

# Developments: Significant new activity on the EPAL platform

While Dafni Kek focuses on online education for the less advantaged, the Hellenic Education Association (HAEA) advocates for liberal adult learning and education, in times where vocationalism has become the norm. Neither organisation is not supported by the Greek government. Dafni Kek improved its funding situation through Erasmus grants. The funding situation of adult education in Greece has been influenced by a long period of austerity. During the pandemic, many providers had to close and/or could not afford to pay their membership.

According to both members, the situation of adult education in the past year has deteriorated, yet Dafni Kek mentions that there has been significant activity in Greece through the online platform EPAL. The platform offered many opportunities for proactive peer learning and digital skill training in times of the pandemic.

In the past years the Greek government implemented some policies for Upskilling Pathways, but according to EAEAs members there were no new initiatives that fostered the Sustainable Development Goals. The report from the European Semester mirrors their experience of adult education in Greece. The European Pillar of Social Rights has been implemented in some areas in Greece. However, neither of the EAEA members was aware of a civil society consultation. In general, civil society is rarely consulted in Greece.

Some measures in the last year promoted participation in adult education and others supported the employment of vulnerable groups. A new government project issued vouchers to support people who have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis with training for digital competences, but this initiative was cancelled due to the low quality of the

courses offered. The government also supported the establishment of a global distance education platform, seeking to bring education to each school unity in Greek territory. However, there were major technical difficulties, because there was no support or recognition of the homes that didn't have the infrastructure to support digital learning.

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## Challenges: Promoting liberal education before vocationalism

The main challenge adult education providers are facing are the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many seminars and conferences were postponed and had to be moved to a digital environment. The crisis had deteriorating financial consequences for civil society. Planned mobilities had to be postponed and many adult learning partners in Greece lost their jobs, hindering learners' participation.

Dafni Kek is in the process of changing its status from a course provider to a centre offering support and information for learning opportunities online, a bridge between people and educational institutions. Hence, they were only slightly affected by the pandemic and most of the employees were kept.

### Access to open and free online resources

Another challenge for adult learning providers in Greece is supporting the less advantaged learners, who often have a negative attitude towards technologies. Dafni Kek advocates for accessible, open and free online resources, prepared specifically for less advantaged learners. Furthermore, they want the government to increase funding

on outreach strategies that meet the needs of the least represented groups in education and society.

For Hellenic Adult Education Association (HAEA) the main challenge in the upcoming year is vocationalism. Education for work has become mainstream policy, while general and liberal adult education is neglected and given limited funding and opportunities to expand. As digitalisation is becoming a new reality, HAEA draws attention to the importance of civic adult education, critical thinking and promoting social transformation. The fundamental pillars of adult learning should not be overruled by vocational education.

## Lowering barriers to adult education

At the time of EAEAs survey (summer 2020) HAEA has not defined their focus for 2020/2021 yet. Dafni Keks focus will be on lowering barriers to access adult education, foster education on citizenship, life skills, sustainability and advocate for free and more investment in distance education. Drafting recommendations to the Greek governments, both organisations advocate for more funding and institutional support to revitalize and enhance visibility and recognition of adult education.

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