EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE 2015

A Civil Society View

Adult Education in Europe 2015 – A Civil Society View

European Association for the Education of Adults

Illustrated map on the cover: Freevector/Vecteezy.com

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE 2015

A Civil Society View

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A summary of the situation of non-formal adult education in Europe 5
Belarus 9
Belgium (French speaking region) 10
Bulgaria 12
Croatia 13
Cyprus 15
Denmark 16
Estonia 18
Finland 19
France 21
Germany 22
Greece 24
Hungary 25
Iceland 26
Ireland 27
Israel 28
29 Italy
30 Lichtenstein
31 Lithuania
32 Macedonia
33 Montenegro
34 The Netherlands
35 Norway
36 Portugal
37 Romania
38 Russia
39 Serbia
41 Slovakia
42 Slovenia
43 Spain
44 Sweden
45 Switzerland
46 Turkey
47 United Kingdom

Dear reader,

We are happy to present our country reports 2015. This is now the second time that we have asked our members to tell us what is going on in their countries. The intention was to get a more systematic insight on what our members believe to be key developments.

A caveat: this is of course not a scientific analysis of adult education in Europe. It is the perception of a number of civil society organisations and adult education providers, and it is meant to complement governmental reporting on adult education. The reports are also shaped by the number and form of our respondent(s) – a small liberal adult education centre will have a different view of developments than a large vocationally oriented network of providers.

Nevertheless we believe that this exercise will help us and other interested stakeholders better understand the current challenges of adult education in Europe. The summary will give you a good overview of the main challenges as seen by our members.

We also hope that, over time, we will be able to compare the developments over the years. This year, a number of our members report the introduction of new laws and regulations – which effect will they have? How will adult education change because of this? Hopefully, the country reports of the future will give us the relevant answers.

Per Paludan Hansen, EAEA President

Gina Ebner, EAEA Secretary General

A SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION OF NON-FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE

European overview

In 2014–2015, adult education has undergone many developments and faced several challenges. Based on the responses from EAEA members present all over Europe, this is a summary of the present situation.

The responses show that three main topics were central issues for the European adult education scene in 2015:

Funding

In most European countries the financial situation and strength of adult education providers is unsatisfactory. Either they are struggling with national or local stakeholders and authorities to gain sufficient public funding for their work; or their funding is threatened through cuts in the general public budgets which also affect the field of education.

Integration and education of migrants

Due to the conflicts in many regions of the Middle-East and Africa and the intensified inner-European mobility, numbers of migrants participating in adult education have increased a lot. The needs and demands of this group of learners differ from the expectations of traditional participants. Therefore it has become necessary for adult education providers to both redesign their programmes accordingly and to further educate and train their trainers enabling them to meet the needs of their learners.

Key topics in the programmes for migrants are the acquisition of language skills and knowledge about the culture and labour market of their new host and home country.

Development of basic skills for low-skilled and low-educated learners

As a result of the European economic crisis, the conditions in many European labour markets are still tense, especially for low-educated and low-qualified people. Many projects were established to enable these people to (re-)integrate into society and economy through the provision of basic skills. A second crucial goal of programmes aiming at low-educated learners is to (re-)familiarize them with learning. Many people of this target group weren't reached by the formal education system. That's why non-formal adult education providers took up the mission to support their participants in gaining new skills.

Regional trends in Europe

Further trends can be identified in the different regions of Europe. This gives a more detailed view on the situation in the countries.

The Central and Western European countries

Belgium (French-speaking part), France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK

Qualification Frameworks

Many of EAEA's Central and Western European members are currently involved in the development or implementation of National Qualification Frameworks or Validation Frameworks for non-formal adult education. A lot of resources are spent on adjustment measures, since numerous programmes offered are affected by the changed frameworks.

Basic education for low-educated learners

Low-educated learners are currently the central target group of adult education providers. The key task is to support them in the development of basic skills. An interesting trend in this field is that providers regard literacy skills not anymore as compulsory and rather focus on the further development of already existing skills to design the learning schedule according to the learner's individual needs and strengths.

The Nordic countries

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden

Financial insecurity

The situation of adult education in the Nordic countries is dominated by concerns about a reduction of their funding sources. Except for Sweden which increased its spending on education, most Nordic countries are facing (threats of) cuts in their education budgets. The struggle to conserve the current funding and budget became a central challenge.

Change in legal frameworks

Also a lot of Nordic countries are confronted with a change in the legal framework. May it be the implementation of a national qualification framework, a validation framework or even the re-structuring of the whole education system like in Finland. EAEA's Nordic members are occupied in their adjustment to the new settings.

Education/training of migrants

Due to the increased migration, especially of refugees from non-European countries, Nordic adult education providers are re-designing their programme offers to meet the needs of their new key participant group. To support the integration of their participants to their new countries of residence, education providers now put an emphasis on the provision of language classes and introductory classes about the culture of the host countries.

The Southern European and Mediterranean countries

Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey

Raising awareness of adult education

Recognition of non-formal adult education in Southern European and Mediterranean countries is still an issue. Education providers have to struggle for acceptance of their programmes among the population and the financial backing by public authorities and regional stakeholders. It will be a key challenge for the Southern European adult education institutions to raise awareness of their work within their own populations. All these factors combined lead to a still unsatisfying participant number in many Southern countries.

Education/training of migrants

Due to their geographic proximity, the Southern European countries are heavily affected by the current migration from third countries. Migrants and especially refugees became a key participant group for education providers. The needs of these groups differ from the needs of the “traditional” key groups, which causes providers to take great effort in re-structuring measures of programmes and organisation.

Demographic change

Demographic change has an effect on adult education, since an increasing share of participants is older. To meet this increasing demand, EAEA’s Mediterranean members develop and implement methods and programmes that are tailor-made for older adults.

Vocational Educational Training (VET)

As a result of the economic crisis in many countries in the South, youth unemployment rates are still dramatically high. To counter this situation, vocational educational training has become a key tool for the (re-)integration of young adults into society.

Train the trainers

These new challenges adult education providers face created the need for further qualification of trainers and adult education professionals. Many organisations foster "train the trainer" programmes to prepare their staff for new participant groups and demands.

The Central and Eastern European countries (CEE)

Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia

Establish non-formal adult education

In their reports EAEA's Eastern European members gave us a diverse picture of the status of non-formal adult education in their countries.

A common ground in the responses was the unsatisfying recognition of adult education. In many states of the CEE the political backing and understanding of the beneficial effects of non-formal adult education is lacking. The non-formal adult education is struggling to be recognized as equal to formal education. This also leads to problematic funding conditions. Our CEE members are still pursuing acceptance of their work and struggle for a stable financial foundation of their work.

Raising awareness of adult education

A key task for adult education providers in CEE countries is awareness-raising. A large share of the population isn't aware of the existing offer of educational programmes. Furthermore the usefulness and validation of such measures is still questioned due to the lack of recognition.

Improvements in this field will also help to increase the participation rate in lifelong learning programmes, which is still very low in comparison to the European average.

Vocational Educational Training (VET)

Another challenge of our Eastern members is the promotion of the various fields of adult education besides the vocational educational training. This field is still underdeveloped in many countries.

Basic skills for low-skilled learners

The current focus group of new programmes is low-skilled learners. Adult education providers offer programmes for the development of basic skills to (re-)integrate participants into the economy and society.

BELARUS

Recent developments

In 2015 a major event in the field of adult education in Belarus was the festival of non-formal education. This event was held for the fifth time in 2015. The festival of non-formal education enabled education providers to present their actions and programmes to a wider public and increase the awareness of non-formal education opportunities in Belarus.

Future focus

A major challenge for adult education in Belarus is the promotion of and awareness for adult education. There are still large groups in society who cannot participate in educational measures due to the lack of information. Likewise, a key challenge for 2015 and onwards will be to promote the beneficial aspects of adult education for the whole of society. A wider spread educational infrastructure could bring large economic and civil benefits for the population.

In regard to the improvement of public health, it will be a crucial task for adult education providers to raise awareness among stakeholders on the impact of adult education on health. Through adult education measures an important step can be taken to support the process.

Member Outlook

The Belarusian EAEA members are aware of the challenges adult education faces in their country and are shaping their actions accordingly.

They believe that it will be an essential task to foster awareness-raising in 2015 and the following years. In this case adult education can play a vital role in the improvement of the quality of people's lives in Belarus. Furthermore, members will take efforts to promote the beneficial aspects of adult education for the whole of society.

In upcoming projects the Belarusian members will foster the promotion of health education as a crucial field of adult education. An important impact on public health can be done through educational measures.

BELGIUM (FRENCH SPEAKING REGION)

Recent developments

EAEA members from the French-speaking part of Belgium reported a twofold picture of the recent developments for adult education in their country.

On the positive side there is to mention the introduction of the European Social Fund (ESF) programme. Through the ESF programme participating organisations could offer provisions in the fields of literacy, French as a foreign language and trainings for adults who have achieved ISCED[1] only.

Secondly, new coordination mechanisms have been established. This gives additional opportunities to link training, employment and education sectors in each sub-region of the country in order to involve various local actors. Our members highlight the fact that literacy training providers have also been included in the coordination measures. This will enable them to bridge the existing gaps that are currently still separating them from the vocational training sector.

Thirdly, a study was conducted in the field of literacy training. The steering committee for literacy training will soon publish its results in a report. The report will provide a comprehensive knowledge on the supply of literacy trainings available in Belgium. Finally, a "French-speaking certifications framework" has been established.

On the other hand, there are significant negative developments to be mentioned. The recently introduced new policies on the integration of migrants appear to our members as counterproductive. The compulsory training in French that is included in these measures is aiming at too high levels (A2[2]). This excludes people who are lacking basic literacy skills and hinders their integration. Furthermore, the policies are targeting only one specific sub-category of learners and discouraging other learners. At the same time, this development increases the control of authorities on the associative sector, which makes the work of adult education providers more difficult and finally may result in a decrease of efficiency.

Secondly, due to a hardening of the stance towards the unemployed, there is a visible increase in the exclusion from unemployment benefits for affected people. This has worsened social and financial conditions of the unemployed. And since this group represents a large audience among some adult education providers, there is a significant decrease in participants' numbers for some organisations. Additionally, authorities refuse to provide data for adult education providers on the educational attainments of people excluded from benefits.

1 ISCED stands for the International Standard Classification of Education, with level 1 including primary education.

2 The second level (out of six) as divided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Future focus

The preservation of the popular education model is regarded as the main challenge for adult education in Belgium. Current education policies are targeting specific groups and use education as a conditionality in exchange for access to a given welfare provision or legal status. This undermines the work of adult education providers who promote universal access to basic skills. This process becomes even more critical when it comes to the numbers, with 70–80% of trainings offered by education providers affected by this process. This leads to an increased control by the authorities on both the unemployed and education providers.

EAEA members also perceive the results of PIAAC or of quantitative surveys on the needs in literacy training as a challenge. Due to the lack of funding it was not possible to conduct such a survey yet. There is a need for this survey since Eurostat is not providing data on educational attainment of the low-skilled population that is precise enough. So far the ISCED groups 0–2 were presented as a unified category, which made an effective analysis of the needs in literacy and numeracy training impossible.

A general topic in Belgium is the access to vocational trainings for people with literacy issues. Due to the bias that puts literacy as a prerequisite for further training, many learners are excluded from vocational trainings although some are already highly skilled in the corresponding vocational education and training (VET) field. Our Belgian members demand more flexibility in the requirements for vocational measures.

Member outlook

EAEA members will further focus on the integration of the unemployed, the support of people with low literacy skills and encourage people to gain basic skills.

BULGARIA

Recent developments

In 2015, an important milestone of adult education was the launch of the EPALE platform in Bulgaria. This marks a crucial step in the improvement of the adult education infrastructure.

Future focus

According to EAEA's Bulgarian members, a major challenge will be to increase the awareness of adults for lifelong learning measures. In this field there is still great potential, since only a small proportion of adults are currently participating in learning.

Another challenge is the participation of adults in different civil initiatives. The engagement in such initiatives is a vital step to improve citizenship education in Bulgaria.

Member outlook

One of the main activities of the Bulgarian members is to strengthen the Bulgarian adult education network. The development of this emerging field is the key task for our Bulgarian education providers.

The cooperation with European partners proved to be an important part in this development process. These types of cooperation, which are mainly executed under Erasmus+, will be intensified in the future.

CROATIA

Recent developments

The most important recent activity in Croatia in the field of education, and particularly adult education is the implementation of the new Strategy for Education, Science and Technology. It is the first comprehensive education strategy in the Republic of Croatia, based on a lifelong learning approach where adult education has been included as an important element. It will replace the former National Strategy of Adult Education.

Our Croatian members also report other initiatives, mostly from the Agency for VET and adult education, and from the Croatian Adult Education Society, which are focused on improving the professionalization of adult educators. The Agency has stressed its role regarding the improvement of training and monitoring in the process of providing professional training and quality assurance in adult education.

The implementation of EPALE in Croatia started in 2015 with a national information campaign and the inclusion of key stakeholders. The process of implementation is still on the level of key stakeholders who are in discussion about the key goals of the EPALE platform.

As a further development, the Croatian Ministries of education and of labour and pension systems introduced a Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF). The CROQF forms the foundation of the national operating programme “Investment for Growth and Jobs”, which includes adult education as an important element, and marks a very important step towards the improvement of the connection between education and labour market. Furthermore, the resources in the operational programme will aim at improving the quality and relevance of the programmes using the CROQF, as well as at encouraging institutions to engage in high-quality adult education and in validation of non-formal learning.

Future focus

EAEA members in Croatia believe that the most important challenge for Croatian adult education will be the implementation of the National Education Strategy. To face this challenge there has to be a change in legislation and a development of policy tools for:

a) the effective development of new programmes (and new approaches);
b) the professional development of adult educators, improving their professional autonomy and respecting their professional competency;
c) a more effective public administration, and
d) the organisational development of adult education providers.

The CROQF will be the key policy tool to strengthen the linkage between education and economy. Fostered by the government and the ministry of education, the CROQF can lead to a significant policy change, promoting recognition of prior learning, educational response to industry demands, visibility of non-formal learning, and different learning paths.

A further key challenge will be to increase the number of adult education participants in Croatia.

The current participation rate of 2.9% in Croatia is unsatisfying and one of the lowest in Europe. To change this, awareness and acceptance of adult education have to be increased. Our members also believe that cooperation with the Croatian economy has to be fostered. If the programmes of adult education providers correspond to the demands of the economy, it is certain that the position of adult learning in Croatia will be strengthened.

Member outlook

Our Croatian members will set their focus on responding to the challenges adult education is facing in Croatia. The implementation of the new National Education Strategy will be a key task that is affecting all programmes of education providers.

New programmes will be developed in close correspondence with the demands of the Croatian economy. In this way our members hope to establish a solid foundation and acceptance in the educational culture of Croatia.

CYPRUS

Recent developments

In the recent years the Cypriot EAEA members have focused on qualification measures for trainers. Through these trainings it has been possible to spread innovative ideas and introduce new concepts to adult education trainers in Cyprus.

Another main task of adult education providers in Cyprus has been to extend the offer to young adults. This group was strikingly affected by the prevailing economic crisis and therefore has become a key target for educational measures, not just for vocational training but also for holistic measures.

Future focus

A key task will be fostering European cooperation. The mutually beneficial exchange of techniques and knowledge that our Cypriot members perceive, plays a vital role in the development of adult education in Cyprus.

Member outlook

In the coming years the Cypriot members will continue on their qualification measures for trainers. They proved to be successful in the past, and there is a constant demand among Cypriot adult educators for such measures.

DENMARK

Recent developments

In the recent years the Danish members of EAEA followed a widespread agenda. An initiative was started to encourage non-formal adult education providers to include refugees in their activities and thereby contribute to the debate in society about people's equal value, learning and active citizenship.

Also the project "People's movement against loneliness" was launched by organisations, municipalities and companies to stimulate discussions about loneliness and help people meet, as long-term loneliness can have serious consequences for a person's quality of life and society as a whole.

New tools were developed for the assessment of prior learning to facilitate work on assessment measures. Furthermore, Danish members created basic training modules for non-formal adult education teachers and principals to ensure a common understanding of non-formal adult education and its values.

Several events took place in the context of adult education in Denmark. In cooperation with the UNESCO, the conference "The Learning City" invited Danish cities into UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities. The network aims to promote inclusive learning through a combination of institutional structures, modern technology and cross-sectoral cooperation, all centred in a city environment. Recent developments also included a seminar on digital inclusion of all citizens and projects celebrating the 100th anniversary of women's and servants' right to vote in 2015.

The Danish members conducted their project in regard to the European Agenda for Adult Learning. Our members' aim was to provide learning opportunities for all, which is essential for competitiveness and employability, social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development.

Future focus

Our Danish members report that the main challenge to non-formal adult education is to increase the motivation of citizens to participate in society and in the public debate. In this struggle an emphasis is laid on the support of the least privileged groups to enable their participation.

The development of funding has also come under criticism. There are trends towards a decrease in funding of non-formal adult education. It will be a challenge to raise awareness amongst stakeholders to secure a sufficient funding of educational measures, both on a local and state level.

Member outlook

An important topic of upcoming programmes will be the inclusion of refugees – both in educational offers for refugees to gain basic and language skills, and for the Danish society to sensitize them to the needs and reality of refugees.

Another key topic will be the further training of education staff. New structured courses will be offered to spread innovative concepts and digital skills among non-formal adult education teachers and principals. Staff and volunteers of non-formal education facilities will also benefit from qualification courses.

A third block is the improvement of education. The offer of measures to gain basic skills will be expanded. New projects that will be set up will focus on participants who need different approaches than the mainstream in the transition between school and further education.

A cross-sectoral topic will be fostering the participation in European projects and the exchange of knowledge with other European adult education providers.

ESTONIA

Recent developments

Estonian EAEA members report that the most important initiative in the field of adult education recently was the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy, which was approved by the Government in February 2014. In order to implement the strategy, the Ministry of Education and Research has drafted an implementation plan and programmes. The Lifelong Learning Strategy is a document that guides the most important developments in the area of education, including adult education. It is the basis on which the government will make its decisions for educational funding for the years 2014–2020 and for the development of programmes that support the achievement of necessary changes.

The general goal of the Lifelong Learning Strategy is to provide everyone in Estonia with learning opportunities that are tailored to their needs and capabilities throughout their whole lifespan, in order for them to maximize opportunities for dignified self-actualization within society, in their work as well as in their family life.

Future focus

The key challenge for Estonian adult education will be the implementation of the new Adult Education Act. That demands from adult education providers to develop outcome based curricula and to implement a self-evaluation model. There will be further changes to the non-formal adult education network, since it has to work on the implementation of a new financing model.

The Estonian adult education providers will set their upcoming focus on the target group of low-educated learners. Programmes will be offered to introduce this target group to lifelong learning and to provide them with counselling for their learning progress and professional career.

A key purpose of these re-trainings will be to qualify participants for the needs of the labour market. To reach this, the Estonian adult education providers will foster their cooperation with employers.

Member outlook

Our members will implement the lifelong learning approach in all of their programmes. By offering these diverse, flexible and high-quality programmes, it has been possible to increase the number of participants in all age groups. Driving forces are the career services, which will further be fostered since the Estonian adult education providers seek to work closer with employers.

Another focus of our members will be to emphasise digital literacy within their programmes. Through the usage of modern digital technology in learning and teaching both become more effective and efficient. And by introducing all age groups to digital technologies adult education providers play an important role in improving the digital skills of all age groups within the population.

The Estonian adult education providers will continue the struggle to guarantee every citizen equal opportunities for education. It is their aim to increase participation in adult education programmes throughout all ages, to offer lifelong learning opportunities. As mentioned in the challenges, a key target group will be the one of low-educated learners. They have to be re-introduced to the learning society and the Estonian adult education network will put them on top of the agenda.

FINLAND

Recent developments

Our members from Finland reported that big changes in the structure and financing of adult education are taking place. A structural policy programme was issued in order to implement the field of education into the public economic plan. Its goal is to reduce the number of education providers and to create bigger education entities. To achieve this, the Ministry of Education and Culture announced its will to cancel the licences of education providers which cannot prove their ability to finance and maintain the education institutions when faced with reduced financial support from the state and municipalities in the coming years. This reform will come into effect at the beginning of 2017. Another aim of this reform is to increase the financial predictability of liberal adult education funding. The financial model will be changed, making performance quota the basis for funding.

In 2014, the government decided that the governmental and municipal funding of liberal adult education should be cut to achieve total savings of 33 million euros divided between the years of 2015 and 2017. The factual cut budgeted for 2015 was 5% of the governmental grant for liberal adult education. These cuts penalize all players in liberal adult education, but it will be particularly hard on small entities. The institutions have to sort out how they will cope with decreasing public grants while simultaneously meeting new educational challenges.

In 2015 a general election took place. The new government has formed six key projects in the field of knowledge and education, but none of these mentions liberal adult education.

Future focus

The adult education scene in Finland has to face a variety of challenges in its further development. There will be a harsh cut in public funding and the providers of adult education have to adapt to the situation. This will also result in an increase of funding required from the students. At the same time, higher student fees will limit the access to education, especially for disadvantaged groups who are most in need of such measures.

Due to this worsening financial situation, Finnish adult education providers will have to find complementary, possibly untraditional means of finance, and new partnerships.

As a result of the structural reform, the reduction of the number of education providers will force the present providers to look for a new kind of coalitions. National or regional, cross-sectoral or conglomerate institutions might be born. But for institutions offering value-based education it might be hard to find suitable partners, which might endanger their further existence.

Our members regard it as a crucial challenge to maintain the quality of their education and believe that a sustainable basis for the funding of immigrants' educational integration has to be found. Currently the education on integration, language and culture is free for the participants. It is now funded by the subsidy of liberal adult education, and eats away the possibilities to offer traditional liberal education. Finnish education providers suggest having a state subsidy specially directed at the educational integration of immigrants.

Taking a look at the general picture, the strategic role of adult education has not been defined yet. There are different processes going on, but the big picture is missing. EAEA members will advocate for the creation of a national adult education strategy.

Member outlook

The main topic for the Finnish members will be to secure their funding structure while facing the decrease in public funding. Besides this the integration of immigrants and an expansion of the education offer for this group will be central as well.

FRANCE

Recent developments

EAEA members list a number of major changes that the French adult education sector has undergone recently, perhaps the key one being the revision of the Law for Vocational Training, which came into force in January 2015. The importance of the revision lies in the reinforced role of the individual in the lifelong learning process. Whether in employment or seeking employment, everybody can now use their "personal training account" recording trainings that mandatorily lead to diplomas. Most significantly, the individual in training does not have to meet any costs as they are fully covered by the companies and specific mutualized funds. This development offers EAEA members hope that the number of diploma holders will increase. At the same time, they admit it is too early to tell if the endeavour will be successful, especially in the view of recent cutbacks in companies' mandatory funding for lifelong learning.

Yet another change involves the decentralization of trainings for low-qualified adults. Previously trainings were the responsibility of the state. They have now been transferred to the region. These are basic skills trainings, often including literacy, and are aimed mainly at job seekers and young people neither in education, employment or training (NEETs). Basic skills seem to be the focus of the agenda for adult education in France, as another important development involves the adoption of a "competences basis" ("socle de compétences") at the national level. This could underpin the creation of certifying training courses. The Straighten Basic Skills project is also an example of the growing interest in the matter. This ongoing (October 2014–September 2017) cooperation between six European organisations offers a broad, systemic view of the labour market, with the aim to define a set of "success indicators" for implementing work-related skills in the training of the low-skilled and the unemployed.

Future focus

EAEA members in France expressed their concern over the practical outcomes of the new legal framework. It is essential that the low-educated access trainings and gain competences that are applicable in their daily work and personal life. As educational pathways are obviously personalized, adequate monitoring and guidance will pose a huge challenge.

EAEA members also indicate a target group that adult trainings should aim at: those between 18 and 35 years of age who have decided not to pursue any studies, and those who normally do not have time to engage in cultural activities.

Member outlook

EAEA members are planning to focus on the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning in France. EAEA member INFREP acted as the coordinator of a working group on apprenticeship and "alternative training" in 2012–2014 and is planning to extend the programme in France.

GERMANY

Recent developments

The development of adult education in Germany offers a multi-fold picture. EAEA's German members perceive the introduction of Erasmus+ as an important change for adult education, but they are also very sceptical about it. The procedures appear to be difficult and extremely time consuming. This is why many members are very unsatisfied with the implementation of Erasmus+.

As for the negotiations on the German Qualification Framework (DQR), there are positives news to report. Informal and non-formal learning are part of the recent position papers that were passed by federal and state governments.

Major steps have been taken in the integration of ICTs into teaching and learning by German adult education providers. Programmes and concepts were re-designed to include them and new formats were introduced, such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).

Our German members report that changes are taking place in their approach towards people with low levels of education. They have shifted from their old approach of focusing on literacy education towards a more comprehensive understanding of basic education, which takes the individual needs of participants more into account.

Future focus

The expectation towards adult education providers is the offer of flexible, creative and open courses. But to guarantee such courses it is essential to ensure the work of adult education providers. This includes that supplementary rules shouldn't hinder the providers' work, and also that there is a sufficient financial support to allow innovation. If no financial backing is found, education centres have to raise their course fees which can make it impossible for disadvantaged groups to participate.

Our members report that German adult education is, like all of society, affected by demographic changes. A lot of experience will get lost soon when a large share of staff will reach retirement age. It is essential to cover this gap before it influences the quality of services provided.

Also, older learners and people who entered their post-employment phase have to be identified as a new key participant group. Offers need to be designed to meet the demands of this growing age group.

On the other hand, young learners will become central as well. Despite their decreasing share of the total population, they are the most important participants group, since they can take part in many programmes over the period of their life. Therefore it is important to (re)introduce them early to the learning society and connect them to adult education providers.

Our members believe that to increase the number of participants it will thus be necessary to professionalize the management and marketing of adult education institutions. Only in doing so will the institutions be able to compete with private education providers, who only follow commercial interests.

The current European refugee crisis is also noticed in Germany. The education of migrants and asylum seekers has already become an important challenge for adult education providers. Integration can only happen if proper language skills and cultural knowledge are provided to the people in need.

The last challenge will be the implementation of the German Qualification Framework (DQR). Although some progress has been made, the final paper has yet to be drafted. German adult education providers will have to continue advocating for the inclusion of informal and non-formal adult education in the DQR until it is passed by the government and becomes legally binding.

Member outlook

The struggle towards a German Qualification Framework (DQR) will continue to be a topic for German adult education providers. Also the financing has to be ensured since the expectations and fields of work are increasing.

Furthermore, the challenge of demographic change has to be faced proactively. The mentioned adjustments in the participant structure will require some efforts that have to be taken to prepare German adult education for the future.

The same is necessary for the usage of modern ICTs in teaching and learning. Our members think it is central to adopt new methods of knowledge transfer to maintain the high quality of educational measures provided. In this way, innovations can be adopted and the attractiveness of programmes for participants can be increased.

GREECE

Recent developments

Due to the recent general election and the omnipresent crisis, most reforms in the lifelong learning sector have been stopped. In spite of this stagnation, there was also a remarkable development coming from a new initiative. In 2013 the Municipal Centres for Lifelong Learning started operating and became a huge success. Until today about 150,000 adults have participated in programmes of the 250 Municipal Centres. Unfortunately, since the financing of the Municipal Centres is based on public funding, the prospects of the Centres are unsure in view of the large cuts in public budget.

Future focus

A major challenge for Greek adult education will be to take part in overcoming the economic crisis. Programmes to tackle unemployment have to be introduced. Hereby, an emphasis will lay on second chance education. Through projects in this field mainly young Roma and early dropouts can be integrated into the system. It is worth noting that some Greek members are sceptical about this process, since there is the danger of a “vocationalization” of adult education. It will be important to find a balance and keep a wide range of programme topics, and not only vocational measures. Another crucial aspect in these measures will be the validation of non-formal learning. This will open an alternative to school-based systems of validation, and help to raise the employability of participants.

Financing is reported to be the second main challenge in Greece. Greek adult education relies heavily on public funding and large cuts in this budget are endangering the whole adult education system. Therefore it will be essential to secure the necessary public funding and to open new sources of funding. Furthermore, volunteering has to be fostered in Greek adult education. Through volunteering it is possible both to ease the financial pressure on adult education providers and to raise awareness and acceptance for adult education among the population. Generally it will be a challenge to promote adult education and to make it obvious to the Greek population what beneficial effects adult education can have for them individually and as a society.

Member outlook

The Greek EAEA members will focus on providing programmes for their participants to secure their professional future. Also the dialogue between professionals and learners will be fostered in order to offer participants a more suited education.

Our members will also focus on promoting adult education in Greece. In this way the acceptance of adult education will rise and it will become likely to preserve the funding structure despite the cuts in public spending.

HUNGARY

Recent developments

Among the recent developments in Hungary EAEA members list launching the LLP Erasmus European Studies and Research in Adult Learning (ESRALE) project. The project involves inter-university partnership, the aim being to improve the professionalization of adult educators and to enhance research of adult learning and education.

Hungary has also organised regional conferences of the EAEA-coordinated Regional Networking for Adult Learning in Europe (RENEWAL) project and actively participated in the post-2015 dialogue led by EAEA.

The Culture Guide project also deserves a separate mention. This international initiative entailed the development of a handbook on involving marginalized people in artistic and cultural activities.

Future focus

As in other countries, Hungarian EAEA members feel their major challenge for the years ahead will be to increase lifelong learning participation while improving the performance of those already pursuing adult learning. In order to achieve this objective, the focus in adult education policies should be shifted from vocational education and training (VET) towards non-vocational adult education, ideally striking a balance between the two sectors.

Fighting back illiteracy is yet another important goal, as EAEA members in Hungary report functional illiteracy in disadvantaged families to be growing. Thus, the development of basic skills among adult learners should be on top of the post-2015 agenda.

Member outlook

EAEA members in Hungary have the intention to organise more events around adult education, increase advocacy at the national level and thus influence its visibility in the public eye.

ICELAND

Recent developments

A major focus of the recent activities of EAEA Icelandic members was to strengthen the cooperation with their Nordic partners. Over the course of several meetings key stakeholders established plans to intensify the cooperation and to exchange knowledge in the field of adult education.

Furthermore, the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Education was fostered in Iceland.

Future focus

The main challenge for future activities appears to be the issue of financing. Our Icelandic members perceive that this is a crucial and cross-topic issue which has to be addressed both internally and at the stakeholder level.

Member outlook

The members will continue to focus on the expansion of cooperation with Nordic and European partners.

IRELAND

Recent developments

According to EAEA members, the main development in Ireland recently involves a new strategy designed by SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, which was launched by the government in May 2014. Key stakeholders, including EAEA member AONTAS, hold regular meetings to oversee its implementation. SOLAS aims to respond to needs and opportunities of the Further Education and Training sector both in the short and long term, actively working towards enhancing personal and professional development of learners. In order to get learners more engaged in adult learning, a National Adult Learner Forum has been established with AONTAS put in charge of its creation.

In spite of these developments, EAEA members admit there have been significant budget cuts in the community education sector, prompting worries about its future. Our survey answers indicate that the public sector is more focused on efficiency than on the human factor, prioritizing accreditation and employment and leaving non-formal and informal education activities behind.

Future focus

Irish EAEA members list a number of goals for the years ahead. The adoption of the Further Education and Training strategy by the Ministry for Education and Skills, while certainly positive and welcome in the field, might prove to be challenging. The providers will need to adapt to new ways of working, collecting data and dealing with the different cultural aspects and ethos of adult education and training. Also, even though the strategy has five objectives, priority is given to only two of them: up-skilling and re-skilling for labour market and social inclusion. The crucial role of non-formal, unaccredited education has yet to be adequately recognized. It currently suffers from insufficient documentation, with no data on wider outcomes of learning provided. This has a detrimental effect on the performance of learners and tutors alike and hopefully it will be addressed in the foreseeable future.

Another reason for concern involves funding for part-time higher education, which continues to be an issue in Ireland due to relatively high fees. Part-time students are effectively excluded from the system as they do not receive any form of support, be it tax relief, cheap loans or the opportunity to attend classes full-time but on a flexible basis. EAEA members believe this should be on top of the agenda in the years ahead as the government has yet to recognize the significant role occupied by adult education in society, economy, culture and, above all, in educating families.

Some EAEA members also expect to see the term “adult education” replaced with terms such as “lifelong learning”, “service learning” or “experimental learning”. They recognize the dynamics of change in education and are looking forward to new developments, including more recognition of prior learning, which remains irrelevant in Irish universities.

Member outlook

For EAEA members, to face the new challenges academics in the field should focus on facilitating collaborative partnerships in the sector to share good practices, co-author work and conduct research. More advocacy work is also needed to ensure that policy makers recognize the overriding importance of adult learning and its far-reaching social and economic implications.

ISRAEL

Recent developments

In the recent year, EAEA Israeli members worked on the commemoration of World War I, with the year 2014 marking the 100th anniversary of its outbreak. Many projects and events were launched to raise awareness and sensitize people to the meaning and implications of this anniversary.

Future focus

The main goal of Israeli adult education is to expand the cooperation and exchange with other European adult education providers. It is perceived as central for the Israeli members that more projects have to be executed with European organisations.

Member outlook

A big step in the development of adult education will involve the establishment of a training centre for teachers working in adult education institutions. This will ensure the distribution of innovative concepts among the adult educators in Israel.

ITALY

Recent developments

EAEA members from Italy indicate that the recent focus in adult education has included ICT and foreign languages. Most courses that are organised use innovative strategies and an interactive approach, providing learners with a contextualized knowledge and an applicable skillset. Peer interaction and stimulating working groups are equally important, enabling learners a better exchange of experiences and ideas.

Future focus

EAEA members recognize the profound impact of the ongoing financial crisis and the increasing number of job-seekers on the labour market. Keeping this in mind, they would like to see more of the unemployed involved in adult learning and thus improve their chances at getting employed.

At the same time, they point out that there is a clear discrepancy between formal and informal education in terms of their recognition. Even though EAEA members have repeatedly voiced their concern over the lack of acknowledgement of informal training, formal education owns all the certification power in the field of culture. EAEA members agree that this calls for immediate and concrete actions at a legislative level.

Member outlook

It is EAEA members' impression that adult learning should be oriented towards promoting English language courses, particularly study abroad visits. They also see a need to make such courses tailored to the specific needs of learners, recognizing their age and background.

LIECHTENSTEIN

Recent developments

The recent focus of adult education in Liechtenstein has been on basic skills. Courses and programmes have been initiated to offer adults the acquisition of such skills. Adult education providers put the emphasis on the connection to the participant's profession and tailored the courses accordingly.

To improve the effects of educational measures counselling centres were opened in order to assist potential participants to find the most suiting courses or programmes.

Future focus

The key challenge for adult education in Liechtenstein will be to sensitize both the general population and especially the employers to the field of basic skills. It is important to increase the acceptance and usage of such trainings in this field.

Furthermore, our members perceive that decision-makers and stakeholders have to be addressed more intensively. Non-formal adult education serves an essential role in the educational system of Liechtenstein, and even in the time of financial cuts, it is essential to not only conserve but also to expand this highly beneficial field for society.

Member outlook

EAEA members from Liechtenstein will focus on the creation of future programmes on the issue of basic skills. To make such programmes more attractive for the target group the members are re-evaluating their financing structure to incorporate some beneficial changes.

LITHUANIA

Recent developments

As a result of an initiative of Lithuanian EAEA members, a new law on non-formal adult education and continuous learning came into force on 1 January 2015, establishing a new state commission on non-formal adult education. The tasks of the commission are to advise the ministry of education and science on issues in the field of adult education policies, models of financing, quality assurance, system of recognition and validation of competences acquired by non-formal and informal learning, and creating a system of information and consultation of non-formal and continuous adult learning.

Furthermore, local municipalities are now carrying the responsibility to develop adult education in their districts.

Future focus

A challenge for adult education in Lithuania will be to spread the distribution of education measures. Most offers are to be found in the biggest cities, while rural areas are left behind. A system has to be implemented to increase the offer of education programmes in rural areas and their attractiveness.

In regard to the rising number of migrants from third countries, effective programmes have to be launched to guarantee the language training and civic orientation of these persons. Right now Lithuania has to deal with a small number of migrants, but numbers are expected to increase 4–5 times within the next three years, which creates the necessity to take measures to address this problem.

Member outlook

For some Lithuanian members the key task will be to develop a system of quality assurance for the field of non-formal adult education. Current regulations are not suited to the demands to ensure the further development of adult education in Lithuania. Our members will also work on a framework which would allow for recognizing non-formally acquired competences.

MACEDONIA

Recent developments

In the last year Macedonia adopted a concept for primary education for adults. This enables adult education providers to offer legally recognized programmes. This development marks a milestone in the adoption of a holistic educational programme for adults in the whole country.

Additionally, this year saw another edition of "Days of Lifelong Learning". This festival reached a nation-wide audience and was able to increase its number of participants compared to former events.

Future focus

The Macedonian members of EAEA regard the lack of awareness of adult education as the main challenge. Many people of the target group are not conscious of the existing offer of non-formal or informal education in Macedonia. Furthermore, there is a lack of trust towards these measures. Formal education is by far the most valued education amongst learners and employers. Measures have to be taken to change this situation and make non-formal and informal adult education become recognized as an equally valued form of education.

Member outlook

Adult education providers in Macedonia will set their focus on intensifying the cooperation between them and the business sector. In this way they will be enabled to offer more suitable programmes for their target group and match their participants' experiences in their professional life.

MONTENEGRO

Recent developments

Recent developments in Montenegro include a number of initiatives in the adult education sector, including long-term adult education plans on the government level such as the Adult Education Strategy of Montenegro (2015–2025) and the Adult Education Plan (2015–2019). Montenegro has also recognized the need to improve the treatment of imprisoned persons and to offer them support after they have served their time. Two action plans have been created to this end.

2014 also saw the celebration of XIII Days of Adult Education and Learning promoting the importance of life-long learning in personal and social development. Another major issue the event emphasized was the continuing focus on building social partnerships and training adult education staff.

Future focus

EAEA members in Montenegro point out a number of challenges for the years to come. They think it essential to raise awareness among the employers in different sectors about the importance of professional development and training, as well as to analyse the educational needs of employees. They also acknowledge the need to share the best practices in the field through the creation of an e-platform as well as manuals and other learning materials. Further efforts are also needed to improve social responsibility by focusing on training staff, the key issues being volunteerism, social inclusion and active ageing.

On a brighter note, the Montenegro Vocational Education and Training (VET) Centre has taken the first steps towards the implementation of the European Agenda of Adult Learning on the national level which, if approved by the European Commission, will be carried out from November 2015 to November 2017.

Member outlook

EAEA members feel that it is crucial to identify the educational needs of employees and respond to them accordingly though a series of specific measures. They also stress the importance of effective dissemination strategies to ensure that the best practices in the field are shared and followed.

THE NETHERLANDS

Recent developments

The focus in the adult education community in the Netherlands has been on the promotion of literacy and reading skills with the Action Programme Count Along with Language launched by the government to this end. Thanks to this initiative it will be significantly easier to detect linguistic deficiencies in businesses and public institutions alike. The programme also recognizes public libraries as a major vehicle in overcoming language problems regardless of the readers' age.

Furthermore, the Dutch government has invested in the promotion of lifelong learning in higher education institutions by adapting the educational pathways to the needs of part-time students and making some of them eligible for extra funding. The programme will run from 2015 to 2019 and will amount up to 65 million Euros.

Future focus

With the government initiatives described above, EAEA members in the Netherlands feel that it is necessary to continue in a similar way and promote reading particularly among those with language deficiencies. They also deem it essential to strengthen the position of non-formal education providers at a regional level and enhance their role in vocational and educational training. Further decentralization of adult education is also defined as the top priority for the foreseeable future; at the same time, EAEA members recognize the need to cooperate with the Ministry of Education.

Member outlook

When looking towards the future, EAEA members seem to feel positive about the government's decision to promote reading and literacy and are willing to implement this policy in their endeavours. They also wish for the non-formal education sector to achieve steady growth and benefit from more opportunities.

NORWAY

Recent developments

At the moment, adult education in Norway seems to be facing financial challenges. One EAEA member deplored the government's proposal to cut their funding by half; a decision which would have affected their work substantially if it had not been revoked thanks to a series of lobbying activities.

Recent developments include participation in the Ardenal Week, an annual forum enabling a better exchange between different NGOs and voluntary organisations and opening a larger debate about policy issues. Another major event was a joint conference on Adult Education and Development organised by The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL) along with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNESCO and the University of Oslo.

Norway also continues to monitor the proficiency of adults through the ongoing implementation of the PIAAC study, including a joint report for Nordic countries.

Future focus

A recurring topic among our members' answers was certainly that of validation of non-formal learning. While the government's recent endeavours are certainly welcome, EAEA members from Norway call for more validation of non-formal learning as well as the continuing implementation and careful interpretation of PIAAC. It seems that EAEA members feel that adult learning associations still have a long way to go in terms of achieving national recognition.

Member outlook

For EAEA members the overall ambition is to have more insight into the ongoing changes in the labour market and to see how they could impact specific needs in the adult education sector. Another challenge to be faced is the need to redefine non-formal adult learning as a concept belonging either to the sector of education or culture.

PORTUGAL

Recent developments

Among the most significant developments achieved recently EAEA members highlight the launch of the Centres for Qualification and Professional Education. They consider the validation process to be of overriding importance as it plays a valuable motivational role for different learning pathways, non-formal, informal or formal. At the same time, EAEA members in Portugal report the validation system and its centres to be seriously underfunded, causing a dramatic fall in the number of certifications granted – dropping from 20,000 certifications in 2010 to merely 256 in 2014 and 2015. Although a funding scheme has been announced, the maximum amount that can be granted is 190,000 € for a 15 month working period, which is by no means enough and can only cover staff payment.

Future focus

The challenges lying ahead mentioned by Portuguese EAEA members include the ongoing struggle for more recognition of adult education. The current focus in education and training involves addressing youth unemployment, with almost no funds allocated to adult education activities. As a matter of fact, 40% of the target public in the validation centres is youth, particularly those not in education, employment, or training (NEETs). This means that only 60% of the already tight budget can be allocated to adult learners. The lack of funding is a recurring theme among EAEA members in Portugal and the general consensus is that this issue should be addressed as soon as possible.

EAEA members in Portugal also say that more changes on a national level are expected following the upcoming elections. They express their hope that social, ecological, civic and artistic organizations, with educational activities being their common denominator, will find recognition among policy makers.

Member outlook

EAEA members in Portugal are planning to actively promote adult education and training to increase a cross-sectorial understanding of education. They also highlight the importance of including senior citizens and people with special needs in learning, following an intergenerational approach and an emphasis on basic literacy and technological literacy.

ROMANIA

Recent developments

The year 2014 in Romania saw a number of events oriented towards the development of the adult education sector. A major example is the fourth edition of the National Symposium e-Learning in Adult Education, which aimed to promote modern tools and methods in the education process. Another important event was the International Conference on Adult Education, a forum for exchanging information and presenting the results of research in the field of continuing and adult education.

Finally, the National Authority for Qualifications held the final conference of the project "Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning". Among the key issues discussed was the authorization of the assessment centres and training providers as well as the development of adult education as shaped by the recognition of academic and professional qualifications. The conference also served as the occasion to present the future actions intended to underpin the latest initiatives of the European Commission in adult education: the project proposal "Learn for a better life" and the electronic platform for adult education EPALE.

Future focus

Our survey answers indicate that the core challenge faced by Romania is to increase the participation in Lifelong Learning to 10% by the year 2020, which is the target set by the National Strategy on Lifelong Learning and adopted by the Romanian government in June 2015. Although the adult participation in lifelong learning has been steadily growing and reached 2% in 2013, it remains substantially lower than the European Union average of 8.9%, which means that there is still great room for improvement in this area and the government strategy is certainly welcome.

EAEA members explain that the relatively poor results might stem from insufficient cooperation between various stakeholders involved in adult education and training. It is generally hoped that the strategy will increase the relevance of vocational and educational training for the labour market and will thus positively affect the lifelong learning participation numbers.

Member outlook

As shown by the numbers cited above, greater efforts are needed in the foreseeable future in order to foster a better understanding of the adult education sector among all decision makers. EAEA members in Romania feel that it is crucial for policy makers and learners alike to realize that adult education goes beyond vocational training and has a great potential.

RUSSIA

Recent developments

EAEA members from Russia indicate a number of recent achievements. The major focus in Russia has been the issue of multiculturalism in adult education. Among recent undertakings Russian EAEA members mention developing management of a learning community in a multicultural region. Similarly, the 16th Week of Adult Education in Russia operated under the theme "Development of multicultural spaces of adult education", focusing primarily on the role of multicultural education in socialization and conflict-solving.

Another challenge recently addressed in Russia involved bridging generational gaps in education. This was tackled at the Third International Children and Adult Cultural and Educational Forum of the CIS countries (Commonwealth of Independent States – a loose association of former Soviet Republics), which represented an invaluable opportunity for participants of different generations and nationalities to interact during various training programs. It is particularly the education of senior citizens that has received special interest in Russia. In fact, EAEA members describe education opportunities for elderly learners as rapidly improving thanks to their increasing confidence in using the Internet. This, in turn, means that they can access a wider range of courses.

Future focus

EAEA members list working out the state concept of continuous education for adults and developing a monitoring system of continuing education as key areas for future focus, as there is still not enough understanding of the socio-economic importance of adult education. They also indicate that more attention should be devoted to collaboration in this sector, which is still inadequate. Awareness-raising activities are thus welcome, as are various initiatives opening adult education opportunities towards everyone, regardless of age, background or prior training.

Member outlook

EAEA members in Russia stress the importance of putting adult education in greater focus on its national political agenda. They would also wish for non-formal and informal education to receive more recognition within the framework of a state-supported, permanent system and will engage in more advocacy work in order to achieve it.

SERBIA

Recent developments

EAEA members from Serbia voice their concern over several issues regarding the adult education sector. They also concede that, with the last survey done in 2011, there are not sufficient data regarding adult education, making it is difficult to present a clear picture of the situation.

First, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development adopted amendments to the Higher Education Law which caused widespread protests. In the context of adult education the amendments effectively mean exclusion of adults from the higher education system, as part-time study is not included in the amendments.

EAEA members also express their worries over the lack of progress in the implementation of the Law on Adult Education. Similarly, the goals set in the Strategy for Development of Education in Serbia 2020 have not been implemented as planned; as a matter of fact, Serbia did not participate in the PIAAC research and is still lacking adequate basic skills programmes for adults. The National Qualification Framework in Serbia has not been adopted either. This, coupled with the vulnerable position of teachers, constantly undermined by austerity measures, has led to a number of long strikes and unsuccessful negotiations.

Finally, EAEA members mention the financial issues they have to struggle with, as the adult education sector is mainly operated by NGOs with little or no funding provided by the state. A case in point would be the implementation of the Second Chance programme. This initiative was launched out of the need to improve basic adult education in Serbia, where illiteracy rates are still alarmingly high. However, when faced with the task, the staff involved in the project realized that they could only rely on themselves and their own resources to ensure professional development. Fortunately, significant support was provided by the Adult Education Society which printed manuals and developed a training programme for the teachers.

There have been more positive developments, such as bottom-up initiatives supported by local activists in major Serbian cities. Another worthwhile project was the Adult Learning Festival organised in December 2014 by the Adult Education Society under the theme “Learning Cities”. Serbia also participated in the World Education Forum, held in May 2015 in Incheon in Korea. The ongoing cooperation with global and EU networks has been greatly appreciated as it might help develop a system of quality in adult education.

Future focus

According to EAEA members, the challenges ahead of Serbia concern mainly the process of EU integration, which unfortunately has not received enough support from the local governments. At the same time international partners expect the sector to be transformed so that it would no longer depend on donations. This understandably puts adult education association in a difficult position.

Among other problems that Serbia will continue to face EAEA members mention the support of refugees and asylum seekers. In order for their integration into society to be effective, Serbian adult education system has to be oriented towards peace and intercultural education. This, however, may

turn out to be difficult to achieve, as Serbian EAEA members report problems with free expression and critical thinking in the media and public sphere. In other words, EAEA members call for a further democratization of the country which might help bridge the gaps in the existing system.

Serbian adult education providers also indicate a continuing need to invest in the basic education of adults, as the level of functional literacy is still below expectations. For this to work, Serbia will need to implement a national quality framework, which could also help define clear conditions for trainers and teachers to fulfil.

Member outlook

EAEA members in Serbia agree that civic organisations must be prioritized to ensure sustainability of EU partnerships, participation in EU projects and mobility of adult education staff. They would also like to see adult educators promote a wide access to learning opportunities and constantly monitor the EU accession process. EAEA members feel that for civic organisations to survive more lobbying and advocacy at the EU level is essential.

SLOVAKIA

Recent developments

Recently the topic of adult learning has achieved greater recognition in Slovakia, partly thanks to the RENEWAL project coordinated by EAEA, which focused on strengthening the European Agenda for Adult Learning in the Southern and Central Eastern Regions. The meeting in Bratislava has certainly played a part in promoting adult education and opening a larger debate about its potential among the civil society and policy makers alike.

Other developments include the REPAS project launched by the Ministry of Labour. The initiative involves financing requalification courses for the unemployed who, after years of inadequate learning experiences, could finally gain an opportunity to re-enter the labour market.

Future focus

The members from Slovakia list three major challenges for the upcoming years. First, as the national project CVANU is coming to an end in October 2015, the Act on Lifelong Learning should come into force, although it is not expected to happen before the parliamentary elections in March 2016. The project created and financed 25 regional centres that also offer education for companies. As the centres are not sustainable yet, they might need EU funding, thus creating competition for locally active NGOs and private companies.

Second, 2015 will see the final outcome of the project devoted to National Occupational Standards and National Educational Standards. It is expected to also contribute to the validation of informal learning.

Finally, EAEA member AIVD orgnanises the 15th Lifelong Learning Week in Slovakia in September 2015, with this year focus shifted towards enhancing quality in adult learning. With the support of the Ministry of Education, it certainly generates more recognition for adult learning in the media.

Member outlook

According to EAEA members it is vital for Slovakia to get civil society more actively involved in the creation of new legislation and in the process of shaping new projects. They feel that more effort should be put on making these projects sustainable and operating within existing structures.

SLOVENIA

Recent developments

As in many European countries, recent developments in Slovenia included the implementation of the PIAAC study. Its results are expected to effectively influence policy-making and provide insight into the current needs of the labour market in terms of skills and competencies. This, in turn, will exert a positive impact on the success of both individuals and the country as a whole.

Slovenia has also continued to implement the European Agenda for Adult Learning, focusing on two major aspects: awareness-raising activities and development of basic skills. First, a series of events within the Learning Parade 2015 has played a substantial role in putting adult learning on the agenda. Second, 21 Promoting Adult Skills events have been organised at the local level, contributing to the development of the low-skilled and educationally deprived workforce. The events have been beneficial for all target groups, be it policy-makers, media representatives or learners.

Future focus

EAEA members suggest updating the Adult Education Act and establishing a stable network of state-funded public providers as top priorities for the years to come. They would also like to see a closer cooperation between various ministries concerned with adult education within the framework of the National Programme of Adult Education (NPAE) for the period 2013–2020. Another forthcoming challenge will involve adopting a legislative basis that would regulate financing of adult education.

Member outlook

EAEA members in Slovenia express a continuing interest in EAAL and relevant EU projects that could, among others, regulate the quality assurance in the field of adult education. One of this kind of projects is GOAL – Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners, an Erasmus+ project aimed at low-skilled adults.

SPAIN

Recent developments

Like many other European societies, Spain is strikingly affected by demographic change. Older adults have become a key participant group, as their share is constantly increasing. This process is also reflected in the design of new programmes. Active aging approaches have been widely adopted by adult education providers in Spain. The aim of these programmes is to prepare older adults for an active post-working life. Besides courses on how to transform the lifestyles, our Spanish members report that gaining information and communication technology (ICT) skills have become a central topic for this participant group.

Future focus

EAEA Spanish members believe that the prospects for adult education are mixed. With the upcoming national and regional elections, political campaigns are now in full swing; unfortunately none of the parties have mentioned adult education as part of their agenda. This leads to uncertainty over the way in which adult education will develop after the elections and under potentially new governments.

Our members report an ongoing problem with the coordination and cooperation among the different autonomous communities and regions in Spain. Under the status quo, there is barely any exchange of information between adult education providers of the different regions. A closer cooperation would be a key step to improve Spanish adult education.

Due to the ongoing change in the structure of participants, the key challenge for adult education providers will be to integrate two specific groups: older adults and immigrants. As mentioned above, the share of older adults among the total population will increase, and therefore also among the participants. It is also to be observed that immigration from European and third countries towards Spain has increased. Since both groups have needs and expectations that differ drastically from the former key target groups, Spanish adult education providers have to spend resources and pay specific attention to the development of suitable methods and programme designs to fit the demand of its participants.

Member outlook

The focus of our members in Spain will be on the integration of older adults and immigrants to their programmes and establishing themselves as key education providers for these target groups.

Efforts will also be taken in the field of literacy and basic skills, particularly through fostering the cooperation within the adult education network. Generally, our Spanish members state that they will increase their participation in international education networks. They regard the exchange with other European and international education as beneficial for their work and as key to provide innovative solutions to the challenges that Spain is facing.

Lastly, further qualification of educators will be an aim. Train the Trainer courses will be offered to spread innovation and new methods among the Spanish adult education society. Only through these trainings can suitable techniques be acquired to face the new challenges resulting from the changed participant structure.

SWEDEN

Recent developments

In September 2014 the general election took place in Sweden, which resulted in a social democratic government. Our Swedish members report that this government is eager to support adult education and has passed an initiative to raise funding for both formal and non-formal adult education.

Generally, the new government is also promoting the integration of immigrants and wants to speed up their establishment in their new home country. To reach this aim, special learning initiatives have been introduced for newly arrived immigrants and refugee by adult education providers. In these courses, organised on a full-time basis over the period of six months, participants study the Swedish language and are introduced to the Swedish society and labour market.

In June 2015, the Swedish Parliament decided on the Swedish National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It involves both the formal educational system and non-formal learning. EAEA members had taken an active part in the preparations of NQF and regard this as a positive step towards recognizing and increasing visibility of non-formal adult learning.

Future focus

The main challenge for adult education in Sweden will be to strengthen its support both politically and financially. Due to the government change the positions have not been settled yet and it has to be ensured that the promised support will be given. This, especially financial, backing is essential to conserve the innovative potential of adult education in Sweden.

Our Swedish members report that their key task is to keep and develop learning for democratic and active citizenship. It is essential to preserve this field, otherwise an important characteristic of Swedish adult education could be lost.

Member outlook

An important task for Swedish adult education providers will be the implementation of the NQF. Each member organisation has to adjust their courses according to the framework.

To foster an active participation adult education providers have to cooperate closer with regional partners and actors. In this way programmes can be designed closer to the needs of learners, encouraging active participation.

In their selection of topics our Swedish members will put an emphasis on activities contributing to democracy, empowerment, bridging educational gaps and cultural participation.

Looking at the target groups, there are two groups to mention that will move more into the focus of adult education providers: low-educated young adults and migrants. For the first group education providers will offer programmes to motivate learners to continue their learning career. For migrants our Swedish members are preparing courses that could foster their integration into Swedish society, which will include Swedish language studies and introductions to the Swedish society and to the labour market.

SWITZERLAND

Recent developments

According to our members, recent developments in Switzerland have included a number of government initiatives such as the preparation of a new federal law on adult learning and the development of the National Qualifications Framework. Professional tertiary education has also been steadily growing thanks to an increase in funding. Another major area that has benefitted from new funding instruments was the field of basic skills, reaching out to the low-skilled and enhancing their employability.

At the same time, Switzerland has not adopted the European Agenda following a national popular vote on immigration policy.

Future focus

According to EAEA members the next years will bring not only the implementation of the new law on adult learning, but also new policies and funding schemes. There is also hope that the new law will lead to a more thorough validation of non-formal adult learning and a promotion of basic skills. The cooperation between the state, education providers and NGOs is also expected to grow.

Member outlook

EAEA members in Switzerland are hoping for more commitment and willingness among public authorities to engage in key issues, namely transparency, international cooperation and recognition of non-formal learning. It is their intention to advocate for the acknowledgement of these topics.

TURKEY

Recent developments

As a result of the conflicts in its surrounding countries, Turkey is facing a constant increase in the number of refugees. EAEA Turkish members were joining the struggle to provide refugees with learning activities. Education centres in regions close to the borders have made great efforts to fulfil the new demands.

A method spreading widely in the Turkish adult education society is e-learning. The development and diffusion of e-learning tools and technology has deeply changed the opportunities for adult education.

Future focus

The increasing number of migrants from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan will remain the main challenge for adult education in Turkey. Our members expect that many trainers will be needed to provide courses in language training and to introduce the refugees to the culture of their new country of residence.

More education providers have to join this struggle, since the great demand is exceeding the current capacities. A key challenge to improve the situation will be to convince local governments and key stakeholders of the need to support local initiatives, such as community centres to ensure their work in the long run.

A central task for the future work of Turkish adult education providers will be awareness-raising. The knowledge about the benefits of adult education for the individual, but also for society as a whole, is not widespread enough among the Turkish population. In order to increase the participation in adult education and its recognition, the general public has to be informed about the existing educational opportunities to pursue their self-development.

In the past years Lifelong Learning programmes were mostly executed by the Adult Education Centres run by the civil society. Nowadays also Public Education Centres, which are public bodies, have started to cooperate to improve the Lifelong Learning culture for all groups in the community. This cooperation has to be fostered and expanded in order to create a broad and stable foundation for the Lifelong Learning community in Turkey.

Member outlook

EAEA Turkish members report that they see a key challenge for their future work in the development and promotion of Lifelong Learning (LLL). In cooperation with stakeholders and civil society organisations a culture and awareness of LLL has to be established. The focus of LLL measures will lie on the improvement of key competencies of adults and increasing the access to adult education by distance learning, providing adults with more flexible and convenient ways to participate.

UNITED KINGDOM

Recent developments

EAEA member NIACE has piloted the development of a Citizens' Curriculum. This locally led initiative ensures that all individuals have the key set of skills including language (ESOL), English and maths skills combined with digital, health, financial and civic capabilities. Thanks to this integrated framework even the most vulnerable groups in society can be provided with an applicable skillset.

Other initiatives of NIACE include a Personal and Social Development Course oriented towards the needs of female prisoners and What Employers Want, a website facilitating communication between employers and young job-seekers. More experienced employees have had a chance to obtain Mid-Life Career Reviews to help them improve their career progression. Community learning has also been made easier thanks to the establishment of an on-line platform.

NIACE has also continued to successfully organize the Adult Learners' Week coupled with 3,000 Have a Go activities, providing adults with an incentive to learn something new. It has also hosted the Adult Learners' Week and a number of Impact Forums in each of the four nations, the aim being to promote the European Agenda for Adult Learning and raise awareness of the growing potential of lifelong learning.

Future focus

EAEA members foresee a number of financial problems that might emerge due to the demographic ageing. As this will lead to more demand on resources for adult social care, health, welfare and pensions, EAEA members in the UK fear that investments in adult learning might shrink. There has also been some concern over getting an equitable share of public funding since the UK government's current focus seems to be on the transition from school to work rather than on lifelong learning. As a matter of fact, EAEA members in the UK say they would welcome an independent review of funding issues that the UK is facing.

Member outlook

EAEA members in the UK would like to see more emphasis on both informal and formal learning, enabling people to gain economically and socially applicable skills. The feedback from the UK also indicates a wish for adult education to become more personalized, combining personal skills accounts with career reviews, which would help learners make an informed choice about their development.

Why is ADULT EDUCATION *important*

Investing in

ADULT EDUCATION

makes good sense for

INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES *and* **ECONOMIES**

as a whole

Research shows that

ADULT EDUCATION

has wider benefits

People given chance to learn and develop are:

PRODUCTIVE

They participate in the workforce and make the economy grow and develop. Adult learning can improve employability and income, especially for groups such as migrants and women from ethnic minorities. It has an important role in maintaining, re-skilling and upgrading the skills of those with the greatest need for support.

HEALTHY

They live healthy and fulfilled lives. Adults who take at least one course between the age of 33 and 42 are more likely to have given up smoking, increased their exercise and their life satisfaction. When conducting a survey among adult learners in Finland, 28 % of interviewees cited mental well-being as an outcome of learning and 13 % mentioned improved physical health.

WELL-OFF

They are less likely to slip into poverty. Adult learning can help substantially to reduce poverty through enhancing employment prospects and giving better chances of acquiring the tools needed to run their own lives. It has an empowering role in times of crisis, providing a stable community, a chance for reorientation, a safe place and social recognition.

SUPPORTIVE PARENTS

They ensure that their children develop a love of learning and take full advantage of education. Educational attainment in one generation has positive effects in the next generation. Parental education influences the children's performance in education, because they provide their children with educational support.

ACTIVE CITIZENS

They participate in their own communities and civil society. Those who participate in one or two courses are 13 % more likely to vote. The European Social Survey finds a strong and consistent positive relationship between years of education and interest in politics. Every additional year of education in general raises the likelihood of voting in national elections by 3 %.

OPEN-MINDED

They support and respect people with different abilities and cultural beliefs. Adult learning is associated with more open-minded perspectives on race and authority, greater understanding of people from different backgrounds, challenging previously held beliefs and with a sustaining effect on non-extremist views.

LAW-ABIDING

They are less-likely to commit crime. Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning shows that learning is strongly related to propensity to commit crime. People with no qualifications are more likely to be persistent offenders. Education and training reduces the risks of people engaging in criminal activity and re-offending.

HAPPY

They nurture their creativity and imagination. 35% of adult learners see a strong correlation between adult learning with happiness and well-being. Direct effects of adult learning relevant to well-being are self-efficacy, -belief and -worth. Four-fifth of learners reported a positive impact on areas such as confidence and life satisfaction.

SOURCES

European Social Survey, *www.europeansocialsurvey.org*
Feinstein, L.; Budge, D., Vorhaus, J. and Duckworth, K. (2008): "The social and personal benefits of learning: A summary of key research findings"
Centre for Research on the Wider benefits of Learning, *www.learningbenefits.net*
Manninen, J. (2010): "Wider Benefits of Learning within Liberal Adult Education System in Finland". University of Eastern Finland.
OECD (2007): "CERI - Understanding the Social Outcomes of Learning"
Schuller, T. and Watson, D. (2009): "Learning through Life: Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning". *www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry/AboutIFLL.htm*.
Timmermann, D. (2010): "Public Responsibility for Continuing Education Shaping the Adult Education System through State Financing"
Wolfe, B. and Haveman, R. (2002): "Accounting for the Social and Non-Market Benefits of Education". *www.oecd.org/innovation/research/1825109.pdf.*

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe.

EAEA is a European NGO with over 130 member organisations in more than 40 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.

EAEA promotes adult learning and access to and participation in non-formal adult education for all, particularly for groups currently under-represented.

EAEA'S MAIN ROLES

- **Policy advocacy for lifelong learning at European level**
- **Development of practice through projects, publications and training**
- **Provision of information and services for our members**
- **International cooperation**

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

THE VOICE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE

www.eaea.org

European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
Mundo-J, Rue de l'Industrie 10, 1000 Brussels
Tel. +32 2 893 25 22, eaea-office@eaea.org