

# Annual conference of literacy learners

## WHO ARE WE?

CONFAPEA is a confederation which brings together several Spanish cultural and educational associations. Participants from the different associations join in decision-making and project management processes. All participants are volunteers.

CONFAPEA was created to promote associations that seek greater participation of those who are in a situation of social exclusion.

CONFAPEA supports a model based on the competence of adult learners instead of focusing on their shortcomings.

CONFAPEA promotes training aimed at transforming society and organizes events and meetings to strengthen the voice of participants in the design and organization of training centers for adults.

## DESCRIPTION

### THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF LITERACY LEARNERS IN SPAIN

“Today we spoke about literacy from the standpoint of citizenship, by saying that, from this point of view, literacy increases the desire to learn.”

These conferences gather once a year, engaging learners from various literacy training associations, as well as participants from cultural associations.

### HOW DID THE IDEA ARISE TO ORGANIZE LEARNER CONFERENCES?

The first conference was held in 1999. It brought together 300 learners and it was a success. It was during this first meeting that participants decided to organize an annual meeting for adult training associations.

Their idea was to consolidate this emerging movement: adult learners should be able to decide what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

Learners are working to make the following bill a reality:

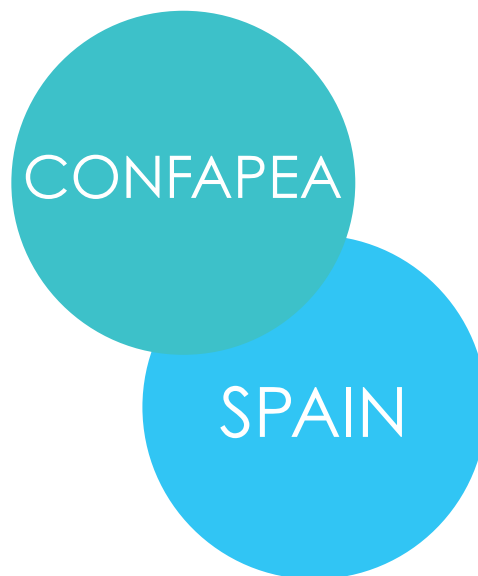
Training, as an inalienable right for adults, should be an instrument of self-determination that overcomes social inequality in relationships based on power. Training involves intercultural dialogue and recognition between communities.

The adoption and development of this Declaration is consistent with the objectives of adult learners who have no qualifications, and who act as volunteers. These are people in possession of a rich culture who have been silenced by the literate society.

### Preamble to the Bill of Learners

In its first two editions, the learner conference brought together associations at the regional level. From the third meeting, the forum went national.

The 3rd Conference was organized with the Cultural Association Paulo Freire, from Vitoria (Spain).



Gradually participants from rural areas (in particular from Galicia) started joining associations and eventually organized the 5th Conference in Granada (Andalusia), where many Roma took part.

The 6th Conference in 2004 has become a reference for CONFAPEA because it was the milestone where the organization was consolidated and the Conference acquired recognition at national level.

The 7th Conference took on an international dimension. It was held in Almeria (Andalusia). During the meeting, participants had the chance to share their reflections by videoconference with another meeting in Porto Alegre (Brazil) on the topic: how does adult literacy contribute to democracy and citizen participation, especially for those who are excluded from public debate because they lack a university qualification?

A videoconference facility was also used during the 8th Conference. Learners from three countries, Brazil, Argentina and Spain were able to share opinions on how adult education should be taken into account to grant everyone participation in society.

From then on, the Conference became international in scope, while it strengthened the representation of Spanish associations at the national level.

The 10th Conference in 2011 brought together learners from Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Scotland. It was held after the Eur-Alpha Learners Workshop, in which learners spent a week together to reflect on the good practices to promote the participation of learners.

This conference has highlighted that, irrespective of their origin, learners share a common dream and they want:

- To see prejudices disappear, allowing different cultures to live together,
- An increase in availability and access to literacy training, particularly for people in remote rural areas,
- An increase in the number of volunteers for training institutions,
- Respect of the right to lifelong learning,
- Creation and promotion of spaces for intercultural dialogue,
- More resources and policies committed to popular training,
- To have public meetings take place to discuss educational issues.

## CONTACT CONFAPEA

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### HOW IS A CONFAPEA CONFERENCE ORGANIZED?

In the months prior to the conference the topics to be addressed are considered by literacy learners in their classes and centres . Then, a chat room is set up as a means of communication. Participating learners and organisations have the chance to suggest their proposals and discuss them further.

The definitive content of the conference is decided during this virtual assembly. It is democratically decided which are the most successful literacy and basic skills interventions that will be presented during the round-table discussions and which issues related to adult training will be discussed in the working groups.

The chosen topics are discussed in literacy classes and in initial basic skills training. These discussions are subject to analysis and surveys, and the results are later presented in the conference. In this way, the opinion of all learners is represented in the conference, including that of learners who do not physically participate.

All conferences are organized and prepared by adult learners with literacy difficulties. For most participants, this is the first time they have ever taken the floor before several hundred people. It is remarkable how participation enhances these learners' confidence and self-esteem.

After each conference; discussions, exchanges of opinion and conclusions are drafted on paper to put all details on record, and to allow the reflection to continue. This means that a conference is not an end, but a starting point to consider the work from other dimensions.

The conclusions and reflections of participants are also published and disseminated by the media and interested organisations.

Unity creates strength. By meeting at the conference, participants who are preparing for these meetings, and they are many, make their voices heard by policy makers and by administrative organisations that make decisions affecting them. Through preparing and organizing congresses, participants show that adult basic education learners decide and speak for themselves.

### VIA THE EUR-ALPHA PARTNER

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