



Candidate's presentation form for EAEA President and Executive Board members

Full name of the candidate Dearbhail Lawless

Title Ms

Organisation of the candidate AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation

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Nominated by AONTAS

Email address of the nominating member dlawless@aontas.com

Running for Board member

Please upload your portrait photo.

Dearbháil Lawless_Curriculum Vitae_E....pdf

Please describe your current position and role in your organisation.

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 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? What capacities do you have to support the work of EAEA?

As an adult educator by profession, I have worked across Community Education, Further Education and Training (VET in Ireland), and Higher Education. I bring extensive experience in representing adult learning at national, European, and global levels. In 2022, I was appointed by the Irish Government as a National Delegate to CONFINTEA VII in Morocco, and I currently serve on the State Board of SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland.

Throughout my career in adult education, I've had the privilege of working with a diverse range of learners and staff, which has deepened my understanding of the sector and enriched my perspective. I have developed national policy papers and led successful advocacy campaigns that secured increased funding for providers and a Government commitment to improved financial supports for learners.

I am deeply passionate about adult learning and view it as a powerful catalyst for social change.

Currently, I serve as one of EAEA's Vice Presidents. In this role, I have championed learner voice by initiating new activities and strengthening our organisational governance and infrastructure. At each of the

past three annual conferences, I have brought learners to participate and co-delivered workshops focused on amplifying their voices—an effort aimed at influencing and improving practice across Europe.

If re-elected, I will continue to prioritise social cohesion across Europe, advocate for robust adult education policy and funding, and further develop learner voice initiatives at the heart of our work.

Are there specific activities or areas of work at EAEA you would like to contribute to? Which activities or areas of work are you already actively contributing to?

Providing a representative voice for adult learning.

Engaging with and supporting members and colleagues in and outside of Europe.

Building learner voice infrastructure at EU level.

Calling for immediate support for social cohesion and an increased focus on equality and democracy.

Helping the EAEA team with organisational infrastructure, as needed.

Providing a strong voice on the Board that represents the values and expectations of our members.

What motivates you to candidate for the Executive Board of EAEA?

I grew up in a working-class, lone-parent family in Ireland, and I know first-hand the barriers faced by people from similar backgrounds. I also know the transformative power of adult learning—education changed my life, and that’s why I am so deeply committed to educational equality.

Like AONTAS, EAEA stands firmly by its core values and principles, which guide and inspire its work. I am eager to contribute to this shared mission, supporting the growth, impact, and success of both the organisation and the wider EAEA community.

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

I have strong relationships with both the EAEA team and Board, and I will continue to dedicate my time and energy to supporting the EAEA community. I am committed to ensuring the sustainability and wellbeing of the association, always bringing a respectful, collaborative, and encouraging approach to my work.

AONTAS and EAEA share similar values and missions, and I believe this connection strengthens our collective efforts through shared learning, expertise, and resources. EAEA is a vibrant and wonderful community that I care about deeply.

If re-elected, I look forward to working closely with members and staff, and to continuing to advocate for equality, inclusion, and peace, especially in these challenging political times.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my nomination.