

SPECIAL EDITION

Trends and Issues of Adult Learning in Europe

As is well known, EAEA has won a tender that is a study on the situation and development of adult education and which has a tight connection to the plan that the Commission is preparing to release a Communication on Adult Learning in Europe.

Although only the first draft of the study has been prepared so far, we think it is important to publish an extra issue of the newsletter for the Berlin conference and to publish a summary of some parts of the study, firstly in order to raise interest.

Besides the view and quality represented by the study, it is also important that the EAEA members get to know its contents and form an opinion, since we have to work together on the study and influencing the Communication and interpreting the tasks set therein in the future. So this is only the beginning to be able to have in-depth discussions on the future of adult education in 2006.

The summary has been prepared by the Budapest Link Office and Odyssee.

Additionally, EAEA is taking the opportunity to discuss the study with colleagues coming to the Berlin conference of the folkhighschools in the first week of May.

Please send your comments to mnt@nepfoiskola.hu and eaea-main@eaea.org. Thank you.

JANOS SZ. TOTH
PRESIDENT OF EAEA



This report and much more at www.eaea.org

EVENTS

4-5 May, Berlin, Germany
Conference: German Public Day of the Folkhighschools

9-13 May
GR3: European Project Planning and Management

11-13 May, Bäckaskog Castle, Sweden
6th ERDI Expert Seminar: Validation of non-formal and informal learning

18-20 May, Gdynia, Poland
Universities for regional development / EUCEN 15 year celebration

18-20 May, Bucharest, Romania
Science literacy and lifelong learning. Europe towards a knowledge-based society

18-21 May, Brussels, Belgium
Continuing Learning Opportunities for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities as a step towards Non-discrimination

20-23 May, Sofia, Bulgaria
GR3: Women crossing Borders

1-3 June University of Pitesti, Romania
Edu-World 2006: Education facing contemporary world issues

8-11 June, Heeze, the Netherlands
GR3: Women crossing Borders

8-11 June, Källvik, Finland
European Forum for Freedom in Education

15-26 June, Galilee College / Israel National Commission for UNESCO
16th Management of Higher Education Institutions Seminar

18 - 20 June, University of Bergen, Norway
Players, goals and strategies in enhancing the attractiveness of European universities

19-30 June, Bologna, Italy
GR3: ICT as an Instrument for Foreign Language Teaching

Adult Learning and Adult Education in Europe Today

The question that we wish to ask here is how to create an analytic and all encompassing account of the most important features of adult education in Europe today, especially in Policy, which can act as a prelude to sharpening our focus on the most salient tasks and challenges for policy and practice today and tomorrow. The summary of this section will include an overview on current legislation, (non)participation in adult learning, with the prominent issue of social inclusion as well as the problems caused by demographic change both through immigration and ageing of the population.

Legislation, Financial Systems and Related Policy Issues

European adult education legislation and financial systems cannot be separated from other areas of policy provision and so the aim is to look at all of these areas in the context of one another with the hope of producing a fully integrated picture. The established traditions of the Northern and western parts of Europe are assessed as well as looking at how the new member states of the European union, as well as the countries lying beyond their borders, have historically approached policy on adult education and how they are adapting to the more dynamic relations of an integrated Europe.

Even a brief look at some statistical databases reveals that in many European countries political responsibility for adult learning can be fragmented. Even in England (the possible exception), where in theory accountability lies with a single ministry, different parts of government find themselves with varied responsibilities in the field of adult education. This fragmentation clearly calls for changes but with this come many problems especially relating to how we should monitor and assess policy issues within any given country but more

pressingly, how we should conduct comparisons between countries.

Each system is different and an obvious divide is visible between northern and western Europe where adult education is often institutionalised and firmly structured, and southern and eastern countries where various bodies and social structures supply the impetus and adult learning often takes place in work of social settings rather than in specific institutions.

An Overview on Legislation

Having said adult education is more institutionalised in the northern and western nations of Europe, legislation relating to adult learning in this region is not the norm. However, some countries, or states within a federal country, do have laws, such as some German Lander. On the whole laws that have a bearing on adult learning are part of other policy areas and this leads to a major problem, namely that, adult education (especially informal and non-formal) lacks a visible face and is often perceived as being part of another field.

However regulations on informal/non-formal adult education do exist and they tend to fall into the following four categories.

- 1 regulations offering public financial support to providers of adult education
- 2 regulations establishing individual entitlements to educational leave
- 3 regulations offering financial incentives to learners to take part in education
- 4 regulations establishing a framework for the recognition of prior, non-formal and informal learning.

Adult Education in Lifelong Learning Strategies

According to the requirement of the ET 2010 programme developing lifelong learning strategies is a priority for most countries. However, the approach towards this issue differs from nation to nation as does the way it is put into practice. The place that is given to general (non-formal/informal) adult education within these strategies also varies. The focus tends to be on either formal education or vocational training. Education that has different aims such as personal growth, the increase of self esteem, active citizenship or social inclusion are overlooked to a certain extent.

Some of the major issues on which policy debates focus are as follows:

- **Funding:** This is clearly one of the most integral areas in policy formation on lifelong learning and it is also one of the most contentious.
- **Stimulating Demand:** It is especially important to increase the demand for adult learning among groups who are most at risk such as older people, disabled people and those with low levels of education.
- **Flexible Supply:** This can be seen as the flipside of stimulation of demand and focuses on the idea that the learner should be at the centre of educational offers.
- **Disadvantaged Groups:** How to include these groups in the process of adult learning.

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Discussion: Diversity, Harmonisation, Subsidiarity and the Place of Legislation

There is a consensus that adult education needs to be given financial security and in order for this to happen it needs to be provided for in law. Those laws that already exist in individual states in Europe as well as those that are currently being formulated have many common features. However, any attempt to move towards harmonisation because of these similarities should be resisted. A policy of harmonisation contravenes the principle of subsidiarity. It is inappropriate to talk of *European adult education*; it would be better and more legitimate to speak of adult education in European states, or idealistically of *adult education with a European dimension*. Each individual state has an important role to play in shaping adult education, this is of no doubt. However, at present most are restricted to providing administrative and financial frameworks and any that were to go further in law could be called pioneers.

In nearly all European countries it was agreed in national consultations in 2000 to adopt the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. The debate about lifelong learning set off by the Memorandum and its subsequent Communication have led to something like universal discussion on the importance of European-oriented adult education, and yet the effect on national education policies, including legislation and funding, is still by no means sufficiently sustained.

Trends in Participation – Barriers, Data and Expectations

The first question that begs asking is who participates in adult learning? More provocatively though we might ask who does *not* participate in adult learning? a question which may provide some startling answers.

Despite recognition of the benefits of education and training to groups and individuals at risk of social exclusion there

is strong and consistent evidence that the participation of disadvantaged groups in all kinds of adult education (formal, informal and non-formal) continues to be lower than that of other groups. For the 25 EU countries we find

Participation in Formal Adult Education by previous educational attainment:

Low 1.4%
Medium 5.2%
High 8.5%

Participation in Non-formal Adult Education by previous educational attainment:

Low 6.5%
Medium 16.4%
High 30.9%

Participation in Informal Adult Education by previous educational attainment:

Low 18.4%
Medium 34.1%
High 55.2%

(LFS ad hoc module on lifelong learning, 2003)

Only few countries conduct comprehensive national surveys on participation in adult learning – for example the National Adult Learners Survey in UK, and the Berichtssystem Weiterbildung in Germany. Even where they exist such statistics are seldom comparable because of the differences of definitions and categories. Often statistics are available only for certain sectors or types of providers; often they focus only on formal and/or vocational adult learning. The Socrates I project ESNAL pointed in 2000 to a number shortcomings of existing statistics. These still persist. A first attempt to establish a comprehensive harmonised statistics for adult learning, including non-formal and informal learning, is the prospective Adult Education Survey proposed by the Eurostat Task Force.

Even if national studies and statistics are not directly comparable, a number of common participation patterns appear throughout a wide range of such studies, for example

- Participation in adult learning declines with growing age – especially in vocational and work-

related fields

- Participation rates increase as the level of education of the participants rises
- The worse the social situation, the less likely people are to take part in adult education
- Participation is lower in rural than in urban areas
- Particular ethnic minorities take considerably less part in adult learning than others.

What are the Causes of Non-participation?

Demand centred causes of non-participation include a lack of motivation and confidence, problems of social exclusion and a lack of information about possible opportunities. Supply centred causes include barriers such as a lack of guidance and counselling, the high cost of learning, those outside employment are not in a position to benefit from work based learning and those in low skilled work often find the same problem.

All these obstacles are well-known in principle. Some have been subjected to research and analysis for decades, and numerous projects are underway in European countries to address them with a view to promoting access especially for under-represented, disadvantaged groups. However, for this to happen we need more in depth and comparable evaluation data on the subject. Working to remove these kinds of practical infrastructural barriers alone is not sufficient. Rather, a learning culture needs to be fostered though which attitudes can be changed and motivation increased. This involves motivation on the part of the learners but it can also be improved by good external promotion of adult education.

Participation can also be increased by making a shift towards informal learning, and in turn exploiting the learning potential of places such as social houses and cultural institutions.

More studies are needed to highlight the difference between *education* and *learning* and so shed light on which should be used and in what context. All of this should be done without losing sight of the fact that

quality of provision should not be overlooked. Participation rates alone say little about the value of learning and thus monitoring of quality should be of increased importance.

Social Inclusion and Adult Education

Before looking at ways in which adult education may be able to provide a platform for social inclusion it would be beneficial first to define exactly what *social exclusion* means. It can be defined as:

"A process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, lack of basic competences and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination . . . They have little access to power and decision making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control of the decisions that affect their day to day lives."

Many people suffer from social exclusion, most notably individuals without basic school education, unskilled workers, immigrants and refugees, some minority ethnic groups, drug addicts and ex-offenders as well as the elderly. The question at hand then, is can adult learning help to alleviate these problems and in doing so foster social inclusion?

In many countries the people that fall into the categories listed above, as well as other groups at risk of social exclusion, are seen as the targets of many policy decisions.

This is because it is well understood that upgrading the skills of these groups can boost economic performance. The OECD's *Education at a Glance* provides evidence that education and training increases the job prospects and earnings of the individuals. Not only this but providing education for the groups most at risk of social exclusion is also seen as the best way of providing welfare in many countries. However, the benefits of adult education are not merely centred around labour market and financial concerns but also on other, wider benefits. *The Wider benefits of Learning* (2004) shows many health benefits, increased racial tolerance and political participation and a further study made by NIACE (1999) shows evidence for positive mental and physical health benefits related to learning.

The wider benefits of lifelong learning are

gaining recognition in some countries, but as we have noted above, and to an increasing extent of late, in the majority of countries education and training for disadvantaged adults is seen primarily as a means of access to and progression in the labour market. The Commission's *Joint Report on Social Inclusion*, which summarises results of the examination of the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion (2003-2005), states the importance of education in tackling social exclusion and building inclusion in civil society is insufficiently acknowledged: 'the interconnections between progress in learning and other dimensions that affect people's lives such as health, environment, family and community circumstances are not generally well represented'.

No doubt more research on and dissemination of successful practice is needed to show how the wider benefits of learning, and inclusive lifelong learning strategies, can be planned, developed and implemented in all European countries.

Population Changes – Ageing Population

Throughout history the demography of Europe has always been changing and for many different reasons. In today's Europe there are two main trends that characterise the population changes of the majority of EU countries, especially the old 15. They are, namely, an ageing population and an increase in immigration. The reasons for these trends are well known and do not need to be explained here but the effects that they might have on adult learning, and the way in which adult learning can affect those whose constitute the demographic change are of crucial importance.

The problems that this is starting to cause are clear. Expenditure on old age pensions is rising sharply, expenditure on health care will also increase with an ageing population and decisions of how to spend public funds will also be made more difficult as a need to remain competitive in the global market, and thus lower taxation, competes directly with the expenditure requirements set out above. This brings up questions about who should pay for the increased levels of

spending of education and training that will be needed to supplement the skills of an ageing work force. Discussion will need to take place about spreading the cost between the state, individual learners and employers.

The Lisbon agreement set a target for increasing the participation rate for older workers (aged 50 to 64) in the labour market. It identifies lifelong learning as having a contribution to play, not least through improving older peoples' skills and adaptability. The European Union has agreed ambitious targets for increasing the active involvement of older workers in the labour market:

- 50% of the EU population in the 55-64 age group should be in employment by 2010; and
- Progressive increase of about five years in the effective average age at which people stop working by 2010, resulting in an average retirement age of 64.

How should individual countries go about carrying this out though? The Commission has recommended a joint approach based on four main points.

- 1 Focusing investment on enabling older people to update their skills
- 2 Findings ways for employers to meet the needs of older workers
- 3 Changing the view among employers that early retirement is a good way of downsizing
- 4 Reviewing tax and benefit systems and encouraging people to work on rather than retire

Population Changes – Immigration

In numerous ways immigration can be seen as the counter balance to an ageing population in Europe. However, it is not as simple as the incoming migrants filling the holes in the labour market left by the ageing workforce. Rather, despite many countries' immigration policies requiring a certain level of skills for entry, there are many knowledge and skills requirements for the new residents.

The labour market position of migrants, or non-EU nationals, is substantially worse than that of EU nationals, with an unemployment rate twice as high. The Kok report (2003) finds the main cause for this situation to be inappropriate or low levels of skill, as well as cultural and language barriers.

Ray (2004) argues that member states have recognised the crucial role of education in addressing social exclusion, and are building integration policies and programs such as skills training programs that attempt to promote education for newcomers, their children and in some cases even long-established migrants. Labour market-related immigration is about letting in migrants as trainees and highly qualified workers. The controlled immigration of qualified workers increases the supply of labour and labour market participation as a whole, generating growth as a result and ultimately helping stabilise the social insurance systems. Since immigration should not be allowed conflict with reducing unemployment, immigration legislation should however be flexible, allowing for uncertainty over the future demand for labour.

Beyond the policies of individual countries though, the Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* shows lifelong learning as crucial for every citizen without discrimination, if Europe is to become more prosperous, inclusive, tolerant and democratic. It mentions learning mobility as one of the key factors, for Europe to become the most dynamic knowledge society in the world. One basic skill for successful mobility is intercultural competence, making the inclusion of multicultural competences necessary in the training of all people involved in teaching and tutoring. The Network on Intercultural Learning in Europe (NILE), a Grundtvig 4 project, mentions a need for stronger anti-discrimination policies and also for more recognition and opportunities for democratic participation by ethnic and religious minority groups from diverse cultural backgrounds 'who should at the same time be encouraged to identify with or at least to feel a sense of belonging to the country where they have settled'.

Quality and Development in Adult Education

Assessing the quality of provision in adult education is clearly of great importance; as it is right though the educational spectrum. This can be done through various forms of audit, assessment, monitoring and reporting. However, due to the distinct, varied, and even fragmented nature of the adult education venture, and especially in informal and non-formal learning, it can be difficult to carry out such fundamental quality assurance tasks.

Here are some of the purposes of quality assurance:

- To ensure a high level of outcome of learning including relevance and appropriateness of the learning to the needs of the learners
- To ensure the efficiency of the learning process and its organisation, including targeted use of resources
- To ensure transparency about educational provision for learners
- To ensure transparency about learning outcomes for learners and other actors, thus facilitating the recognition of learning achievements and transition between different learning pathways
- To make learning more attractive and increase motivation, especially for disadvantaged groups
- To enable equal access to learning for all who wish and/or need to learn.

In order to meet these requirements, quality assurance mechanism must be applied at three different levels each of which requires some small change in the way the quality assessment tools are applied. The first of these is at organisational level. Quality management models have been introduced into adult education organisations in many countries. Most, such as ISO and EFQM, have been adopted from the business sector. These models concentrate on organisational processes rather than on the quality of the outcome. This is a problem as is the fact that many institutions are unable to cope with the administrative workload that such quality assurance models bring. The second level is the learner level in which the main concern is how to assess and document learning outcomes and in some countries

initiatives are underway to develop tools that will help to recognise quality in informal and non-formal learning. These developments are to be further promoted as a means of making learning outcomes visible to learners and other stakeholders. The third quality assurance level is at system level. That is, how does quality assessment figure in legislation? In some countries, dedicated institutes or expert bodies support the development and monitoring of adult education and learning – some are government appointed like the Finnish Adult Education Council, some are NGOs such as the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales), the German Institute for Adult Education, and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

The Review suggests the following conclusions about quality in adult education

- Adult education at national level should be seen as an educational field in its own right, and receive appropriate attention in terms of monitoring and quality assurance.
- At European level a working group could be established to elaborate a quality assurance framework for general adult education.
- Quality monitoring systems in adult education should attend more to the learners and learning outcomes. Models for the assessment and recognition of prior learning may help here.
- Policies should be developed to further linkage of existing national models for the recognition of prior learning to the European Qualifications Framework in order to increase comparability and transparency.

Monitoring learning processes and outcomes alone, however, is not sufficient. Alongside this kind of quality assurance it is vital that adult education staff are allowed to develop professionally so that they can provide the highest quality service. To ensure that this happens is a massive task because it is important to realise for their professional development that staff include a wide range of different actors with different work activities,

occupational status and educational backgrounds. It is very difficult to create an all encompassing picture of the state of the profession in Europe but six activity fields can help us to understand the professional development of adult education staff. These are *teaching, management, counselling and guidance, media, programme planning and support*. Although some initiatives already exist through which to improve these fields much still needs to be done and comparative studies would help to identify and disseminate best practice.



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Could we understand African music a bit better?

There were reactions from across Spain of Zambian government's and opposition's decision campaigns. They were both effective pieces of African singing and music with surprising campaign talk. Such a message can be pretty influential. It had a deep impact on me and although I missed the rhythm of the music the election increased my ability to know my way around the campaign. I remember this because the average EU citizen might be in the same position now, trying to find their way around the options and talk about the unacknowledged Labour Strategy. I am not talking about the people of Zambian now. I am talking about EU 25 citizens, who have to get their share of the Labour returns package at the half time of the Labour Process, which consists of 20 main objectives and 120 sub-objectives with 117 different initiatives. The reporting system for 25 member states adds up to no fewer than 300 annual reports. The number of studies published before the Spring Summit is also very high in the number of Commission papers as well as the Presidency Conclusions, the comments of political groups, international organisations, industry federations and NGOs. President Barroso was right when he said this nobody read all of them.

This is one reason why the board of EAEA has decided to initiate a direct dialogue with members of the European Parliament. I am a member of the Committee of Education and Culture on the relationship between the Labour Strategy and lifelong learning and the more practical and more successful contribution of adult education and lifelong learning development. We would like to thank Mr. J. St. Simon, Vice-Chairman of the Committee of Education and Culture for taking upon him the role of the leading party to the EP reception as well as the UK National Institute of Continuing Education (NIACE) for their contribution. The reception takes place in the EP, building at Brussels, 10th of April at 6 pm. (For further information see the EAEA website)

We agree that for everyone who is committed to the success of EU in the future the Labour Strategy will be a top priority in some years. We agree that the first step when towards direct dialogue brings concrete results we will be able to carry on with.

June St. Simon
President of EAEA

EVENTS

- Responsible Competences
Corporate Social Responsibility
Driving European Competences
in a Global Economy
19th April 2005, Brussels
- From Bologna to Bologna and beyond
20 EU25N Conference
28-30 April 2005
University of Bergen, Norway
- Citizen Learning
HEALTHY May 11-12 2005
In connection to the development of thinking on the role of lifelong learning in developing active citizenship and civil society, ACADET is organising a national conference as one of the activities to mark the European Year of Citizenship through Education.
- 2005-05-12 - 2004-05-15
14th International Conference on Teacher Education
Theory and Practice in the European Context
Adult Education, Liberty, Fraternity, Equality?
May 12-14
Turku, Finland
- 2005-05-14 - 2005-05-17
Council of Europe Summit in Poland
Summit under the Polish Chairmanship
Prepared by the Council of Europe's
Sector action

New Board of EAEA elected

I have attempted to read through at least a part of them and ended up drawing the following conclusions, simple criteria as a 2004-05 citizen instead of a 2004-05 citizen as I did not want to do that in those and far better in all this. The other very noticeable thing is the widespread dissatisfaction concerning the realisation of the goals set in 2000. The list of reasons and areas of the dissatisfaction represents many, several opinions. One of the major ones has been laid little attention in the central role of education and training in social cohesion and competitiveness and in the successful realisation of the Labour Strategy. From the EAEA and point of view, we would prefer simple words and less conversation on the citizens' part.

Board 2004-2006

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Tasks and Challenges – Which Policy Choices?

Combining Quality, Diversity and Innovation in Finding the Way Forward

As we have seen, non-formal adult education is richly diverse. To meet diverse and changing learner needs it needs to be flexible and adaptable. Although not a negative factor, a variety of national, regional and even local policies persist, despite the quest for a European framework of lifelong learning. Thus adult education in Norway is very different from adult education in Poland. Competition, felt as an obstacle in one country, can be a driving force for social change in another.

It is well known that non-formal adult education is marginalised and underfunded. However, there is a strong sense of solidarity with participants, especially the disadvantaged. Adult education can be seen as the practice of social inclusion and a force for social cohesion. Can we find any one way forward to develop this further? Can we find a single model or structure? Or will the quest for one solution destroy the richness, variety and diversity which makes non-formal adult education so vital, lively and tailor made?

no simple agreed definition. It includes a wide range of policies and practices in different settings, sectors and countries.

There are a number of reasons for recognition of different forms of learning and processes vary according to these purposes. Issues of recognition also vary across different kinds of institutions.

Adult learning and recognition in universities

In university lifelong learning or adult education, the purpose is often to obtain entry to a programme of study without the usual entry qualifications, or to obtain part of a diploma. In some countries such as France and the UK this is already possible to a certain extent. In others it is legally impossible for this to happen.

Recognition in vocational training

In most countries in Europe there is considerable reform underway to shift the base of vocational training to competences and outputs rather than knowledge and inputs. Reform of this kind should make the recognition of no-formal and informal learning easier, although so far the take-up in most countries is patchy.

General adult education

Very little formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning goes on in general adult education. However, it is very common for the non-formal and informal learning of the participants in adult education to be 'recognised' in the design and delivery of the learning programme. Often one of the main purposes of adult education programmes is the development of self-confidence and awareness of the skills and competencies that the individual or group possess.

Volunteering

Many adults volunteer, and many governments depend on volunteers to provide a range of social and community support services.

To do this we can look to the rich culture and well developed infrastructure of the Nordic countries. Also in coming years further professional development will not only be necessary but inevitable. Innovation and further professionalism are also necessary to raise the quality of provision; therefore knowledge transfer should be stimulated and extended.

Recognising and Validating Different Forms of Learning - the Relationship to European Credit Transfer in VET

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is part of a larger debate about the knowledge society and lifelong learning. It is also part of political and inter-ministerial discussions at national and European level in the Bologna and Copenhagen processes. However, it has

Current developments and problems

A growing body of professionals can see benefit in developing different kinds of recognition arrangements for different purposes, and there is enormous commitment and creativity among these professionals to developing new practice. However, there are many problems including a lack of awareness, a lack of guidance and training, a lack of funding, a lack of provision and in some countries legal barriers as well.

Basic Skills and Key Competencies - Emerging Issues

Until the mid 90s, the traditional approach towards basic skills in Europe was generally narrow. Lack of basic skills was identified as a literacy problem and the successful completion of basic schooling implied possession of reading, writing and numeracy skills. This was mainly treated as a part of formal and initial education.

Only the formal literacy of adults was taken into consideration. Governments and education authorities were convinced that more or less everything was in order, that there was not much to do, that the problem existed mainly in third world countries. However, the International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD, 1997; OECD, 2000) presented evidence of the nature and magnitude of literacy gaps in the OECD countries.

There has been no concrete motivation to carry out concrete EU level surveys similar to those carried out by OECD. However, one of the eight groups of the Commission's Concrete Objectives Work Programme dealing with basic skills and key competencies, has concluded that the key issue in the field of adult education was that all adults, particularly the less advantaged, should be enabled to develop and maintain key competencies throughout their lives. Successful initiatives are characterised by some of the following features: A thorough need for analysis, research into new methodologies, a cohesive infrastructure, providing work based training, making the needs of the learner a priority and providing incentives to learners.

The 2004 report of the basic skills working group and the proposal on the key competencies for lifelong learning set out concrete recommendations and focused on how to approach the problem at a policy level. Also NGOs have started European-level work in basic skills development, an example of which is the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning project run by the EAEA and the fact that the EAEA chose basic skills and key competencies as the subjects of the Grundtvig Award in 2004. The project entitled *Promoting Social Inclusion Through Basic Skills Learning* includes a consortium mostly of EAEA member countries. It formulated and tested working tools to promote key competencies at regional and local levels, with contributions by eight countries (C, H, CZ, DK, ES, HU, PL, RO, UK).

Implications for action

Some desirable actions are as follows.

- 1 The significant differences existing between members in the field of basic skills and key competencies should be reduced
- 2 Adult learning practice should be reviewed and the development of basic skills and key competencies activities integrated into the basic activities of all kinds of adult learning providers.
- 3 Advocacy work should present the results and good practice of more advanced members for others to learn from and use.
- 4 There should be extensive dissemination to understand and use the good practices collected so far with the support of the Commission.
- 5 All this will only be possible on the basis of detailed surveys and developmental working programmes.

Active Citizenship and Adult Learning

The issues of active citizenship have come to the fore since the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning was released. Its importance is universally acknowledged though little has been done to have it recognised, enforced and extended into the practice of lifelong and adult learning.

A high level and quality of active citizenship carries special social benefits, an attribute of European society without which it will be impossible to maintain and improve global competitiveness and a safe and successful market economy.

Since the beginning of the 21st interest in education for democratic citizenship has been renewed. Recent parallel initiatives in the field are taking place elsewhere in Europe as well as internationally. In both established democracies and newly established democratic states such as those of Eastern and Central Europe, there is recognition that democracy is fragile and depends on the active engagement of citizens, not just in voting, but in developing and participating in sustainable and cohesive communities. This applies to the 25 member states of the EU as well as to a wider circle.

Active citizenship learning has a dual approach, and adult learning for social cohesion should always incorporate two dimensions

- Education for and with the disadvantaged population
- Education and training for and with civil servants, teachers and others in the broader civil society who interact with these groups.

Learning active citizenship is part of fighting discrimination by including all citizens without discrimination, underlining the importance of the citizenship dimension and bringing into force an anti-racism directive. The knowledge economy also needs citizenship skills including private and public services, consumers as well as individuals. There should also be provision for unemployed people. Also, renewed governance of adult learning institutes contributes to the citizenship skills of the clients:

Adult learning cannot succeed without comprehensive identification, accounting for, integration and development of adult learning activities for active citizenship. A wide range of adult learning activities aimed at active citizenship development should be integrated into the Common European Adult Learning Framework. Producing visible and measurable active citizenship benefits and integrating its

indicators would bring many other benefits.

Social Cohesion – Responding to the Challenges of Social Inclusion

Social cohesion is an issue now recognised as vitally important to both the social and the economic health of modern European societies. There are a rich variety of examples of successful approaches within the countries covered by this study, including individuals and groups at risk of social exclusion, in adult education.

The two examples described below have been chosen not only because they illustrate the variety of successful initiatives and methods adopted by policy makers and practitioners but also because they demonstrate the wide benefits to disadvantaged individuals and groups of gaining access to and succeeding in adult education and lifelong learning.

Employing Women’s Potential

This was a Grundtvig 1 project that won the first annual EAEA Grundtvig award. This is an example of a method of empowering members of disadvantaged groups to be advocates for learning which can and has been used successfully in other environments and for other learning goals. Trade unions have recruited ‘learning champions’ to support and guide fellow low-skilled workers into educational programmes

Learn Direct

Learndirect is a national advice line and network of learning providers in the UK. Callers can contact the advice line by telephone, or use its website to enquire about learning opportunities and gain advice on courses and careers from qualified staff. In 2004-05 Learndirect received 790,000 calls, of which 244,000 came from people with low previous educational attainments. The success of Learndirect with disadvantaged groups was investigated through case study interviews. These revealed that its appeal was due to its affordability, anonymity and accessibility. Also its success can be

attributed to its high profile in the national media.

These, and many other programmes suggest a number of ways in which adult education can support the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, and combat the risks of social exclusion experienced by millions of European citizens and residents. Here we take up six areas for consideration in developing socially inclusive adult education policies and practices:

- 1 Raising Awareness of the Benefits of Adult Learning to Combat Social Exclusion
- 2 Valuing Non-Vocational Adult Education
- 3 Developing personalised learning programmes
- 4 New learning partnerships to combat social exclusion
- 5 Information, guidance and counselling
- 6 Learning from ESF and Grundtvig Projects

An Ageing Population and Intercultural Learning – New Challenges

The ethos of inclusiveness and integration underpins current policy thinking in the adult education sector. It is well illustrated by the trend towards inter-culturalism and the Grundtvig 4network PEFETE (Pan-European Forum for the Education of The Elderly) distinguishes four main strengths of senior citizens’ education

- 1 *Self-directed and experiential learning:* senior citizens are often personally involved in their education; they have a lifetime of experience to offer others and generally feel strongly involved in the education process
- 2 *An immense volunteer reserve:* many activities in senior citizens’ education are peer-to-peer activities; senior citizens work as volunteers in senior citizens’ education

3 *Contributing to cultural heritage and human capital:* senior citizens can play an important role in relation to cultural heritage.

4 *Wide range of providers:* senior citizens’ education is offered by a very wide range of providers; universities and other organisations of formal education, commercial institutes, self-help organisations, local groups of volunteers, etc.

Different issues are prevalent in different European regions. Competency development predominates in formal adult education in Western and Northern Europe as the acquisition of knowledge becomes less important. Validation instruments for non-formal and informal learning are being developed in the context of life-long learning and employability. In Southern Europe adult education still concentrates mainly on young adults even though the population is well aware of the benefits of education. Eastern European states still struggle with a generation of highly educated senior citizens who had to leave the labour force at an earlier age than they expected and now find themselves facing unexpected socio-economic challenges, especially extremely low pensions.

Many questions still remain as to how to approach the education of the ageing population. For example should integrated activities be used whereby senior citizens’ education is firmly based in existing adult education (as in Germany)? It is considered very important in many countries that education be accessible to all age groups. Should an inter-generational approach be introduced? This can help to build more cohesive neighbourhoods and fosters an understanding between the generations. Cyprus is a good example of this although most initiatives encouraging interaction between students and senior citizens are a result of the commitment and devotion of administrators and officers in various departments and services, rather than of national policy.

Investment and Return in Lifelong Learning

In 2000, The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning set the objective of significantly increasing investments in lifelong learning as well as improving their effectiveness. In 2003 the report of the Lisbon process found that far from looking forward in terms of raising investment things had taken a step back or stayed the same. Investment is also still supply- rather than demand-oriented. Most reports, especially those written over the last decade, tell us about the drop in financial support given to non-vocational adult education, and the restrictions and cut-backs that have resulted.

However, numerous financing incentives have taken the form of pilot projects being introduced (only partially) in member countries. They use different methods of reducing taxes on profits, levy/grant schemes like grant disbursements, individual learning accounts, and learning vouchers. Despite these incentives an increase in co-financing by individuals, public authorities and corporations is inevitable, as is increasing financing efficiency at institutional, corporation, local, regional, national and community levels.

What action should be taken on this issue then? Eight propositions are made here:

- 1 Visibility needed for return on all forms of adult learning
- 2 Changing the cultural paradigm
- 3 Ideology-free indicators and benchmarks
- 4 Decentralisation and connection of policies
- 5 Economic and/or non-economic benefit of learning?
- 6 Renew labour market policy?
- 7 Levelling the financial playing field
- 8 Who owns individual competencies?

Expanding the Adult Education and Learning Research Base

The history of European research policy started in 1984 with the adoption of the first RTD framework programme. It was only ten years later, in 1994, that a socio-economic research programme - TSER - was created under the Fourth Framework Programme (FP4). This activity was continued in FP5 with the key action of 'Improving the socio-economic knowledge base'. These two actions allowed the financing of 345 projects, and the networking of at least 2 500 teams of European research workers, corresponding to a financial effort of more than 260 million Euros on the part of the Union.

Challenges for future research agendas

The new paradigms and practices of lifelong learning have to be supported, underpinned and filled out by means of series of surveys, analyses and research which feeds innovation in the understanding and practice of lifelong learning. We therefore make five suggestions here for promoting stronger research co-operation especially between universities in the field of lifelong learning at a European level and beyond:

- 1 Concentration on a small number of more targeted topics
- 2 Mapping excellence
- 3 Training and mobility of researchers
- 4 Research infrastructures
- 5 Boosting private investment in research



European Level and Global Co-operation in Adult Education

Here we take note more directly of internationalisation and internationalism in adult education and lifelong learning. The discussions that were initiated by the UNESCO international Conferences on Adult Education (Helsingör 1949, Montreal 1960, Tokyo 1972, Paris 1985 and Hamburg 1997) were milestones in the development of adult education as a separate field of education requiring its own regulatory and institutional framework of policies, legislation and financial arrangements which would also strengthen the profession through pre-service and in-service training, research, methods and the media. In 1976, UNESCO put these together in its *Recommendations on the Development of Adult Education*. This anticipated extraordinarily clearly the view of adult education that still prevails today, as both a late phase of the education continuum and a separate component or sector of education.

The work of OECD (which is frequently referred to elsewhere in this study) is also of great importance. As early as the end of the sixties it had adopted the term *recurrent education* to call for a form of lifelong learning to bring the labour force up to date with economic and technological changes by means of time out for education and training. The OECD is now more than ever a proponent of lifelong learning. As we have seen, its numerous research studies have proved to be significant milestones in conceptual development.

As an overview to this topic globalisation means that issues important to Europe are also being addressed in 'smart' competitor regions, not necessarily carrying the same historical baggage as Europe, which can be a barrier to change. On the other hand wise tolerance and valuing of tradition and diversity, which builds on the indigenous wisdom and expertise of European ways, may provide the essential underpinnings for success in carrying recommendations through its successful and sustainable action.

First draft of findings, key issues and recommendations - to be discussed

What does this report tell us?

It tells us that the lifelong learning of all Europeans is necessary for a successful, prosperous and harmonious European society. This is widely recognised in national and European documents from the late nineties. It is embedded in objectives and targets adopted for itself by the Community and by many of its individual members.

However, specific actions involving the allocation of resources and monitoring and reporting on results have not generally followed.

Where records exist they show serious shortfalls against targets. The collection of data differs between member states, making comparison and the shared development of good practice difficult.

The most important recommendation is that it is time to take these issues firmly in hand, and to make transparent the needs, policies and resource implications.

There are four obstacles to making real progress. First there is fuzziness about what is meant and really needed, and secondly ambivalence and reservation about acting firmly, especially over hard indicators. Thirdly there is genuine difficulty in identifying and measuring the most important aspects, as these are indeed the most elusive and intangible. If we measure the immeasurable we distort and reduce it. If we fail to measure we neglect and ignore it. The fourth difficulty is that immediate and urgent priorities are usually economic, and relate to skill shortages. All aspects are important, especially with changes in the population's age profile, and high levels of migration.

The usual focus is on immediate skill shortages. But for a strong, successful sustainable Europe the labour market now also tends to require more generic vocational skills, which are less tangible and less clearly seen as an urgent

necessity. Labour market needs also benefit from and spill over into the wider field of 'soft skills'. They gain from non-formal educational settings and approaches, and from informal and 'accidental' learning.

Creating a good social learning environment is thus important for the much larger numbers involved in the long term, but harder to measure and therefore to finance. It involves many policy portfolios, not just a ministry for schools and education.

We should be clear that there are vital social / civic, political / democratic and equity objectives for sustainable Europe. These stand in their own right as essential requirements. They also underpin and feed into economic and labour market needs, especially for the longer term.

The social and the economic both matter. They are connected, but should not be confused; one should not hide behind the other. The key point of focus and linkage is the individual learner as a unique and 'integrated' being.

Indicators that are transparent and realistic are required to show so far as possible volume, trends and quality of attainment, also identifiable distinct costs. The European Community and its members can then see and compare, removing the mist which may obscure inefficiency on the one hand and a failure of political will on the other.



Key messages

Lifelong learning is essential. Adult education is its essential fourth pillar, alongside initial schooling, higher education and vocational training. It includes education for economic, civic and social purposes. It requires informal, non-formal and formal learning settings. It is contributing to achieve the Lisbon goals, which favours equitable and sustainable development and shared prosperity. This is important for all partners in modern societies in all sectors and at all levels.

1. Adult learning culture and arrangements must therefore permeate all public sectors and portfolios, as well as the work of all private and third sector organisations.

Adult education is not an isolated island, but strongly connected with social and economical developments in contemporary society.

2. The quality of adult education is relying on moving into networks and collaboration with social movements, NGO as well as with enterprises looking for social corporate responsibility. Professional development of adult education staff and train the trainers have to be stimulated, supported and funded and mobility of adult educations staff should be encouraged and facilitated.

It is essential that the many diverse ways, settings and forms of adult learning be recognised, valued and supported so far as resources allow, including the use of adequate public funds where these are needed. This is especially true for high priority excluded and disadvantaged individuals and groups. Therefore

3. The idea of a Common European

Adult Learning Framework (CEALF) is helpful in order to be able to make optimal use individually, socially and economically of benefits at national and European levels, and to increase these, maintaining and extending the diversity of adult learning based in national traditions. It should offer a means to monitor and compare approaches, progress and outcomes so that the European partners can work together, exchange good practice, and improve the volume, quality, economic and social utility of adult learning.

Social cohesion in support of social inclusion is now recognised as essential to the ESM. The social fabric is strained by significant population changes having social and cultural as well as economic consequences.

Inclusive lifelong learning is needed to mitigate and remove new disparities and inequities of age, access to resources, and social participation arising from changing demography and the migration of workers and of different cultural and ethnic groups throughout and from beyond Europe.

4. Therefore governments and public authorities should pay special attention to less advantaged groups, including specific age groups. Adult learning must be always available and easily accessible at all levels and in all learning sites throughout life.

Objectives for Carrying out the Aims of the Key Messages

How, then, to give practical effect to these key messages a requirements?

1. Improve the quality and efficiency of adult learning.

Non-formal and informal learning are most effective for motivating and involving the most disadvantaged. European policy-making and indicators must include measures of trends in adult learning towards wider inclusion or towards greater inequality of access and outcomes on the part of adult and older learners, especially the 60% now shown to be non-participants.

2. International adult learning

indicators and benchmarks

as proposed in post-Lisbon goals for 2010 and 2013 are therefore now an urgent necessity.

3. A culture of adult learning must be nurtured as a core European characteristic.

This requires sustained campaigning using all possible means and media to reach and permeate the consciousness of each individual as well as every social partner and sector.

4. Those working in many different roles as facilitators of adult learning must have initial and continuing in-service professional development and support. This must include a high level of mobility and exchange of good practice within the Community.

5. The knowledge society is fast changing. Some jobs change substantially or disappear. New jobs emerge. In this fast-changing world short-term vocational skill training has only short-term use. Broader learning of skills and competencies is required by employers and workers. Adult learning including broader non-vocational education and training must therefore be included in the EQF.

6. This implies reversing the old order of priorities. Providers of adult education should take into account the integrative self-directed learning (including use of ICT) of individual learners. Personal competence is the first priority with social competence including attitudes following, and specific knowledge and skills training having less significance. This is necessary for economic success even in the quite short to medium term.

7. To avoid waste and repetition, an adult learning validation framework must be compatible with ECVET. This will open up credit recognition, accumulation, transfer, and mobility in line with policies for the expanded European Community..

8. Large sectors of the adult age

community remain at a serious educational disadvantage in many countries. This is exacerbated by population movement and by the rising longevity of older people with only modest initial schooling. Highly effective personalised basic skills (BS) and key competence (KC) programmes must be provided. Frequently these will be most efficiently and effectively provided through civil society organisations at local community levels.

9. Adult learning guidance and counselling services must be developed as part of the infrastructure of lifelong learning. Mobile forms can reach out to social partners, civic communities, families and individuals. A particular challenge is to support learning counselling offered to small and medium sized companies.

10. Active citizenship, social cohesion, intercultural learning In future more than the 20% of the population of the European Union will come from outside. Improving social cohesion, civic participation and economic growth requires a huge process of intercultural learning provision both for native Europeans and for the incoming population.

11. Demographic challenges of an ageing population

A programme promoting health, active social life and flexible further employment is needed in adult learning. This should build on existing good practice and take account of new knowledge and research such as the OECD-co-ordinated brain research.

12. Decentralisation, local learning centres and local partnerships

Networks of learning providers at local and regional levels and the linking of learning sites can increase social capital, and develop competitiveness and economic innovation. The social economy, a third economy, or protected labour market employment and learning and social welfare programmes are also included in strengthening the relationship between local economic development and adult

learning. An important goal of adult learning is to improve institutional governance. This applies as much to the public sector as to the transformation of private corporations into learning organisations. All learning providers should act on the research evidence for the fact that how we learn is more important than what we learn.

13. Co-financing mechanisms and other incentives

Cost-effective analysis of lifelong and adult learning might reduce costs by at least 10-15%. This should be redeployed within the adult learning 'system'. It must not mean reducing total investment, which needs to rise significantly. We need a well considered shift of effort in order to create dynamically growing adult learning co-financing mechanisms. High quality, efficiency and more openness may reduce institutional and official resistance and encourage a **significant increase in corporate learning investment**. Such a step forward, and a step change, is needed in governmental incentives and initiatives for the development of workplace learning. Special attention should be paid to setting of economic incentives for low-skilled and disadvantaged groups.

14. Research in adult education and learning.

The economic and social role of adult learning remains relatively unexplored. Priority should be given to applied and basic research into quality and efficiency of adult learning within the creation of TSER and the European Area of Research. The number and mobility of adult learning researchers should be significantly increased, including research mobility within and outside the EU.

15. The contribution of AE at European and global level

Lifelong learning dialogue and co-operation have an important role in maintaining the EU's global role, and in valuing and promoting the ESM, as is shown by ASEM and other examples. Introducing and implementing adult learning programmes within EuroAid must have priority, first within the integration process and the European Neighbourhood Policy, which is a matter of economic interest as well as of security.



The contribution of ETF and EuroAid within the EU, and extensive adult learning co-operation with the OECD and the World Bank, are equally needed.

16. The Grundtvig programme and the Commission provide essential means for carrying out activities to realise the objectives set in the phase of the Lisbon process that goes until 2010, and

then between 2007-13 and for the new generational phase afterwards. Special attention must be given to **much more transferable data and to creating methodologically sound databases**. We have to measure efficiently the effectiveness, visibility, success, and usefulness of project results. The Commission should apply to itself the innovation, development and cost effectiveness, which it encourages in the members.

The list of team members, experts, contributors

Project Team

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Adult Education trends and issues tender meeting, Brussels, January 2006

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EAEA reception 2006

EAEA Statement on Key Competencies proposal

The EAEA statement on the proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning is now online.

The statement was submitted earlier in 2006, and has already been seen as constructive and useful.

You will find it in the EAEA Policy section.

Are you representative?

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is launching an online consultation on the representativeness of European civil society organisations. The consultation, is open until 30 June 2006.

For a number of years, civil society organisations active at EU level have called for the right to take part in EU policy-making. At the same time, the EU institutions have become increasingly interested in holding a dialogue with civil society, and a number of consultation and participation mechanisms have been established, in recognition of the fact that policies can only be effective if an effort is made to listen to the public, and if these policies are endorsed by the people concerned by Community decisions. More on this, and a link to the consultation at www.eaea.org/news

Education for Democratic Citizenship toolbox

An EDC - TOOLBOX is now available thanks to the "EDC-multipliers" -project. The project was carried out within the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe) that started in 2001 as a co-operation between EDC-related institutions from Albania, Austria, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Finnish transparency

One of the objectives of the Finnish Presidency of the European Union is to increase the transparency of the proceedings of the Council, the Union's main decision-making institution. Means of achieving this include promoting access to documents, ensuring efficient communications and enhancing the transparency of decision-making. This way Finland will seek to meet expectations placed on it as a European promoter of transparency.

One of Finland's objectives is to develop European regulation on public access to documents. Finland will prepare for the publication of a Commission Discussion Paper on the revision of the Regulation regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents during the year. Finland is also taking steps to promote discussion on the issue during its Presidency.

In order to improve openness to the public of the Council's activity, transparency will have a major role in communications during the Presidency. The Presidency website will be user-friendly and will – as during Finland's previous Presidency – feature Coreper and working party agendas as well as agendas and background papers of the Councils of Ministers.

Finland also intends to boost the number of public sessions of the Council, paying special attention to the quality of discussions. Transparency will be assessed separately for each Council configuration.

European eStrategies initiative

The European Study on ePortfolio and Europass readiness is gaining momentum. Organisations in a range of sectors have already subscribed to the study.

National co-ordinators established to date in 16 European countries securely anchor the Greater European dimension of the study, with the inclusion of Switzerland, Norway and the candidate member states of Romania and Bulgaria.



AE Trends and issues at the European Parliament

More than 80 persons; MEPs, representatives from the Commission and other European institutions as well as lobbyists and members of EAEA, attended the annual EAEA reception, held at the European Parliament on April 25, 2006. The event was a follow-up to last years success. Dr Helga Trüpel, MEP (Greens/European Free Alliance) and Vice-Chairwoman in the Committee on Culture and Education, hosted the reception. EAEA Vice president Jumbo Klerq introduced the first results from the **Adult Education trends and issues** tender to an interested audience.

Dr Helga Trüpel, MEP, focused on the importance for proper funding of the lifelong learning initiatives promoted by the European Union, and expressed concern about the deficits in the recent budget deals, which threatens to seriously undermine the new educational programmes of the Union. She went on to underline the pluralism in adult learning, stating that learning is not just simply a skill development tool, but is a value in itself.



Dr Helga Trüpel, MEP

European universities criticise EIT proposal

Higher education stakeholders across Europe say that the operational structure currently proposed for the European Institute of Technology will lead to "institutional and intellectual fragmentation of Europe's universities".

In February 2006, the Commission presented its plans for the establishment of a European Institute of Technology (EIT) by 2009.

The European Spring Council 2006 supported establishment of the EIT in the form of a network of existing institutions and disregarded the possibility of establishing it on a new or existing single campus.

According to the Commission's current proposal, the European Institute of Technology (EIT) would consist of knowledge communities, which would bring together departments of universities, companies and research institutes to perform research, education and innovation activities in interdisciplinary strategic areas.

These departments and their staff would be transferred to the EIT for 10-15 years and cease to be part of their home organisations for that period. Universities, companies and research centres would thus not be members of the EIT as entities, only their specific R&D, innovation or education departments and the teams of these divisions.

The European University Association (EUA), which represents over 700 individual universities and a number of other higher education stakeholders across Europe, says that the legal structure currently proposed for the European Institute of Technology (EIT) is "the wrong mechanism for reaching the goals set for the EIT".

The unanimously adopted EUA policy position on the Commission's communication on the EIT states that presently defined 'modus operandi' of these communities "will not achieve the synergetic effects intended but rather contribute to the institutional and

intellectual fragmentation of Europe's universities at a time when strong, autonomous and accountable institutions are crucial if universities are to play their role as the 'locus where education, research and innovation meet'".

According to the League of European Research Universities (Leru), the models proposed for the EIT "militate against competition, will be unable to deliver the short and medium term benefits sought, are narrow and unimaginative in scope and are of doubtful sustainability."

As to the Coimbra Group universities, an association of long-established European multidisciplinary universities, it states that "it is doubtful that the creation of an EIT will be directly beneficial to the creation of a European knowledge-based economy and the Lisbon strategy." These universities think that "the purpose assigned to a potential EIT can be better achieved through the European Research Council."

The Commission is expected to present a detailed proposal, by July 2006, on how a 'network EIT' would work in practice. The EIT is expected to be established by 2009.

EU budget deal

The European Council reached agreement on an overall figure of 862,4 billion euros for the EU's long-term budget in December 2005.

The European Parliament threatened to vote down the summit deal and demanded an extra 12 billion euros. However via a series of trilogue meetings between Parliament, Council and the Commission a deal was reached on 4 April.

This secured an extra 4 billion euros and an additional 2,5 billion euros in the European Investment Bank funds for reaching the Lisbon objectives.

The Parliament secured its future involvement in the mid-term assessment of the Financial Perspective at the end of 2009.

The deal secured name extra funds for the Parliament's priority of boosting growth and employment, life long learning, research and external policies.

EU listens - but is anybody speaking?

A discussion forum, set up in 20 languages, is now available for the discussion on the future of Europe. So far three areas has been set up.

As we have earlier reported on extensively, the Commission has been in somewhat of a flux since the humiliating defeats in the national referendums in France and the Netherlands on the proposed Constitution.

What followed was plan "D", which by no means was, or is, without controversy in the Commission. While nobody objects to the worthwhile ambition to bring Europe closer to its citizens, the methods proposed are not equally endorsed. Mrs Margot Wallströms idea to organise a broad debate in all member states involving citizens, organised civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties has been met with scepticism. Representatives of civil society has, understandably enough, embraced these new initiatives. To make Plan D fully operational, however, calls for a more substantial support, both in political and financial terms.

With the newly opened internet forum, the Commission wants to promote and support national debates on the development of the European Union. The three topics so far includes

- 1 Europe's economic and social development (Lisbon reform agenda and sustainable development);
- 2 Citizens' feelings towards Europe and what are the Union's tasks?
- 3 What are the borders of Europe and what is the EU's role in the world?

Obviously there is pause for concern just at how democratic this type of forum is, and what the purpose of the forum is. Only too easily can it be construed as a smoke screen, making it look like the Commission is listening. It ought therefore to be in the interest of all those whose voices are not usually heard, to speak up. How likely this is remains to be seen. Grass-root level discussions are not easily started in this manner.

EAEA

European Association for the Education of Adults

EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults) is a European NGO with 114 member organisations from 41 countries working in the field of adult learning and representing more than 50 million women and men learners Europe-wide.

The main roles of EAEA are:

- Policy advocacy for lifelong learning at a European level
- Provision of information and services for our members
- Development of practice through projects, publications and training
- International co-operation with other stakeholders in the field

EAEA promotes the social inclusion aspects of the Lisbon Strategy; it promotes adult learning and the widening of access and participation in formal and non-formal adult education for all, particularly for groups currently under-represented. The purposes of learning may be competence development for personal fulfilment and in employment related fields; for social change and active citizenship; for sustainable development and gender mainstreaming; for cultural and intercultural awareness and knowledge.



Association Européenne pour l'Éducation des Adultes

EAEA (Association Européenne pour l'Éducation des Adultes) est une ONG européenne avec 114 organisations affiliées dans 41 pays active dans le secteur de la formation et éducation des adultes comprenant plus de 50 millions de participants hommes et femmes dans toute l'Europe.

Le rôle de EAEA est

- De promouvoir l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie au niveau européen
- De développer l'échange des bonnes pratiques par des projets, publications et formations
- De fournir des informations et services aux affiliés de EAEA
- De favoriser la coopération internationale avec d'autres acteurs dans le secteur

EAEA assure la promotion des aspects d'insertion sociale de la Stratégie de Lisbonne en agissant en faveur de l'apprentissage des adultes par un accès et une participation à la formation formelle et informelle pour tous, et en particulier pour les groupes sous-représentés. Les objectifs de ces formations peuvent être le développement des compétences en vue d'un développement personnel ou dans le domaine de l'emploi, ou pour assurer une participation active des citoyens dans les mutations sociales tenant compte du développement durable, de l'égalité des chances, ainsi que des dimensions culturelles et interculturelles.