

Switzerland introduction 2019

Over the last year much of the changes in adult education in Switzerland has been focused on basic skills however, these changes have had a limited impact, and despite promotion and outreach participation rates remain low, especially amongst those with more limited educational backgrounds. Our members in Switzerland are now focusing their efforts on skill validation and expanding awareness of non-formal, or non-employment focused learning for adults, for example citizenship education and social inclusion.

Links to EU and international policy in Switzerland 2019

In Switzerland the Strategy for Sustainable Development (2016-2019) has been brought in which specifically relates to all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to this there are a number of initiatives designed specifically to implement goal 4, for example, national networking events organised by the UNESCO-Commission for the whole education centre to create a more systemic attitude to lifelong learning. These networks are for providers in formal, and non-formal education as well as people working either children or adults as target groups. In addition to this, the Swiss government has announced that it is working to better foster networks and programmes for specifically non-formal education providers, however, there have been no concrete measures planned so far.

Our member SVEB is very active in advocacy for adult education in Switzerland,

communicating about public initiatives, events, international reports, and is participating and animating activities by civil society organisations.

Challenges and recommendations in Switzerland

SVEB hopes that the future of adult education does not reduce adult learning to employability and job market integration, and that the Swiss government does more to recognise the value of skills and learning opportunities that are not employment specific - learning for the sake of learning, empowerment, and social inclusion, all of which are central to the real life impact of adult education. While the economic impact of adult learning is important, especially for demonstrating a tangible impact of adult education provision they hope that policy starts to retire the idea of adult education as the economy's right hand man. They also recommend a focus on active citizenship, intercultural awareness and democratic engagement over the next year.

The overall funding for education and research was cut by 3%, and as a result our member SVEB has received a 3% drop in its state funding (state funding accounts for approximately one third of their overall revenue). This has made it more of a challenge for the SVEB to fill their responsibilities, especially as this comes in tandem with adult education needing advocates to broaden its recognisable impact - from improving employment, to improving life skills and empowerment.

Recent developments in Switzerland

Recently, thanks to the enactment of the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training, some Switzerland federal states have adapted existing and new policies, mainly in the field of basic skills promotion. According to a shadow report of civil society, under the lead of our EAEA member SVEB, the Federal Act has triggered positive changes in the field of basic skills in the majority of the cantons. However, the overall impact of the new Act is smaller than anticipated.

The Swiss adult education sectors main challenge remains the lack of participation in lifelong learning and which is affecting diversity of participants. In this regard, participation is heavily dependent on formal qualification, employment status, age, and migration/social background. People with a tertiary degree participate twice as much (80%) in adult education as graduates of upper secondary education (40%) (source: Bundesamt für Statistik, Mikrozensus Aus- und Weiterbildung, 2017). Thus, more public initiatives should certainly focus on tackling this challenge.

Another challenge in the sphere of adult education provision is the assurance and development of quality of the education offers. Providers of further education are also challenged to keep up with the newest trends, such as digitalisation or the flexibility of education offers, and adapt their provision accordingly.
