Sweden introduction

Non-formal adult education in Sweden is currently facing challenges related to the changes to the countys political scene. Nevertheless, the EAEA members in Sweden are continuing their work strengthening their presence and improving outreach to marginalised and underrepresented groups of society.

Recent development in Sweden

Since the government elections in September 2018 Sweden has experienced some instability concerning its internal policies, and this has had an impact on the field of adult education as well. On one hand, no new major strategies have been yet developed, but on the other hand, the current government is going through the process of revising existing initiatives. Therefore, the course of development of adult education in Sweden for the near future is still yet to be determined.

Expectations are optimistic, most believe that new policies will expand the influence of adult education and become more inclusive. At the same time, unfortunately, some initiatives are being undercut. As reported by EAEA member, the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, study associations and folk high schools faced a major decrease in funding last year, coming up to 8 million Swedish Krona.

Links to EU and international policy in Sweden

The basic rules regarding compulsory education in Sweden are set out in the Education Act, adopted in 2010. The Act states that all Swedish citizens are entitled to a quality education, and that their access to education must not be affected by their background. Therefore, the Act complies with goal 4 of the Global Sustainable Development Goals.

However, there are still significant challenges to address when it comes to adult education. Participation in higher education in Sweden is significantly affected by socioeconomic background, as well as health conditions. To decrease the gap between those in higher education and those out of it, folk high schools along with study associations, provide adults with comprehensive learning opportunities in both urban and rural environments. The initiatives taken by folk high schools and study associations reflect the need for learning for individuals out of formal education and thus correspond with the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

Challenges and recommendations in Sweden

The biggest challenge for non-formal adult education in Sweden right now is funding. As mentioned before, the changes in the countrys leadership are influencing the allocation of funds to adult education, and as a lot of priorities are yet to be established

practitioners in the field have been left in limbo. The EAEA member, the National Council for Adult Education reports that such areas as migrant work and parental involvement have experienced funding cuts.

Sustaining the work of non-formal adult education providers; keeping provision as responsive and accessible as possible while simultaneously demonstrating the significance of such learning opportunities following funding cuts will be challenging. To address this issue, The Swedish National Council of Adult Education is launching several future reports and inquiries. The idea is to examine how adult education initiatives from the Study Associations and folk high schools impact our society - and what we might need in order to face future challenges. In the coming year, the Council will focus on examining the benefits of study circles and how the Study Associations and folk high schools impact different parts of Swedish society.