Non-formal adult learning in Portugal ‘struggling to survive’

In Portugal, Adult Education and Training is not high enough on the political agenda. Policies and funding are focused mostly on skills for the labour market, neglecting important issues, such as democracy, active and healthy ageing, and sustainability.

APCEP (Associao Portuguesa para a Cultura e Educao Permanente) and Escola Superior de Educao de Coimbra, EAEAs members in Portugal, report that ALE policies in Portugal are targeting primarily labour market needs. Policymakers are failing to tap into the potential of adult education to tackle societal challenges, such as the green transition.

Non-formal adult education has no support and is struggling to survive. - EAEA Member in Portugal

Most people cannot afford to participate in ALE

Specific funding has been given to adult education and training policy in Portugal from the Resilience and Recovery Plan, yet most people cannot afford to participate in ALE. Adult education providers in Portugal are aware of Erasmus+ mobility opportunities, but many lack the organisational capacity to actively apply for, and benefit from, these opportunities.

Funding sources for ALE in Portugal:

- Project funding

- Operating grants/structural funding
- Fees paid by individuals
- Contribution paid by employers
- Programme funding
- Formula funding
- Vouchers

Policymakers do not engage enough with learners and civil society

While both APCEP and Escola Superior de Educao de Coimbra have participated in several advocacy national and European campaigns, policymakers do not take into account civil society organisations and adult learners views and concerns in a systematic manner.

Key recommendations to improve adult learning and education

At the national and local level

- Promote non-formal adult education projects and activities within the adult education policies.
- Translate existing projects and activities of formal and non-formal adult education and training into structural adult education policies, directed at promoting civic participation, fostering critical thinking and democratic participation and enhancing solidarity and tolerance.
- Support the professionalisation of adult educators (thanks to initial education paths in higher education and continuing education), while improving their working conditions

- Develop projects and activities including under-represented learners such as older adults and migrants.
- Fund non-formal adult education providers and ensure access to stable funding for smaller providers.
- Guarantee access to educational opportunities in rural areas.
- Support research into ALE and use that research results to support policy-making decisions.

At the EU level

- Increase civil societys involvement in policy-making processes.
- Strengthen non-formal adult education, implementing concrete actions to promote inclusion and social justice.