

Developments: Implementation of adult education policies is not sufficient

According to our member in Serbia, Adult Education Society (AES), the situation of ALE has slightly deteriorated in the last year. According to them, there is a law, strategy, and other documents related to adult education, but the real-life application and implementation are not sufficient. Most of the policy papers and reports include ALE only minimally. Only vocational education and training has maintained its status quo.

Key adult education laws in Serbia:

- [Adult Education Law](#)
- [Strategy for Development of Education in Serbia by 2030](#)
- [Bylaw on Detailed Conditions Concerning the Programme, Staff, Space, Equipment and Teaching Aids for Acquiring the Status of Publicly Accredited Providers of Adult Education](#)
- [Bylaw on General Standards of Achievement for Adult Learners in Primary Education](#)
- [Law on the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia \(NQF\)](#)

This is due to a plethora of factors: poor economic situation - worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic - increasingly authoritarian political regime, and lack of political will to support adult education.

Funding

The funding for ALE related initiatives and organisations has also decreased. It is explained by shifted priorities and interests of the government. Main ways of funding - public project funding, structural funding, donations, and fees paid by individuals or employees, have become more difficult to secure, especially for ALE providers who did not shift their work online.

COVID-19

COVID-19 pandemic has resulted into even less support for ALE. It also resulted into a shift towards online forms of learning. More people have become interested in and have a better understanding and skills to use digital technologies to access digital learning activities. However, the spread of fake news and conspiracy theories have increased as well.

Unfortunately, disadvantaged groups become more marginalised by dropping out of courses earlier or participating less in ALE activities. Outreach has required more effort on the part of the ALE providers. Many learning programs have been moved online or blended learning solutions were offered to continue with ALE related activities.

Sustainability

AES view social and environmental sustainability as an integral part of their organisational activities. They also note that there is no real commitment for the implementation of sustainable development goals in Serbia.

AES is following CONFINTEA VII processes but is uncertain whether it can attend the

conference in 2022 as part of the Serbian delegation.

Challenges: Degradation of education in general

COVID-19 has resulted in further increase of private providers and decrease of public education providers. Worsened democratic index of the country adds to the degradation of education in general, and adult education as well. There is increased authoritarianism and development of partisan-politics and forms of education linked to the ruling party's objectives and political agenda.

Civil society active in adult learning and education is excluded from policymaking initiatives. Only Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs) are supported for the ruling party to further its political interests at home. To maintain neutrality and autonomy some democratic civil society organisations and private ALE providers have decided to cut ties and discontinued co-operation with the government.

AES has underlined that in 2021 active citizenship, civic education, and awareness-raising will be their top priorities on the agenda. However, decrease in Press Freedom Index translates into fewer opportunities for media-based use of adult learning.
