



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

For Information

EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR THE
EDUCATION OF ADULTS
(EAEA)

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Raffaella Kihrer,
Secretary General,
raffaella.kihrer@eaea.org

Angeliki
Giannakopoulou,
Senior Policy and
Projects Coordination,
angeliki@eaea.org

On the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2028-2034

EAEA's Response - November 2025

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the forthcoming Erasmus+ Programme for 2028–2034. We appreciate the clear recognition of lifelong learning and adult education as essential to Europe's strategic autonomy, social resilience, and competitiveness, in line with the Union of Skills initiative and the European Education Area.

EAEA agrees with the underlying vision that education, training, youth and sport represent the Union's strongest investment in human capital, strengthening democracy and community cohesion and responding to the urgent needs of a rapidly transforming society with persistent skills shortages and widening inequalities.

However, EAEA emphasises that **these ambitions must be matched with substantial financial commitment and structural support** if the Programme is to realise its transformative potential, particularly for those furthest from education and training. EAEA echoes Mario Draghi's report^[1] and calls, together with the Erasmus+ Coalition, for a five-fold increase in the Erasmus+ budget in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to match the scale of the challenges Europe faces and to deliver universal and equitable access, designed to reach all learners.

[1] Draghi, M. (2023). The future of European competitiveness: In-depth analysis and recommendations. European Commission.



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A Strong Funding Commitment and Dedicated Support for Adult Learning

EAEA highlights the **urgent need for an expanded and clearly earmarked budget for adult learning and education (ALE)**, which continues to receive a disproportionately small share of Erasmus+ resources despite representing the largest population group in need of lifelong learning.

We emphatically agree with the fact, as demonstrated in the European Parliament's report on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027, that the budget available for actions in adult learning and education (ALE) is becoming increasingly unpredictable. The current total amount and the share it represents, 5.8 % of the total budget for education and training, are not sufficient to achieve a participation of 60 % of adults in ALE by 2030. This is against a background of a lack of structural funding for ALE at the national and regional levels in Europe, leading to a high degree of dependence on EU project funding. [2]

EAEA accordingly reiterates its call for a **minimum of 20% dedicated funding for adult learning and education**, as well as increased investment in implementation structures, capacity building and community-based providers in order to reach underserved groups and learners with fewer opportunities.

EAEA notes that the budget available for actions in adult learning and education (ALE) is becoming increasingly unpredictable. We call for a minimum of 20% dedicated funding for the sector, as well as increased investment in ALE structures.

Financial Accessibility and Practical Conditions for Participation

Access to learning is not possible without access to funding programmes.

The participation of ALE providers in projects enables many adults to take part in learning. We welcome the fact that the Commission's proposal recognises the need to reduce administrative burdens and simplify access for small organisations and newcomers to European funding programmes.

[2] European Parliament, Report on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 (A9-0413/2023), 6 Dec 2023.

EAEA strongly supports this and **insists on concrete mechanisms to support genuine participation**, including higher and realistic funding levels that reflect inflation and rising mobility costs, increased pre-financing rates for organisations that cannot pre-finance large amounts, mentoring, coaching and translation support for newcomers and organisations representing marginalised groups and blended and local mobility options, enabling participation of adults facing work, care, health or economic constraints.

These measures must be framed not merely as administrative improvements but as core inclusion tools that enable equitable access and participation on equal terms, beyond the current dominance of well-resourced actors.

Adults - including older learners, migrants, workers in transition, people with low qualifications and those returning to education - must be recognised as key participants in shaping Europe's democratic future.

The Role of Adult Learning in Democracy, Participation and Social Cohesion

EAEA underlines the **crucial contribution of adult learning and education (ALE) to democratic participation, social cohesion and resilient, inclusive communities**. While the Commission proposal rightly emphasises the need to promote democratic engagement, civic participation, digital and media literacy, and critical thinking skills, we note that the discourse surrounding adults often remains framed primarily within upskilling and reskilling for labour market needs, rather than recognising their role as active citizens, community members and agents of change.

EAEA stresses that the **programme must adopt a broader and genuinely lifelong learning perspective**, reflecting the understanding that democracy is learned and practised throughout life, not only in school or youth structures. **Adults — including older learners, migrants, workers in transition, people with low qualifications and those returning to education — must be recognised as key participants in shaping Europe's democratic future**[3].

[3] See also the EAEA response: Public Consultation on EU funds in the area of values and mobility, February 2018

Sustainability, System Change and Cross-Sector Cooperation

EAEA welcomes the proposals to extend Jean Monnet Actions to other sectors and to introduce scholarships for strategic sectors. We call on the Commission to include ALE as a strategic sector in these instruments in order to strengthen innovation and excellence and promote cooperation between organisations across Europe.

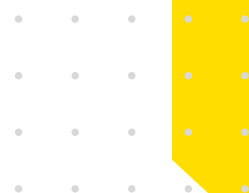
We emphasise that innovation must be in the interests of learners. It should not overshadow the long-term processes of structural change, capacity building and community building that constitute the real added value of Erasmus+. As repeatedly emphasised by the programme's beneficiaries and networks, there is a risk that an increasing focus on short-term, narrowly defined “innovation” will favour novelty over sustainability and impact.

Projects that promote democratic participation, community resilience, inclusion and social cohesion need time to build trust and meaningful engagement. As real change extends beyond the duration of project funding, EAEA calls for mechanisms that ensure continuity through follow-up or multi-phase funding, clear pathways for integration into national and regional policy, stronger incentives for institutional change rather than isolated success stories, and dedicated resources for implementation and mainstreaming, not just for experimentation.

Strengthening Cross-Sector Strategies and Collaboration

Achieving the programme's ambitions also requires stronger and more coherent collaboration across youth, school education, VET, higher education and adult education. Participation, inclusion and democratic resilience cannot be addressed within silos.

EAEA calls for structured and resourced cross-sector collaboration grounded in shared strategic frameworks and learning spaces, joint policy-shaping and evaluation structures, and support actions that unite civil society, education professionals and public authorities beyond project-based partnerships. This is essential, particularly for reaching groups most distant from participation and ensuring that feedback from learners and communities informs European policymaking.



Digital Participation and Inclusion

EAEA supports the Programme's emphasis on digital transformation, but stresses that **digital participation must not become a new source of exclusion**[4]. Many adults lack access to devices, connectivity or basic digital skills, and digital-only solutions may deepen rather than reduce inequalities. As noted in stakeholder feedback, **digital skills must be understood first as life skills for participation and access to rights, not solely for labour-market requirements.**

Innovation must be in the interests of learners. Reducing adult learning to a labour market instrument contradicts Europe's core values and weakens social cohesion at the very moment it is most needed.

Positioning Adult Learning within the Context of Defence and Preparedness

EAEA recognises the EU's increased focus on security, preparedness and resilience, as referenced in the Commission proposal. We understand the importance of preparing societies to respond to crises and protecting democratic systems under pressure. However, we emphasise that adult learning must never be reduced to a tool for equipping people with skills primarily related to defence, security or militarisation.

Adult learning is, fundamentally, a critical, empowering and liberating force, enabling individuals to question, analyse, participate and shape society. It fosters peace, dialogue, solidarity, intercultural understanding and human dignity - the foundations of a resilient democracy. **Reducing adult learning to a labour market instrument for strategic defence priorities would contradict Europe's core values and weaken social cohesion at the very moment it is most needed.** We therefore call for a clear distinction in Erasmus+ between skills for active citizenship and democratic resilience, and skills linked to defence or military preparedness. Europe's strength lies in education that nurtures peace, critical reflection, empathy and cooperation, not conflict.

[4] Right to Offline. (2024). "Essential services must be accessible, even offline."

Key Recommendations

- **Increase the overall budget for Erasmus+** for it to be able to achieve its full transformative potential, as set out in Mario Draghi's Report.
- **Allocate 20% of the Erasmus+ budget to adult learning and education**, to achieve 60% participation of adults in learning by 2030.
- **Ensure that Jean Monnet Actions and Scholarships include adult learning and education**, to promote innovation and excellence at all levels.
- **Ensure that actions and projects promoting democracy, citizenship, and community-building have adequate space and funding in the new Erasmus+ programme**, alongside the promotion of work-related skills.

About us

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 120 member organisations in 44 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.



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