

Transforming Lives, Communities, and Society



- All participants have provided their consent for the publication of photos (in which they may appear) during the events on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, to promote EAEA and adult education in Europe, in compliance with GDPR regulations.

The Power of Adult Learning and Education: Transforming Lives, Communities, and Society



Key results



Highlights

- SmartFood and ADELE projects received Grundtvig Awards on Transforming Lives, Communities, and Society.
- The keynote speech at the conference was given by Isabell Kempf, the Director of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.
- 150 participants from 34 countries all over the world met at the joint conference of EAEA and ICAE.
- We had two days of group discussions and workshops on 8 different topics.

Background

- EAEA General Assembly, Annual Conference and Grundtvig Award ceremony are organised annually. Every year, the conference is held under a different theme, which is also the topic of the Grundtvig Award.
- This year, the conference was co-organised with ICAE, the International Council for Adult Education. Our host was the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation, which is celebrating 150th anniversary in 2024.



Overview



EAEA General Assembly

New members

Discussions:

- Research, policy and practice: what new spaces for exchange?
- Gender equality in the adult learning sector: are we there yet?
- European Education Area: only one year to go!
- Under pressure: (new) roles of adult educators

EAEA Grundtvig Award

Workshops:

- Creative tools for advocacy and social change in the context of migration
- Communities as catalysts for social transformation and green transition
- Learner voice in action
- Global perspectives on adult education and learning (ALE)



Our host

The events were hosted by our member the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (KVS Foundation) in Helsinki.

This year, KVS is celebrating 150th anniversary by coordinating the Year of Sivistys 2024, designated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. (Sivistys is constantly evolving concept referring to learning, enlightenment and cultivation of individuals and societies.)

EAEA General Assembly



- EAEA President **Uwe Gartenschlaeger** welcomed everyone to the **General Assembly** and presented the programme of the day.
- **Lauri Tuomi**, CEO of KVS (Kansanvalistusseura), introduced the participants to concept of **sivistys** - which includes diverse knowledge, critical thinking, action and empathy, skills and abilities required for the resolution of societal problems with others. 2024 is the **150-year anniversary** of **KVS Foundation's** establishment in **1874**.
- The first topic of discussion was the EAEA activity report of 2023, and workplan for 2024.
- Other topics mentioned were highlights of 2023, last year's General Assembly in Zagreb, Key Activities and Challenges throughout the year.
- The revision of the **Manifesto for the Power and Joy of Adult Learning**.
- **10 recommendations for the European Elections of 2024, translated to 19 languages.**
- New formats for capacity building, webinars, trainings and the podcast series "Beyond Learning 2".

New members

Associate members:

- Logopsycom, Belgium
- Pučko otvoreno učilište Samobor, Croatia
- Associação Portuguesa de Entidades Formadoras, Portugal
- Euromed Federation of Socio-cultural and Neighborhood Centers - EFS, France
- DigiCo, Belgium
- 4L - Life Long Learning Laboratory (4L) - Georgia
- Associação Integrar - Portugal

Ordinary member:

- Athens Lifelong Learning Institute Greece

From Ordinary to Associate:

- AIST - Associazione Italiana SocioTerapia, Italy
- ARGE Bildungshäuser, Austria



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Discussions

Research, policy and practice: what new spaces for exchange?

How can we turn the collaboration between research, policy and practice into a virtuous cycle, and learn from each other?

Opening Remarks:

- Marcella Milana highlighted the importance of integrating research, policy, and practice in adult education.
- Gina Ebner emphasized the mutual benefits of closer cooperation between EAEA and ESREA.

Blended/Hybrid Solutions for Training:

- Proposed to consider blended or hybrid training formats to enhance accessibility and engagement.
- Emphasis on creating training formats that are both informative and engaging for staff working in adult learning practice, policy, and research.



Marcella Milana, Professor at University of Verona, and ESREA

Gender equality in the adult learning sector: are we there yet?

Discussions

Adult learning strives to promote social inclusion and gender equality in Europe. Is gender equality a reality within our sector?

- The main takeaways from the discussions included defining equity through intersections. We discussed discrimination on multiple levels, race, class, and gender.
- Topics of language, childcare, education as merit and political education came up. We discussed the visible and invisible gender differences, representation and safety, more specifically with non-binary and queer people's perspectives.
- Wage Gap was discussed - the trend is that women are more educated, but usually do not take higher positions nor do they have the same employability as men.
- Looking forward, these changes take a lot of energy and legislation changes are necessary to have a more equitable society.



Facilitated by Angeliki Giannakopoulou, EAEA Project Coordinator, and technical support by Marina Sakač Hadžić, EAEA Communications Officer

Discussions

European Education Area: only one year to go!

The European Education Area set out ambitious objectives, aiming at achieving universal access in the EU to quality education and training by 2025. What's the state of the art of adult learning policy in our countries as of 2024?

Facilitated by Raffaella Kihrer, Deputy Secretary General and Head of Policy, EAEA

Main take-aways:

- As of 2024, the state of adult learning policy varies across EU countries.
- The cooperation and partnerships are fundamental if we are to establish a dialogue between relevant stakeholders in the adult education and learning sector, and other educational sectors.
- Continuous evaluation and adaptation of policies are crucial to meet the EU's educational goals by 2025.

Under pressure: (new) roles of adult educators

Discussions

Adult educators are often expected to fulfil a multitude of tasks: facilitate, inform, support, motivate, innovate.

The group discussions centred around on what adult learning organisations can do to ensure the well-being of educators.

Main take-aways are:

- exceeding expectations with limited funding
- new regulations which lead to lack of time
- digitalization leaves little time for breaks creating pressure to excel

Proposed solutions:

- training programs on professional development
- clarifying rules
- establishing dialogue between educators and their roles
- addressing advocacy, networking and solidarity within institutions



Anna Skocz, Coordinator of international activities at sTOP and EAEA Board member

EAEA Grundtvig Award 2024



Ewa Duda

SmartFood: Engaging citizens in food diversity in cities. Maria Grzegorzewska University, Warsaw, Poland

The SmartFood project aims to reduce the environmental footprint by promoting self-produced food and decreasing food transportation. The project successfully fostered community integration, with residents sharing responsibilities and produce, enhancing social bonds and quality of life.

Advancing Digital Empowerment of Libraries in Europe – ADELE, coordinated by eGINA, Italy

The ADELE project helps libraries evaluate and improve their digital readiness with a free self-evaluation tool and training. Involving 100 libraries, ADELE helps staff, managers, and users understand their digital use and identify areas for improvement.



Elisabetta Mei

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Annual Conference: Transforming Lives, Communities, and Society



Tarja Kaarina Halonen,
former President of Finland



At this year's **Annual Conference** we discussed the topic of Transforming Lives, Communities, and Society through adult education. Our **keynote** speaker **Isabel Kempf** gave a speech on **Empowering Agility: Adult Education's Role in Navigating Global Change**.

Parallel workshops:

1. Creative tools for advocacy and social change in the context of migration
2. Communities as catalysts for social transformation and green transition
3. Learner voice in action
4. Global perspectives on ALE

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PARTICIPANTS

37

COUNTRIES



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Empowering Agility: Adult Education's Role in Navigating Global Change

by Isabel Kempf, the Director of UNESCO

Keynote

- We see the importance of creating **active spaces** where people can meet, socialise, and learn together. This socialisation aspect of ALE is not to be underestimated. ALE promotes **social justice, equity** and **inclusion**.
- The complexity of the world today drives people to **simple answers**, and our role as adult educators is becoming more important.
- We still have a way to go to include everyone in **digital technologies**.
- We have to make sure that adult education spaces are **safe spaces** not only for learning but also for the **future of our society**. ALE has **transformative potential** but needs finances and good establishments to make it happen.
- **Peace and Education** is a topic that has been undervalued. Exchange programmes, learning cities. In Lviv they just organised a meeting with other **learning cities**. Helping each other out when there is a need is an important part of adult education.



Isabel Kempf,
Director of UNESCO

Creative tools for advocacy and social change in the context of migration

Workshop 1

How are migrants portrayed in the media?
How are migrant adult learners portrayed within your communities?

The main topics discussed in this workshop include:

- Radical Pedagogies
- Campaigning for the right to work
- Access to education
- Theatre of the oppressed

Participants had a chance to try some methods from the theatre of the oppressed and to discuss the migration laws in their respective countries.



Pinar Aksu, PhD researcher at the University of Glasgow

Workshop 2

Communities as catalysts for social transformation and green transition

Why bringing community and nature at the heart of what we do is a powerful drive for transformation?
What can adult educators learn from sustainable communities?

Facilitated by Laura Kaestele, a network weaver at ECOLISE

Main take-aways:

- importance of examining roots and creating supportive and secure spaces within our own communities
- acknowledgment of the potential impact of our own actions and the value of learning from one another
- embracing courage is crucial
- small changes have been recognised as highly significant, they can initiate a snowball effect allowing the community to initiate change



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Learner voice in action

What can adult learning organisations do to encourage learner-led approaches?

- **Paula Garry** - I was aimless until starting community education when I found that my passion was **childcare**. I still do training programmes. The potential is unlimited, says Paula, a learner from Ireland speaking at the workshop on Learner Voice in Action.
- **Finbarr Savage** - check what **barriers learners face**. Getting the grassroots important. **Learners as leaders** as part of the European Agenda for Adult Learning.
- Adult education is not teachers explaining what to do. We are **talking together**, says **Marlies Elderenbosch**, CINOP foundation at the Learner Voice in Action workshop.
- **Ricarda Motschilnig** - there is a lot of **research in literacy** but not with learners. We created a learning research group including 9 literacy learners from the courses. It was important that **everyone gets paid** and that they are not volunteering, they were researchers like anyone else. They formulated research questions with us. We showed them tools how to conduct interviews, facilitate focus groups.
- **Safe space was key**. In the course of the project people transformed.

Workshop 3



Workshop 4

Global perspectives on ALE

What's the global outlook on adult learning and education?

Organised and facilitated by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)

Main discussion points:

- global outlook on adult learning and education, current state and trends
 - diverse international approaches, the implications of policy practice and personal growth
 - impact on learning experiences, analysing different educational approaches and how they shape the learning experience of adults globally
- adaptability to cultural contexts, critically assessing how education practices can be adapted to diverse cultural contexts
 - empowerment through knowledge, giving a profound understanding of global trends
 - interactive engagement to deeply understand and evaluate the adaptability
 - professional development for educators, policymakers
 - practical insights and networking, the opportunities which networking can give to professionals around the world



Jose Roberto Guevara, President of ICAE, and Board Member of the GCE representing Asia-Pacific.



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How do we make our impact visible?

Panel discussion



Tuulikki Laes - In my research I studied intergenerational learning through engagement in a rock band. The idea of struggle is an important aspect, as music and art is not only a recreational leisure activity, it includes difficulties and overcoming them. This experience helped create new identities for adults.

Anna Ekström - In my years as the minister of education in Sweden I always fought to keep the Bildung aspect of education. My arguments were that ALE is a solution to most problems, skill shortages, high threshold in the labour market, lack of equality between men and women, fake news and outright lies in debates, alienation and unfulfilled dreams.

Katarina Popović - We need an intersectional approach in research and activism. I want to question the notion of impact and how we measure it because the conventional approach does not encompass the impact on the grassroots level. Can we measure ALE for peace and democracy? Empowerment is important, as well as critical thinking, but how do we measure it? Qualitative methods, Case studies, participant testimonials, measuring intangible benefits. We need a holistic approach.

Alex Stevenson - In ALE we are good at words and stories, great learner stories in the EAEA manifesto, but we are not great with numbers. Different in culture and evaluation evidence and impact. Employment programmes are robustly evaluated in the UK, but there are few robust studies on which kinds of interventions work for which people. Ethical questions arise here, how can we make control groups.



How do we make our impact visible?

Panel
discussion



Concluding words

By **Gina Ebner**,
Secretary General of EAEA

We've discussed the importance of working with research and how to use each other's arguments to strengthen positions.

We talked about the learners voice, teachers and the staff. It is the learners who bring additional strength to advocacy.

The importance of global cooperation - not only Europe. There are issues that we all share and we should work on together.

From one person to the whole family.

Let's start the snowballs - transformation will get stronger and bigger.

