

Developments: New strategy for continuous education

Digital education was a major topic for three German EAEA members who responded to the survey. 2019 brought more online learning options, which were driven by big adult learning providers and not necessarily based on new policies. In the last year, one important policy change was the release of the national strategy for continuous education.

For the Volkshochschulverband Baden-Württemberg (vhs-bw) the situation of adult education has slightly improved, and for the Katholische Erwachsenenbildung Deutschland - Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft e.V.(KEB) and Deutsche Evangelische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Erwachsenenbildung (DEAE) it has stayed the same. Due to increased regional funding vhs-bw was able to launch a new program aimed at the integration of migrants. The vhs-bw has also launched several projects, including mobility projects.

Civil society has an active role in adult education policy development in Germany. The impact of the European Pillar of Social Rights can be seen in new funding schemes for vulnerable groups but it's not certain they were motivated by the pillar. There are some policies for the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Challenges: Shut down during the pandemic and digital upskilling

The adult sector was significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, which led to an immediate shutdown of many classes and financial losses because projects stopped abruptly and some of the organisations missed important application deadlines for European funding. The KEB reported that many of their partners were forced to close down during the pandemic, which for some resulted in bankruptcy. During the pandemic, the much needed courses on digital upskilling for work and everyday life were also cancelled, which exacerbated inequalities and made it impossible for many disadvantaged adults to participate in continuing education.

Focus on educating immigrants and senior citizens

Vhs-bw focus for the next year will be providing education for immigrants and senior citizens. Many offers will be designed for lower-skilled adults, however, their participation in education will probably remain low. KEB will promote digital training and continue to support opportunities that foster sustainable development in the adult education sector. DAEA joins KEB in their focus on digital education. DAEAs secondary focus is the expansion of educational offers in East Germany, focusing especially on political education. Vhs-bw calls on the government to ensure that there are no financial barriers for anyone to participate in adult education. KEB highlights that adult education is more than vocational training and that non-formal education needs to receive adequate attention.

Overall, the three members believe that adult education requires more recognition and funding to be able to provide the holistic set of skills demanded for future life and work demands.
