

Increased funding needed to overcome crises

Although policy-makers recognise the importance of adult learning and education (ALE), the financial situation of ALE in Germany is tense and uncertainties about taxation are dominating the debate.

Important fields of action for German ALE are literacy and basic education, education for sustainable development, digitalisation, continuing education in the context of international development cooperation, political education and democracy education, social cohesion, and integration. This is also supported to a certain extent by national and regional policy initiatives, while their most important focus is on ALE for the labour market. Most people in Germany can afford to participate in ALE; however, learners have only very limited possibilities to express their views and needs to policy-makers.

Voice of learners large missing from policy-making, but civil society has a strong role

Civil society organisations in Germany have the opportunity to actively participate in political decision-making processes. In order to influence political prioritisation, EAEA's members in Germany campaigned on various topics in the last year: first and foremost was the campaign to prevent a VAT obligation on educational services. Further actions addressed the calls for federal funding for digitisation at state level, an improvement in the administrative framework conditions in the integration course system, an emphasis on the importance of general (non-formal) ALE, and participation in the "Kulturpass".

In the past year, EAEA's members in Germany have been very active in consultations at various levels, including the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs at state level, the Federal Government's plans for so-called continuing education conferences, the Federal Government's plans for financial education initiatives, and various other consultations on various legislative proposals of the Federal Government, e.g. in the form of statements.

EAEA's German members were also involved in European initiatives such as the European Year of Skills. On the other hand, however, they argue that their views on ALE are not sufficiently taken into account in the European discourse due to a lack of consultation processes: EAEA's members say that the European Commission's country reports and country-specific recommendations do not reflect the actual situation at the national level. This has potential negative repercussions on policy making and prioritisation in the field of ALE, but also on the general political attention paid to the sector, including the central role of ALE in the green transition.

EU funding sources do not adequately consider the circumstances of German adult learning providers

Funding for ALE remains broadly unchanged, although some cuts are expected for 2024. Public funding for ALE at the regional and national levels is insufficient to prevent too much concentration of funding on individual educational measures, such as German courses for immigrants, and to ensure funding for a broader range of programmes.

However, funding from learning fees and employer-side funding is considered sufficient.

EU funding sources such as ESF+ and Erasmus+ are also gaining in importance, although the latter take insufficient account of the circumstances of German ALE, as e.g. flat rates in Erasmus+ KA1 are too low to be cost-covering for German ALE providers.

Key recommendations to improve ALE in Germany

The appreciation of non-formal ALE should be expressed through increased financial support. The ALE centres offer their educational partnership to the federal government and want to make their contribution, especially in overcoming various crisis situations. Politicians must recognise this opportunity and accept the offer.

The EU should take greater account of the experiences of ALE centres and their associations at the local, regional and national levels in order to learn about the challenges that ALE is facing at the grassroots level of policy-making.
