

Developments: Adult learning is still largely associated with formal education

Overall, the Bosnia and Herzegovinian responses see a slight deterioration of the situation in adult learning and education (ALE) compared to previous years. From the point of view of the EAEA members, Association for Local Development Initiatives (ALDI) and Center for Education and Research Nahla, there were no important changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in terms of new policies and strategies.

On paper, the perception of lifelong learning and adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina follows the broad definitions of the EU and UNESCO. In practice, adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still largely concentrated on formal learning activities, which relate to vocational education, retraining, recertification and the work environment.

According to ALDI, the perception that education and learning are age-bound and end on completion of formal education is still widely shared. People are mostly motivated to participate in adult education to get a job or improve their career chances. Very few people study with the sole motivation of personal self-development.

Education governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina

BiH has a complex state structure, and education is governed by the countrys entities and cantons. A total of 15 government bodies, spread across three levels of governance,

are in charge of education administration. Education is coordinated at the state level by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which has only recently created a separate focal point position for adult education.

BiH has two central planning documents for adult education:

- Principles and Standards in the Field of Adult Education in BiH and
- Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning in BiH 2014-2020

The results of the Strategic Platform 2014-2020 are currently being evaluated. The authorities have decided to draft a new strategic document to guide ALE ambitions in the coming years.

Financing of adult education

The funding situation of ALE in Bosnia and Herzegovina has slightly deteriorated since last year. According to Nahla, this is mainly due to the changed priorities of the government and the scarce financial resources. Scarce resources are usually allocated to the most urgent needs, such as used for the continuity of primary and secondary education, teachers salaries and basic infrastructure maintenance.

BiH spends around 4% of its GDP on education. There is no specific budget line for adult education. In contrast to formal education, which is largely publicly financed, financing adult education is a shared responsibility involving municipalities, employers, employees, business and professional associations, NGOs, scientific and educational institutions and individuals. ALE activities in BiH are mainly funded with project funding, operating grants, fees and donations.

CONFINTEA VII

Civil society organisations from Bosnia and Herzegovina had the opportunity to participate virtually in CONFINTEA VII, UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education.

According to EAEA members, CONFINTEA is an important process from a civil society perspective, but it is not taken into account in national policymaking in ALE in BiH. Thus, the Marrakech Framework for Action, the outcome of CONFINTEA VII, will not be a key guiding document for ALE in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Sustainability

The two EAEA members state that BiH is fully committed to the Agenda 2030. However, a strategy to develop and implement a tangible monitoring and evaluation system for SDG 4 in the Bosnian context is lacking so far.

CEI Nahla is main-streaming learning about and for sustainability, while ALDI is currently working on a strategy to promote sustainability in their learning programs.

Learners voice

The legislation does not currently require adult learners to be included in decision-making processes in BiH. Adult learners cannot have a voice in national or regional ALE policymaking. The learners voice is made visible through communication activities.

Challenges and plans: Promoting adult learning and

education for everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Both organisations, ALDI and CEI Nahla would like to/ are developing a strategy to promote ALE in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently, there is no long-term policy that includes non-formal providers in public funding schemes. NGOs can achieve some form of co-financing through international donors in some cases, in addition to collecting participation fees.

The unstable funding and selective interest of international donors make it difficult to plan the education offered to the general public. Donors appear to be more likely to fund the participation of specific, vulnerable groups.

ALDI would like to develop a strategy to ensure financial sustainability and strengthen its competitiveness in the adult education field.

Impact of Covid-19

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Covid-19 led to ALE providers downsizing to smaller or fewer premises. Thereby, the cost of learning provisions has increased due to necessary investments in the technological environment.

Current and future plans

Per the fourth goal of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which dictates the necessity of promoting lifelong learning for everyone, CEI Nahla is committed to expanding its activities in the country and abroad. Summarised in the following points:

- Increase the number of online programs to make them available to larger target groups and continue adapting existing programs to an online format
- Map trends in e-learning
- Create a plan for further digitalisation of the programs
- Do pilot programs to test and develop digital learning
- Identify programs that could be presented/implemented in local communities
- Include activities with the local community in project proposals
- Continue working with marginalised groups

In 2022, ALDI has been networking with German adult education providers to exchange experiences and support transformative learning. The continued promotion of adult education, to ensure greater involvement of learners in adult education programs, will continue to be the focus of ALDI.

CEI Nahla is planning to make a big effort to increase the representation of programs in the field of health care, healthy lifestyles and life skills.

According to EAEA members, the BiH government should provide greater support to ALE and develop a sustainable, long-term ALE strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which includes funding for non-formal education providers. They should be more closely aligned with the European frameworks and international recommendations for ALE.
