



EAEA response to the proposal on 'Erasmus for all'

The European Association for the Education of Adults is an NGO with 128 members in 43 countries, representing non-formal adult education and learning on European level. EAEA and its members represent the whole spectrum of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education activities, including formal, non formal and informal learning, education and skill training.

EAEA welcomes the proposal on 'Erasmus for all' and agrees with the identified challenges for Education and Training. We also welcome the fact that the programme will support the participation of partners from non-EU countries. We especially welcome the fact that the Commission is planning an increase of 80% for adult education.

Nevertheless, EAEA has the impression that 'Erasmus for all' is mainly a Higher Education and student mobility programme and strongly feels that the current proposals needs to be re-balanced in order to fully support the EU and ET 2020 strategies. There are millions of people in Europe who are low-skilled and/or low-qualified and who have little opportunity to participate in learning, in society and in Europe. EAEA believes that the Commission should put a stronger emphasis on these groups and enable projects, policy support and mobility schemes that support them so that the programme takes the lifelong learning approach seriously and is truly 'for all'.

EAEA would like to underline the low participation of adults in lifelong learning and the low level of skills and qualifications of a large number of adults in Europe. In order to reach the 15% participation rate target for 2020 as well as to support the benchmark for higher education on the one hand and fewer school drop-outs on the other hand, strong adult education systems, providers, methodology, staff and provision across Europe is needed. More specifically, there is the need to increase the participation especially of adults with low qualifications who participate seven times less than higher qualified ones. Additionally, in times of a crisis that is not only financial but also concerns European cohesion and identity, adult education has to be the place for European active citizenship, which a strong adult education programme can further develop and promote.

The only answer to these challenges is to promote adult learning – on the one hand through policy and the New Agenda for Adult Learning but also through the corresponding programme.

EAEA therefore has these main proposals:

- Adult Education and Learning has to remain a sector of its own. It is desirable that there are close links with vocational training, but nevertheless **a distinct stream for non-formal and non-vocational adult education** is necessary in order to tackle the challenges mentioned above. This is not only a matter of administration and streamlining, but is of a highly symbolic meaning to member states and the adult education community, including EAEA members. To be subsumed under 'Erasmus Training' will signal to the adult education community that their work is neither recognized nor appreciated.



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- While we appreciate the proposed increase in budget, we understand that there is a high possibility that this increase will not be approved by the member states. As a consequence, the current minimum allocation would actually mean a decrease for adult education. We therefore need a minimum allocation that enables progress for adult learning in Europe! The 2% for Adult Education is completely inadequate in view of the demographic ageing of Europe and the need to increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning and therefore **at a very minimum this should be increased to 7% like schools and youth**. Taking into consideration that the adult education sector is very broad and accommodates a large number of societal concerns because of its non-formal nature (basic skills, creative and artistic activities, prison education, parents' education, non-formal learning for teachers, intercultural learning, migrants' learning, older people, health and well-being, etc.), an **assured** increase is necessary.
 - This programme should also **support the implementation of the New European Agenda for adult learning**. In order to achieve its ambitious agenda and results, it would be very useful to set objectives and targets for the different member states so that access to non-formal adult education and learning is ensured. In supporting this, the future programme has the real opportunity to boost progress and positive change in adult learning, which will mean an improvement in health, well-being, self-confidence, participation, creativity, personal development and employability for a large number of European citizens.
 - While we understand the need for efficiency, we would like to call the EC to balance the need for bigger and more efficient projects with the need to be **inclusive**. A lot of work in adult education (and other sectors) is done by small organizations, and they should still have the opportunity to participate in the new European Programme. We especially support the continuation of the **learning partnerships** which have been very successful for adult education.
 - EAEA regrets that the **mobility schemes for adult learners** have disappeared from the programme. Both Grundtvig workshops and senior volunteering have opened the opportunity for European participation to many people who would not have had the chance otherwise. Taking into consideration that a lot of money goes to students and even graduates who, in most countries, are already in a privileged situation, we think that some support should go to adult learners, too. Additionally, we see a problem of **discrimination** in the fact that young people's mobility and volunteering are strongly reinforced while those over 30 do not have this opportunity.

In the current crisis and the years after, Europe will need highly skilled workers, but also active citizens that support and promote the European idea and European values. We need creative and innovative people who are resilient and can overcome challenges and difficulties. We need people with all the key competences that improve their own but also other people's lives. We need citizens who support democracy, human rights and solidarity and do not seek refuge in hateful, nationalistic thinking. Adult education and learning are indispensable for achieving this.