance, Ahmed explained:

*“In our company we have a well-being team, specialized in the well-being of educators, once a month they organize fun events to relax and improve the well-being of educators”*

## Professional Development

The participants unanimously cited **professional development as a tool to boost the wellbeing of adult educators.**

According to the participants, professional development is where educators learn new skills to improve their teaching, which in turn reduces the stress that comes with unpreparedness and makes the teachers confident in delivering lessons. They believe that **learners have different needs and it can be frustrating if the teachers cannot meet them due to unpreparedness, hence the need to acquire new tools and skills through professional development.** By staying updated through professional development, the teacher experiences less frustration and improved well-being. Mariam describes the link between the professional development of adult educators and their well-being:

*“Professional development will help you in a practical sense to maintain your well-being and develop your*

expertise and I think if you are well supported, well trained, you are more confident and more competent in your role and therefore, you are likely to feel better and it is better for your wellbeing... you are very likely to feel more value because someone is investing in you if it's your employer providing the professional development, so these things contribute to your sound sense of self-esteem and your well-being as a practitioner". Additionally Paul noted:

*"I didn't have to worry about what I was doing because of the trainings I take that keeps me updated, it boosts my confidence and positively impacts my wellbeing...I have been doing some courses in IT which have helped me, especially during the lockdown in the pandemic, these courses were important because we had to teach students at that time to use a computer, I needed to have this formation...I felt more confident because I didn't have to worry about what I was doing, it boosted my confidence. In general, I think that the moment you update yourself on the development of teaching, it may be IT or some methodology, I think you will feel better because you have more tools to teach your students and to adapt to different situations... if I feel confident, I feel better."*

However, the participant highlighted that: *"It is important that the authorities provide some formation [professional development] for the teachers... In Spain, this is not developed, the authorities provide you with some sort of formation but it is a very short formation, formation of 20 hours, 30 hours, or 15 hours but*

*they do not offer you an integral formation and sometimes if you want to do something that interests you or find a course that you consider interesting for what you are teaching, in general you have to pay for it".* Catherine underlined how professional development is helpful not just in supporting learners, but also in improving the wellbeing of the adult educator.

This can be explained, according to Catherine, by the fact that *"If you feel that you don't have the tools to work with the group you are working with, it affects your wellbeing negatively. For example, the number of young adults that have mental health issues has grown in the whole world and Sweden as well and that of course makes for a new dilemma and challenges in your work."*

In this way, continued professional development of adult educators equips them with the confidence and tools to navigate upcoming challenges with learners, including overall poor mental health and other issues. This in turn improves job satisfaction and overall well-being.



# Impact of well-being on the quality of education

The participants, as well as the literature study, agree that the well-being of adult educators impacts the teaching effectiveness and quality of education they provide. **Simply put, better well-being leads to better performance as adult educators.**

When their educator is positive and present.. As Catherine put it, *"If you are tired, if you have too much to do, or don't have the time to take extra chat with a [learner] that needs it or to help them tackle the struggle that they are in as a result of the stress [which affects your wellbeing], then you will end up not being the good teacher you could have been."* Paul added that, *"If you are happy at work, when you feel fine, you teach better than when you feel pessimistic or if you are angry about something or if you are worried Paul."* All the adult educators interviewed agreed that when they were less stressed, they felt more capable of doing their job well.

## Effective strategies and practices that foster the well-being of adult educators

Based on the information shared by the educators during this research, we will be suggesting four effective strategies that can help improve the well-being of adult educators. One of the strategies which cuts across all contexts of the participants interviewed for this research is providing professional development for adult educators.

## 1. Continuous Professional Development

**Receiving continuous professional development and being well-prepared have proven to be effective in improving and ensuring effective teaching and learning takes place, and also improving the well-being of adult educators.** In-service education and continuous training programmes have been seen to be essential for ensuring quality provision and professionalization of adult educators (UIL, 2016, 2019). Ioannou (2023) also highlighted that the effective preparation of adult educators has an impact on their teaching methodologies and can contribute to their students' success. Moreover, well-prepared adult educators can increase their learners' motivation to learn, their capacity to exercise critical judgment and their skill of learning how to learn. Despite the indispensable role of continuous professional development to adult educators and the field of adult learning and education, these provisions are not always made available to ALE staff. For instance, it has been reported that not many opportunities are available for adult educators to be adequately trained before entering the profession, and even fewer opportunities for continuous professional development. As a result, most adult educators are self-taught professionals (Ioannou, 2023; Papastamatis et al., 2009)

While most of these studies focused on how continuous professional development can increase the expertise of adult educators help them deliver quality teaching and increase students' success, we have also seen from our studies that continuous professional development has an impact on the well-being of adult educators. Due to the relevance of continuous professional development in the teaching and well-being of adult educators, some of the adult educators interviewed went as far as to pay by themselves to get more training. Professional development is important for ALE educators to adapt to different kinds of learners, identified earlier as a key source of concern for educators. As Mariam states:

*"We see the increasing need for professional development for teachers around things like trauma-informed approaches to teaching. Where they can teach in a way that is sensitive to learners who have experienced trauma. A need for staff to be trained in things they can do to support their own mental health so that they are not too badly affected by the issues they are exposed to..... The professional development includes knowing how to set some boundaries, knowing how to improve your mental health (Mariam)."*

Offering training on mindfulness or meditation was suggested from experience to help improve the wellbeing of these educators, particularly as strategies to create mental boundaries and protect their mental health.

## 2. Educator Support Groups and Well-being Teams

**Having teacher support groups or well-being teams in adult education schools and organisations** has been seen to help improve the well-being of some of the educators interviewed. This agrees with the study on Collegial support and novice teachers' perceptions of working conditions, which found that collegial support is positively linked to new teachers' ability to manage assigned workloads and meet the requirements of their administrative tasks (Pogodzinski, 2014). For instance, some adult educators interviewed spoke positively about social events organised by their institution to discuss and share challenges they encounter. These events provide peer-to-peer support where educators can get suggestions on possible ways to overcome their challenges. Additionally, ensuring that educators are involved in practices such as reading, exercises, yoga and other extracurricular activities can be effective. Catherine explaining the relevance of collegial support or educators support groups noted: "

*For someone it could be reading an interesting book that learns about the profession in some way, for another one that could be meeting with, with educators in a different context, the European exchange or exchange with the with other school in Sweden, for others it could be taking a year off studying, so it could be different things, but each educator need to have the room to find that that gives them ability."*

Support activities, either self-organised or put in place by management, could be effective strategies to improve educator wellbeing.



### 3. Manageable Workload

Furthermore, **reducing adult educators' workload is essential to improving their well-being.** As discussed earlier in the paper, economic cuts or poor investment in the adult education sector has led to reduced staff and increased workload for educators. In some contexts like Spain, the educators must not only provide trainings, but must also be involved in the competition to get more students. Involvement in managerial and bureaucratic issues increases personal stress on educators, impacting their well-being. This aligns with a previous study among university teachers by Pace et al. (2021), where findings revealed that workload when added to bureaucratic university practices is a risk factor for a negative assessment of work-related well-being among university professors.


### 4. Adequate investment in Adult Education

Finally, **adequate investment in adult learning and education is seen to be the key strategy for improving the well-being of adult educators.**

Poor public funding of ALE is a continuous threat to the sector and is linked to almost all the factors that affect the well-being of adult educators. As noted by EAEA (2023), ALE experiencing financial cuts in many European countries.

This is a **short-sighted and potentially dangerous attempt, emphasising how financial cuts in the sector would lead to the loss of jobs for adult educators, cause a decline in the quality of learning provided, and lead to a decrease in the participation of adult learners.**

Increasing investment and funding in the sector can help curb the challenge of workload and job security because more teachers will be hired. If the sector is properly funded, the recruitment and retention strategies will be improved, as well as the status of the educators in the sector. An increase in investment will lead to an increase in the pay and compensation of adult educators, as well as potentially improved professional development opportunities. It will also mean more affordable quality education for adult learners, who are burdened with financial stress, which indirectly harms their educators. In this way, **increasing investment in Adult Learning and Education will greatly improve the well-being of adult educators and the quality of education in ALE.**



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#### Decreasing funding levels - and yet expecting miracles?

**EAEA's statement on funding pressures on non-formal adult learning and education by European governments**  
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Despite the European Union's emphasis on prioritising Adult Learning and Education (ALE) through various initiatives and strategies, recent reports from EAEA's members reveal that a majority of countries and regions are witnessing stagnant or reduced funding for ALE. Notably, Sweden and Finland which are known for their traditionally strong support of non-formal ALE, are now facing severe cuts. This trend results in job losses for educators, has a negative impact on quality learning provision, and limits the access of adults to learning.

Adult learning and education (ALE) is facing considerable financial cuts in many European countries. The argument put forward by political decision-makers is the economic situation of the respective countries. This is not the first time that education and culture, and especially ALE, have had to accept financial cuts to rescue public finances. We believe that this is an extremely short-sighted, and potentially dangerous, approach.

ALE offers a multitude of benefits for individuals, communities, the economy, and society in general. ALE promotes social inclusion, sustainability, active citizenship, democracy, peace, and much more. ALE has also historically played a significant role in empowering adults through basic education, community development, and the improvement of well-being.

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## Conclusion

Adult learning and education have been crucial and have significantly benefited individuals, communities, and societies. The saying that “most of our lives are spent in adulthood” reinforces why adult learning and education should be prioritized, not only as a process but also as an indicator of active societies. **We cannot prioritize ALE or address the challenges affecting the ALE sector without prioritizing and acknowledging the significant and indispensable role of adult educators.** These adult educators are responsible for teaching, training and facilitating learning for the adult learners. One way to prioritize them and improve the sector is to ensure their well-being is catered for. The factors affecting their well-being should be addressed to ensure they can teach effectively. The study above identified **low status accorded to adult educators, poor compensation, unhealthy work environment, lack of job security workload, and learners’ well-being as factors that negatively affect the well-being of adult educators.**

To combat these factors, **providing adult educators with continuous professional development, and autonomy and having collegial support through various education support groups have positively impacted their well-being.** It was also identified that the well-being of adult educators affects their teaching effectiveness and the quality of education they can provide.

Finally, **the study identified four strategies and practices that could improve the well-being of adult educators,** which include: providing professional development to adult educators; reducing their workload by employing more teachers; encouraging teachers to have support groups and most importantly investing in the ALE.

**Since the well-being of adult educators is essential for promoting quality education in ALE, it is expedient that these strategies are adequately implemented to improve the well-being of adult educators and improve adult learning and education in Europe.**

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