

New government proposes significant cuts to funding of adult education

According to EAEAs members, the situation of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in Finland has stayed the same in 2022-2023. However, there are concerns about the new governmental programme which proposes significant cuts to the ALE sector.

The funding changes are linked to Finland's growing debt, geopolitical shifts, and a new social and healthcare reform. This shift in priorities and financial considerations could potentially reshape the direction of adult education policy in the country.

While EAEAs Finnish members the Finnish Adult Education Association (FAEA) and the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (Kvs) are neutral on whether policymakers consider ALE important, they agree that the Finnish ALE policies promote inclusive and accessible adult education, the policies respond to labour market needs, and societal challenges (e.g., digital and green transitions), foster social cohesion, democratic participation, and well-being.

According to the respondents, learners' views and concerns are considered in policymaking, but they are not directly involved in it. Civil society organisations have good opportunities to express views to policymakers, and their perspectives are usually considered.

The Country Reports and Country Specific Recommendations 2023 by the European Commission effectively capture the state of ALE in Finland, also ALE programs address the issues outlined in them. ALE organisations in Finland are well aware of Erasmus+

mobility opportunities, but they may not have the capacity to apply for them.

New funding for the education of Ukrainian refugees

According to the Finnish members, EU funding is not sufficient but funding from public sources at the national/local level and private sources is adequate. In terms of the comparison between 2022/2023 and the previous year, the funding for ALE in Finland has remained the same.

The primary funding sources are:

- Project funding
- Programme funding (contracts of education authorities with learning providers)
- Operating grants/structural funding
- Fees paid by individuals
- Contribution paid by employers

The non-formal ALE sector has to compete for Erasmus+ funds with universities. The sector received 5 million euros for educating Ukrainian migrants due to a significant influx of refugees in 2022. However, there are concerns arising from the Finnish Ministry of Finance proposing substantial cuts in non-formal adult learning funding in 2023. The new conservative-right-wing government, formed in the summer of 2022, has incorporated these cuts into its governmental program. The changes are attributed to Finland's growing debt, geopolitical shifts (including Nato membership), and a new social and healthcare reform.

Active participation in consultation and advocacy

In 2022/2023 the Finnish members actively engaged in advocacy and campaigning:

- FAEA participated in Nordic cooperation, exploring the connection of Nordic and international/European adult education policies, especially in the areas of green and digital transitions.
- FAEA and Kvs collaborated in promoting the Year of Sivistys (Bildung) 2024
- FAEA joined 14 labour market and civil society organisations in a joint statement against proposed financial cuts by the government, garnering significant publicity

FAEA and civil society also engaged in several consultations. FAEA influenced the reform of continuous learning through participation in two consultation processes, and managed to influence the programme. It has also provided input on EU structural and social funds in Finland and contributed to the development of teachers' education. FAEA also played an active role in the Marrakech Framework for Action consultation and it was referenced in the [Roadmap for Popular Adult Education in Finland in 2022](#).

Proposed cuts threaten holistic implementation of ALE in Finland

The Finnish members make the following recommendations to Finnish decision makers:

- Recognise ALE as an important agent for upskilling and reskilling by basic skills for people outside the labour market with a low educational background.
- Emphasise on a holistic approach to the integration of migrants (including families) instead of narrow labour market measures. A too strict immigration policy will not back up the shortage of labour in many sectors.
- The proposed cuts in public financial support to ALE will cause extensive, systemic damage to a well-functioning system of lifelong learning and democracy.
- Civil society organisations will face reduced capacity to educate volunteers in skills-

based tasks related to security, especially in remote areas (e.g., voluntary fire brigades, rescue staff operating in marine areas).

- There will be a substantially reduced supply of courses for the ageing population, which will have large implications for well-being and life quality for 55+ learners.
- Accessibility to higher education will be weaker on a regional level (open university).

The European decision-makers should take the new Agenda for Adult Learning and the Marrakech Framework for Action into account in European politics. The crisis in democracy requires that the decision-makers invest in civil society and non-formal learning to ensure a democratic society in the future.

Elevating Lifelong Learning in 2024

2024 will be the 150th anniversary of the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation and the [Year of Sivistys](#) (Bildung), as declared by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Foundation will collaborate with civil society and media, and many events are organised on topics of sustainability, equality, science, art etc. throughout 2024. The EAEA and ICAE conference will also take place in Helsinki in June 2024.

FAEA is planning guidelines for the European Elections 2024 and building concrete indicators to prove the impact of adult learning and education.

FAEA continues to implement the roadmap for non-formal adult learning and education, providing a strategic framework for the sector as well as identifying core values and three paths of change until 2030.
