

ADULT EDUCATION AND LEARNING (ALE) AND THE EU

Why does the EU need adult education?

Because it is vital for...



1

Improving the level of skills and competences among the adult population, and especially overcoming the problem of deficient basic skills, providing citizens with a second chance to succeed and enabling them to adapt to the digital age

2

Combatting marginalization and social exclusion and promoting active participation in society

3

Integrating the migrant population with particular reference to refugees and asylum-seekers, and thereby contributing to the prevention of radicalization

4

Addressing the longer term challenge of demographic change and in particular the rising incidence of older people in European societies

5

Fighting the rise of populism and promoting awareness among the adult population of the benefits of living together in a peaceful, harmonious and mutually supportive European Union

6

Furthering citizens' awareness of and constructively critical support for key European Union policies in areas such as environmental protection, sustainable development and strengthening cooperation with citizens in the EU's neighbouring countries.



The “**Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century**” set out by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) provides useful information around all of these points, though with a slightly different taxonomy. More information can be found on <https://eaea.org/our-work/influencing-policy/manifesto-for-adult-learning-in-the-21st-century/>.

Promoting a broader approach to adult learning and education

Instead of such a one-sided emphasis on continuing vocational training, the EU should **promote a much broader approach to adult learning and education**. This should be reflected not only in policy statements but also in concrete support, recognising its importance not only in the context of employability but also in relation to the many other dimensions mentioned above.

Encouraging better awareness of – and a stronger sense of identity with – the European Union

Much greater emphasis should be placed on **promoting a greater awareness of the European Union and a stronger sense of identity with the European Union** among the adult population of the Member States. This has never been more important than today. Of course it is crucial to get young people started and to support transnational cooperation between young people both within school education and in their lives beyond - much more so than is currently the case with Erasmus+.

But in the best case, these measures will take several years before they have an impact on the entire adult population. Given the current level of criticism, scepticism and open rejection of the EU by the citizens themselves in the founding countries of the Union, the EU has no time to wait for this. **Adult learning plays an absolutely central role in this strategy**. And yes, this is an *educational* issue, because history and current events, and especially their European dimension, should be seen as an important milestone in the educational landscape.



Why does adult learning and education need the EU?

Because...

In essence, the arguments are the same as for the other segments which make up a modern country's overall education and training system. But due to the fact that it is generally less well developed in many Member States, and both more fragile and more fragmented than all the other sectors in all of the Member States, adult education arguably has even more to gain from European cooperation than the others have.

The current **Agenda for Adult Learning** has contributed enormously to a growing awareness for adult education and has started to improve work on adult education (contents-, methodological but also strategic and political) in different member states. A new Agenda can therefore continue and even strengthen the work that has been done so far.

EAEA members and other adult learning and education organisations and institutions in Europe rely on the European level to support them in building a strong adult education system on the national level.

Adult education does a lot - more support is an absolute necessity!

Adult education and learning does and achieves a lot: it creates positive change for individuals, communities, the economy and society at large. This should be reflected in an **exponential increase in the overall level of support for adult learning under programmes such as *Erasmus+* and *Europe for Citizens***, and a similar exponential increase in the relative share of funding for adult learning under Erasmus+ compared to other areas of education and training.

This must also be reflected in the nature of the activities supported, with a renewed acceptance of the direct involvement of adult learners, rather than simply involving educational staff working with them.

What can you do at the national and/or regional level?

1

Contact your ministry (or any other institution or organisation that represents adult learning in your country at the European level)! If you have the opportunity to meet with relevant persons, please do so and make sure to mention our shared concern about the continuation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

2

Inform us about any responses that you receive from your ministries or respective national or regional authorities. This makes it easier for us to coordinate our joint advocacy efforts.

3

Combine our message with your own lobbying messages. You are probably already in contact with your ministry because of the current coronavirus crisis. If you think that it is possible to connect the two issues, please do so! Of course, you know best whom to contact and how to do it. You certainly know which arguments and which timing for lobbying work best in your country or region. Don't hesitate to adapt the EAEA advocacy materials to your experience and knowledge.



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS