Developments: New reform proposes training centres for newcomers

The situation of the two members in Spain is different, which shows the multiple voices advocating for adult education in the country. For the Spanish Federation of Popular Universities (FEUP) the situation has stayed the same and they are not aware of any new policies.

The Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research (ACEFIR) reported that the situation of adult learning and education in Spain has slightly deteriorated during the last year, mainly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, a reform proposed the establishment of new training centers for newcomers with low literacy rates and advocated for semi-attendance tuition.

The funding situation has slightly improved because new funding streams opened through projects and new voluntary collaborators. There are some policies for Upskilling Pathways and some that foster the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). During COVID, the SDGs have become a lower priority because of other challenges. The report from the European semester partially mirrors the experience of ACEFIR and according to them, civil society in Spain is rarely consulted in policy making.

A poor relationship between civil society and the administration

It is important to mention that the implementation of policies is dependent on the respective (autonomous) community in Spain because Education, Health, Culture and Labour are decentralised.

In Spain there have been many initiatives sparked by the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), even under the COVID-19 situation. ACEFIR mentions that the EPSR does not play an important role in Spain, because the policies in the region are stronger than those proposed by the European Pillar. Civil society, including ACEFIR have not been consulted on the EPSR. In general, there is a poor relationship between civil society and the administration (ministries).

Challenges: ICT education for older people

COVID-19 significantly affected the adult education sector and the organizations in Spain. The situation has led to changes in the work program and new rules and laws for learning provision came into place. While the COVID-19 forced many providers to temporarily close their doors, it was also a moment in time that revealed the importance of adult learning and education in advocating and bringing resilience to the Spanish population.

ACEFIRs focus for the next year will be to make ICT and other digital technologies available to older people. The pandemic has showcased how little digital skills exist among the older learners in Spain. Voicing a recommendation to the Spanish

government, ACEFIR would build a new Framework for Adult Education by creating a new consortium with a wider vision of what adult learning and education is, including Labour, Health Education and Culture Departments across Spain.