

# Developments: Adult learning is viewed as part of vocational education

According to EAEAs members, adult learning and education in Greece has been overlooked and there is a unidirectional emphasis on vocational education. Other key areas of adult learning do not receive enough attention. EAEAs members stress that qualification for employability is important but not sufficient for a broad and inclusive perspective of adult education.

Responses from EAEA's members gave a varied perspective on the current situation of adult education in the country. Responding organisations said that the situation in ALE has remained the same or slightly deteriorated.

New legislation issued by the Greek government in December 2020 has many provisions to organise the adult education field in Greece. ALE is viewed as a part of vocational education and training system, developing skills that are mainly related to employment. Given that, EAEA members continue to promote the agenda of transformative learning and holistic approach to lifelong learning.

## Adult education remains unseen and defunded

While for some ALE organisations funding stayed the same, others saw a decrease. Due to the pandemic ALE providers received less non-public and non-participant funding. As a result of the ongoing pandemic and lack of financial resources, there is no real interest in lifelong learning among the decision-making bodies.

There has been some funding for VET organisations that may host ALE courses or initiatives, but the main source of funding comes from funding programmes and especially the Erasmus+ programme.

Hellenic Adult Education Association (HAEA) stresses that civil societies are rarely consulted in the ALE policy-making processes. However, EAEAs member Dafni Kek reports to be having regular talks with local and national authorities on the necessity of enforcing and acknowledging adult learning outside of the employability microscope and the political impact it would have. Dafni Kek also involves local stakeholders and policymakers in their international projects.

## COVID-19

As in other countries, courses in Greece were either discontinued or were moved to an online environment during the pandemic. There were some benefits from this as many people developed their digital skills and are now ready to learn online. Shifting learning to a digital environment also attracted new groups of learners.

According to Dafni Kek, due to the isolation during the second wave of the pandemic, there was a significant rise in adults seeking online informal learning opportunities to compensate for the missing social element of face-to-face interactions.

The downside of shifting to a primarily online learning environment has been that many disadvantaged groups have dropped out of learning courses. Many of them have low digital skills or no access to the digital environment due to bad connections or lack of devices. This posed a particular challenge to outreach activities.

## Sustainability in ALE

Greek EAEA members consider sustainability important and would like to develop strategies to promote social and environmental sustainability on an organisational level. They view that the current implementation of sustainable development goals varies a lot in the ALE sector.

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## Challenges: Fragmented educational policies

According to the received responses, the biggest challenge for adult learning and education in Greece is its subjugated position compared to vocational training. Other challenges are low levels of participation, lack of systematic and long-term strategy and fragmented educational policies.

EAEAs members will advocate for a new National Strategic Plan for Adult Education. According to HAEA. The plan should have a holistic character and should consider adult education as a means for both economic development and social cohesion as well as for personal fulfillment and the development of active citizens. They would like to see an accountable plan with a specific budget and measurable goals.

To increase the participation in adult education activities, HAEA proposes a plan for incentives - establishment of individual learning accounts in conjunction with other measures (e.g., paid educational leaves, soft loans, etc.) which may foster participation especially in the field of ongoing vocational training and specifically among low-skilled adults.

Dafni Kek calls for the Greek government to utilise the adult education sector to facilitate change and reforms through international cooperation. In 2022, Dafni Kek focuses on establishing safe spaces for learning, battling discrimination against persons with disabilities and enforcing local and international cooperation towards a more holistic view around adult education.

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