

EU 2020

– The Swedish Adult Education Association’s views on the Commission’s consultation paper

To:

The European Commission

Copy to:

Ministry of Education and Research, Swedish Government

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education

European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Members of the European Parliament

The Swedish Adult Education Association – the umbrella organisation for the Swedish study associations – hereby submits its views on the European Commission’s consultation paper EU 2020. Where the proposals fall beyond the EU’s mandate, we urge the Commission to recommend that Member States prioritise the issues set out in this document.

Introduction

Education is a vital success factor for every society that seeks to be competitive. This is also true in the EU. Therefore the Swedish Adult Education Association supports the Commission’s priorities in the future strategy.

The Commission states that strengthening education is one of the most effective ways of fighting inequality and poverty. The Swedish Adult Education Association agrees, but emphasises the importance of society investing in education which is accessible for all, in all phases of life, permitting a second chance. This is a means to combat poverty and inequality effectively.

Considering that non-formal learning has four times as many participants as formal learning (‘Trends and issues study’ (2006), EAEA) it is both appropriate and essential for non-formal learning to receive a larger proportion of the education cake in the EU and its Member States.

Summary

First priority - Creating value by basing growth on knowledge

In the future strategy the Commission states that a spearhead is important to take research and development forward. The Swedish Adult Education Association supports this but also wishes to emphasise the importance of a broad knowledge base. With a stronger emphasis on non-formal learning, the Swedish Adult Education Association supports the first priority of the future strategy – creating value by basing growth on knowledge.

Folkbildnings-
studieförbundens
intresseorganisation **förbundet**

Swedish Adult Education Association, SAEA
Wallingatan 38, SE-111 24 Stockholm, Sweden
Telephone +468-402 01 50 Telefax +468-402 01 59
fbf@studieforbunden.se www.studieforbunden.se

Second priority - Empowering people in inclusive societies

The key to success for the EU as a competitive and successfully functioning region in a global society lies in integrating broad educational initiatives with initiatives to create involvement on the part of citizens. As the Commission writes in the future strategy, we need to rethink our education systems and our labour markets. The Commission writes that we must both enhance mobility and boost Europe's dynamism to unleash our innovative and creative potential. Furthermore, the Commission considers that new policies must demonstrably contribute to social cohesion, tackling unemployment, and fostering social inclusion. This is exactly what non-formal adult education can demonstrate that it does, and non-formal learning can thereby support the second priority of the future strategy – empowering people in inclusive societies (Evaluation of the study circle participant's experiences by The Swedish National Council of Adult Education, 2009, and Evaluation of Swedish non-formal adult education by the Swedish government, 2004).

Third priority - Creating a competitive, connected and greener economy

Non-formal learning and non-formal adult education must be highlighted and recognised as an important producer of knowledge in society. The strength of non-formal learning lies in the fact that participants are learning for their own sake. They are attracted by a desire to learn rather than by a need to achieve grades. This creates a motivation and commitment which is hugely important to the knowledge results. The merits of non-formal learning are important for achieving the third priority of the future strategy – creating a competitive, connected and greener economy.

Proposals from the Swedish Adult Education Association

In conjunction with the review of the EU's Life Long Learning Programme, the Swedish Adult Education Association asserts that non-formal learning programmes should be expanded and better adapted to the working forms and teaching methods of the sector.

In the light of the knowledge challenges which Europe faces, the Swedish Adult Education Association particularly wishes to propose a broad and powerful investment in a European Knowledge Boost, for citizens' education and learning. Such an investment would also promote the aim of the Commission's Action Plan on Adult Learning "It is always a good time to learn" of improving the opportunities of adults to achieve a qualification at least one level higher than before.

1. Creating value by basing growth on knowledge

Today there are huge differences in the level of education of the population and also in its educational opportunities. In parallel with the EU investing large amounts of resources in promoting research and strengthening the competitiveness of European universities, the EU should concertedly invest in raising the general level of education in the EU.

Folkbildnings-
studieförbundens
intresseorganisation **förbundet**

Swedish Adult Education Association, SAEA
Wallingatan 38, SE-111 24 Stockholm, Sweden
Telephone +468-402 01 50 Telefax +468-402 01 59
fbf@studieforbunden.se www.studieforbunden.se

The Swedish Adult Education Association proposes a joint European Knowledge Boost that invests in the education and learning of its citizens. Formal and non-formal learning need to work together on citizens' education and learning in the EU. The Swedish Adult Education Association is convinced that the Knowledge Boost model suits the EU's way of working and concretely supports the three priorities of the EU 2020 strategy. In November 2009 the European Association for the Education of Adults and the Swedish Adult Education Association handed over an appeal proposing a Knowledge Boost to Ms H el ene Clark and Ms Judit Safrany at the Directorate General for Education and Culture.

A Knowledge Boost would promote the EU's key learning skills, such as learning to learn, social and citizenship skills, cultural awareness, digital expertise and entrepreneurship.

The many citizens who for various reasons have failed to complete formal schooling or who have not been successful must be given a second chance. The non-formal learning which takes place in civil society offers a great opportunity to reach and motivate these people to start new courses of study which improve their chances of higher education or employment. Non-formal learning has four times as many participants as formal learning and this should be clearly recognised.

In the EU 2020 strategy the Commission emphasises the opportunities and challenges of the digital economy and considers that an ambitious Digital Agenda is required for Europe. The Swedish Adult Education Association agrees and urges the Commission to invest resources in promoting the digital inclusion of all citizens. If wide-ranging knowledge initiatives are not implemented immediately, the wide digital gulfs we are already seeing will only deepen. Non-formal adult education has tried and tested methods of arousing the interest of citizens in digital services – methods based on the individual's own interests.

2. Empowering people in inclusive societies

There are more dimensions to being involved in society than merely participation in the labour market. Finding a sense of belonging in local society and in organisations, clubs and societies are important aspects too. The strength of non-formal learning and civil society lie in their being derived from the needs, interests and situation of citizens themselves.

In the EU 2020 strategy, the Commission writes that mobility among citizens is growing. People swap between work and study and change sector and career several times. Some take longer career breaks to realise long-held dreams and ambitions. We see this as something positive.

A wide range of educational options and initiatives are required to facilitate and support mobility. Citizens must be offered education which can be flexibly adapted to their needs and which is in close contact with the society in which they live. Civil society actors and non-

Folkbildnings-
studief orbundens
intresseorganisation **f orbundet**

Swedish Adult Education Association, SAEA
Wallingatan 38, SE-111 24 Stockholm, Sweden
Telephone +468-402 01 50 Telefax +468-402 01 59
fbf@studieforbunden.se www.studieforbunden.se

formal adult education organisations should therefore be given the tools to offer citizens education, courses and projects which facilitate the adult career, whatever form it may take.

If civil society is to successfully be able to generate social inclusion for Europe, decision-makers at EU, national and local level must learn from and raise awareness of the democratic work carried out by civil society organisations. Non-formal adult education really can play a crucial role in promoting active citizenship, but the political and financial support currently provided by the EU for this work does not go far enough.

A future strategy which seriously seeks to promote an inclusive society must emphasise and earmark political and financial resources for non-formal adult education in civil society.

3. Creating a competitive, connected and greener economy

To achieve the goal of a greener economy sustainable in the long term, we need public awareness and an express commitment from citizens. A European Knowledge Boost in line with the model referred to above would be an effective means of reaching and involving many citizens in the process of transition. Here restructuring and reform of the industrial and transport sectors can also gain a foothold.

A Knowledge Boost would also prepare Europe for future challenges, such as the demographic challenge and climate change.

Non-formal adult education and civil society play a central role in teaching people about sustainable development. Non-formal adult education initiatives today will produce long-term benefits. Non-formal adult education, which arouses and develops people's participation in society, is an asset and a necessity for Europe, its Member States and its regions.

Stockholm January 14, 2010

Maicen Ekman
Secretary General

Enclosure:

Fact sheet on the Swedish Knowledge Boost
Appeal from the Active Citizenship in Europe Conference

Folkbildnings-
studieförbundens **förbundet**
intresseorganisation

Swedish Adult Education Association, SAEA
Wallingatan 38, SE-111 24 Stockholm, Sweden
Telephone +468-402 01 50 Telefax +468-402 01 59
fbf@studieforbunden.se www.studieforbunden.se