

New research and advocacy strengthen adult learning policy in Armenia

In the past year, the government of Armenia approved the Education Development State Programme until 2030. It foresees a closer alignment between the terminology on youth and adult education in the Armenian laws on education to the internationally accepted definitions and standards. Public campaigns and advocacy activities have also been planned to raise awareness of non-formal education and what it can achieve.

New research on ALE available

Thanks to the efforts of DWV International since 2021, it has been possible to bring ALE to the forefront of policymakers and the educational community's attention. Rich quantitative and qualitative research on ALE conducted in the last three years allowed us to gather important factual data that is now available concerning participation in ALE and related indicators, as well as the existing system.

Civil society actions in Armenia bring results

In terms of the involvement of civil society and learners in policymaking, learners are not actively included in policy-making processes, but civil society organisations have sufficient opportunities to participate in them. For example, they shared research results on ALE with policymakers in education and brought to their attention global ALE developments such as UNESCO's CONFINTEA VII. As a result, deputy minister Zhanna

Andreassyan, who is now minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, attended the conference and has since made several references to ALE and CONFINTEA in her public statements. Civil society in Armenia is now involved in the implementation process of the Marrakech Framework for Action. Additionally, SAEC regularly participates in public discussions of draft decisions on adult education at the local level, during which it presents the importance of adult education.

Furthermore, DVV Armenia has been closely involved in education strategy and legislation development/amendment processes through public hearings, discussions, and provision of opinions. This is reflected in the new Education Development State Programme, which was approved in November 2022 and includes direct references to ALE.

New policy developments highlight the role of ALE

Up until the recent adoption of the Education Development State Programme, Adult Education (AE) or Adult Learning and Education (ALE) have never been used as terms describing this sub-sector of education in different policies and legislative acts of the Republic of Armenia. Two concepts that come close in the Law on Education are lifelong education and continuous and supplementary education. However, according to the EAEA member SAEC, those do not capture all aspects and richness of ALE and are rather viewed as a continuation of school education with a primary focus on vocational skill attainment for effective entry into the labour market.

Key facts on participation in ALE from the Adult Education Survey in 2020-21

14% of respondents participated in non-formal education during the previous 12 months.

Who participates in ALE in Armenia?

- People from the capital (22%), women (16%) and the employed (21%) were more active in non-formal education.
- 67% of non-formal learning activities were primarily job-related.

The most common reasons for participating in non-formal education were:

- improving job performance (44%)
- obtaining skills and knowledge for use in everyday life (33%)
- improving career prospects (32%).

Cost of non-formal educational activities:

- 39%: free
- Among the remaining 61%:
 - paid for by the respondent or someone else (43%), most often an employer (76%).

Outcomes from non-formal education experience:

- better job performance (24%)
- personal-related reasons (23%), including meeting new people or refreshing skills on general subjects.

Positive developments in funding community ALE

There is a diversity of funding sources available for ALE in Armenia: from project funding, to programme funding, operating grants and structural funding, fees paid by individuals,

contributions paid by employers, formula funding and donations. According to the EAEA member in Armenia the Sisian Adult Education Center Foundation (SAEC), while funding from the EU, public sources and private sources is sufficient, most people still cannot afford to participate in ALE. In a positive development, at the local level, SAEC has been able to convince the local authorities of the importance of adult education, as a result of which the community budget provides small but important financial resources for the financing of adult education programmes in the community.

Focus on supporting the forcibly displaced population

Due to the military operations in Nagorno Karabakh in 2023, almost the entire Armenian population was forcibly displaced and moved to Armenia. In the upcoming year, SAEC will concentrate its efforts on the implementation of educational, social psychological and other support programmes for the forcibly displaced population.
