

Focus: Financial politics Adult education in Europe has nowhere near achieved the status which the European Union set as its objective in the Lisbon Strategy. One of the fundamental reasons for this is the continuing lack of public funding. Instead of spending more the public support of adult education is decreasing, even considering the fact that new forms of funding such as education vouchers are being tested. On the contrary the expenses are increasingly being taken over by the users or their firms. In addition the strong expansion of projects hardly serves to secure education structures. But also the EU must ask itself whether it wants to carry on being above all an institution for the subvention of agriculture or whether it would like to address itself more to issues relevant to the future such as adult education.

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KBE

Which financial model is the most effective?

Europe. A European comparative study has established that educational models involving education vouchers and learning accounts proved the most successful as regards mobilising individuals for continuing education.

(Michael Sommer) The EU commission recently established that participation in continuing education across Europe is still far too low. According to the Lisbon strategy, 12.5 % of all adult Europeans should attend continuing education courses. However, at present, the figure is a mere 9.6 %, even less than in 2005. 6.4 % of these candidates attended non-formal courses. These continuing low attendance rates have prompted many countries to search for special forms of funding designed to motivate those individuals who are less well-trained. The Forschungsinstitut für Bildungs- und Sozialökonomie (or FIBS, Institute for Education and Socio-Economic Research and Consulting) has now analysed and compared the various new funding tools in Europe. The main reason for this serious lack of participation across Europe is, above all, the costs.

On the other hand, studies have demonstrated that continuing education also has positive individual effects such as higher income, more career opportunities and a lower risk of unemployment. According to the study, a central, cross-national trend towards the education voucher / learning accounts tool has emerged during the course of the last ten years. This model provides learners with an immediate source of funding, allowing them to attend a continuing education course. As a rule, participants, or their companies, are expected to make a personal contribution to the costs. The "Individual Learning Account" system was introduced in the United Kingdom in 2000. All interested parties were able to open an account by making a deposit of at least 25 pounds (37 euros). The state contributed 150 pounds. The money was subsequently used to fund courses with registered educational providers. The system was surprisingly successful. 2.6 million accounts were opened within a year. However, it was rapidly discontinued due to the fact that a few fraudulent providers took advantage of it. Attempts at the introduction of a similar account model have been and are still being made in Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and Italy. The vouchers principle functions in a similar way. Here, cheques are

issued which can only be used to pay for continuing education. This system has existed for several years in Germany, for example as regards the qualification of the unemployed or for the promotion of continuing education amongst employees in small and medium-sized businesses (in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, for example). The model was established immediately after its successful trial phase. The Ministry of Education is also planning a "continuing education premium" of 154 euros which can be accessed by the lower income groups.

According to an analysis by the FIBS, these models have made a significant contribution to the fact that more people are participating in continuing education. Another positive factor is that target groups such as the unemployed or low earners can be systematically assisted via specific modalities. In contrast, other tentative European funding models have failed to stand the test of time. These include the option of off-setting education spending against tax liability. However, the lower income groups hardly benefit from this approach at all, as examples in Germany and Austria clearly demonstrate. Discussions regarding the saving for education model, an approach which involves saving funds for continuing education over an extended period of time with support from the state, have been held in Sweden for many years now, but never implemented. On the other hand, a similar model was launched in Austria in autumn 2005. However, the system has remained largely unused until now. The loan principle also only plays a supporting role. It is only possible to apply for individual loans in the United Kingdom, via the so-called Career Development Loan Scheme, which granted 17,000 loans in 2005. ▶



Cartoon:
Mester ▶

EUROPEAN
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A boost for adult education – but forgetting the non-formal sector

Commission adopts Action Plan on Adult Learning

The European Commission has adopted a Communication calling on the Member States to work together and support the EU's Action Plan on Adult Learning. The Action Plan aims to help remove the barriers that prevent adults from engaging in learning activities, and to improve the quality and efficiency of the adult learning sector. ▶

Slow pace of reform in education and training threatens Europe's competitiveness in the long term

There is insufficient overall progress in Europe's education and training systems towards the goals set in the Lisbon strategy for more jobs and growth. This is the main finding of the 2007 edition of the European Commission's annual report on progress towards the Lisbon objectives in the field of education and training, which is published in October 2007. ▶

Further news

Lifelong Learning Programme: Call for proposals 2008 ▶

Study: Great Britain and Switzerland are best at developing and utilising education ▶

Gina Ebner new Secretary General in EAEA ▶

New: European portal for migration ▶

Denmark. *The Danish government has boosted adult education, but with an exclusive focus on formal and job related education. Non-formal education receives none of the new funding. On the contrary it has been cut on several occasions over the last 6 years.*

(Michael Voss) "If you have ever listened to a slaughterhouse worker telling about the first time he was able to read a bedtime story for his little daughter, you cannot help getting somewhat moved today." That was the introducing word of a Danish MP, when the Danish parliament discussed a new law for doubling the number of participants in the Preparatory Adult Education (in Danish FVU).

FVU is training in literacy skills and basic numeracy, arithmetic and basic mathematical concepts.

The projected doubling of FVU-participants is financed by the so called Globalization Fund, passed by a majority in parliament in 2006. Over a period of 6 years the Fund is supposed to make Denmark more competitive and able to cope with the conditions of a globalised world. Starting with 270 million Euro in 2007 (1 Euro = 7.5 Danish kroner) and finishing with 1.350 million Euro in 2012.

A part of this money is earmarked for adult education, varying from 20 million Euro in 2007 to 75 millions in 2010 and then 30 millions in 2012.

Most of the funds will be used for job related formal adult education. Not only is non-formal adult education almost totally excluded from the Globalization Fund programmes. The non-formal sector of adult education has for more than five years experienced one cut in funding after the other.

In 2001 the new governmental majority decided to half the public funding of evening school classes. Approximately 1.800 evening schools offer non-formal adult education.

In 2005 the parliament decided to cut away the 30-40 million Danish kroner that NGOs for years had received for adult education and information in Denmark about development problems and aid.

Since 2000 government funding of the consultant work and the education of AE-teachers, that national AE federations offer, has been cut from 26 million Danish kroner to 6,6 Danish kroner.

Commenting in parliament on these figures the Danish Minister of Education said:

"The reason for this development is a rigorous priority of qualifying education, which means that it has been natural to look into how much the state can support the leisure time not-competence-giving part of the educational sector."

Equating non-formal adult education with non-qualifying education with no competencies provoked the chairman of the Danish Adult Education Association, Per Paludan Hansen, to write a comment in one of the major newspapers accusing the government of lacking competencies:

"Are competencies without formal marks of no importance? Don't you obtain competencies in non-formal adult education? What is the problem

with competencies obtained in your leisure time," he asked.

Per Paludan Hansen referred to the EU definition of key competencies, including competencies that are mostly not included in the diplomas of formal education, for example communicative competencies, learning competencies, intercultural competencies and social competencies.

The chairman also insisted on the non-formal sector's special ability to attract people with no or little education to adult education and to motivate them for formal education, too.

The Minister of Education never replied to this article.

On top of all this non-formal adult education is heading for another funding problem. For many years the national federations of the evening schools and the Danish Adult Education Association have received most of their funding from a special Fund, financed by the surplus of the Danish gambling monopoly, Danske Spil. Also Danish athletic and sport and cultural activities are subsidized by Danske Spil.

But in these years the monopoly of Danske Spil is being undermined by foreign private gambling companies competing on the internet. At the same time the EU-Commission is preparing to take the Danish government to the EU-Court, because the government will not liberalize the gambling market.

With no monopoly the surplus of Dansk Spil will of course diminish and there will be less for sports, culture and non-formal adult education. This is a big challenge for non-formal adult education in Denmark in coming years. ▶

New environment – new identity? Profile of Antra Carlsen

Noric Countries. Antra Carlsen was born and educated as a language teacher in the communist Latvia. She took in Sweden Nordic courses for key groups in the Baltic countries on non-formal adult education. Married to a Dane, she moved with her family from Sweden to Copenhagen. Presently she is the head coordinator of the Nordic Network for Adult Learning, promoting Nordic-Baltic-North Western Russian adult education cooperation, set up by the Nordic Council of Ministers, based in Sweden. ▶



Antra Carlsen ▶

Switzerland: adult education financing

Switzerland. *At present, the statistics relating to the way in which adult education is financed remain relatively incomplete, with the result that it is not yet possible to draw up a detailed table of information regarding this matter. Moreover, the sheer diversity of sources of financing (private / public, Swiss Confederation, cantons) makes it equally difficult to evaluate the financial flows in accordance with the nature of the adult education in question (general, professional).*

(Claude Merazzi) Although precise statistics are somewhat lacking, it is obvious that the proportion of private financing (from participants, businesses and professional associations) far exceeds that of public financing. In 2003, approximately 6% of Switzerland's GDP was devoted to spending on education. And less than 2% of this sum was spent on adult education. The commitment of the Swiss Confederation and the cantons is proportionately weak, this despite the continual affirmation of the importance of adult education for the country's economic dynamism in political circles.

On the one hand, the division of public duties as regards adult education financing can be explained by the distribution of skills between the Swiss Confederation and the cantons, and, on the other, by a historical heritage which lends a decisive weight to the professional associations, among others, in terms of the organisation of basic professional training and adult education.

Broadly speaking, adult education for professional ends, whether of a formal or informal nature, falls within the competence of the Swiss Confederation as regards public financing. Various offices within the Confederation are thus responsible for financing these types of adult education, notably the Federal Office of Professional Training and Technology.

The Office of the Economy and Employment assumes responsibility for the financing of measures related to the job market (MMT), which are designed to improve professional skills and develop strategies to reintegrate or redeploy unemployed professionals. This area of adult education has expanded considerably since the beginning of the 1990s, which witnessed the emergence of relatively serious levels of unemployment in Switzerland.

The area of adult education which is loosely termed "general" relies largely upon public contributions and falls within the competence of Switzerland's 26 cantons and their local policies, with each canton drawing up its own legislation in this regard.

Legislative developments within the cantons have highlighted a genuine financial disengagement at cantonal level as regards general adult education for several years now. Instead, funds and efforts are being predominantly directed at the development of professional training.

In May 2005, Swiss citizens voted to accept a new constitutional clause which gave the Swiss Confederation increased powers in terms of global policies relating to adult education and paved the way for the allocation of various types of financial aid to the adult education sector. Relevant legisla-

tion is currently being drawn up, but the experts are in agreement that public spending on this type of adult education has not yet increased in a demonstrable manner.

The country's executive authorities issued an initial response to a major political challenge after the summer break in August 2007: the Swiss Confederation wishes to promote concrete measures relating to three mainstays of society (language, education and employment) in order to encourage the integration of foreigners. Several of the 14 policies which were approved relate to basic training and adult education.

In Switzerland, adult education has been financed against a backdrop which has, in recent years, undergone significant changes, with the result that the Confederation's legislative plans relating to this type of education will, inevitably, continue to give rise to energetic debate in a country in which the general consensus is that efforts relating to adult education (including financial efforts) rest essentially with the individuals themselves. As political debate has clearly revealed, available public financial aid should, above all, be devoted to professional adult education, to courses of complementary education completed as part of tertiary degrees (specialist universities and colleges), in addition to adult education measures which promote the integration of immigrants. These are designed to strengthen Swiss economics and social cohesion via funding given to professional training institutions on the one hand, and, on the other, to unemployed individuals or women aiming for professional reintegration. ▶

Centre for European Education now open

In the Croatian capital of Zagreb, a "Centre for European Education" was opened on 25 September. The centre is a cooperation between the universities of Münster (Germany) and Zagreb (Croatia).

The great importance of the new European education centre was made clear by the attendance of the Croatian Prime Minister Dr. Ivo Sanader, the German Federal Minister for Education and Research Dr. Annette Schavan and MEP Doris Pack at the opening ceremony in Zagreb. For the first three years, the new centre will be funded by the European Commission as part of the Tempus programme. A further ten higher education institutes and universities from Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Hagen (Germany), Zadar (Croatia), Skopje (Macedonia), Tilburg (Netherlands), Klagenfurt (Austria), Cluj Napoca (Romania), Novi Sad (Serbia), Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Ankara (Turkey) are involved in the project.

The concept is to provide internationally focussed study programmes and further education for managers and young professionals in the fields of European education, education management and education counselling. The first study programme to be offered by the centre is an international one-year Master's degree in "Management and Counselling for European Education". ▶

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France: Nicolas Sarkozy calls for a funding reform for professional education

An official report from the senate proposes a funding reform for professional adult education in France. The President of the Republic is on the brink of ordering the employment minister to effect its implementation. Funds for education administered by unions and management look set to be merged with public and private funds and those from regional bodies. ▶

System of Adult Education in Lithuania

The article introduces the system of adult education in Lithuania, including the relevant institutions, legal framework and funding model; it also sheds light on the main trends in Lifelong learning policy and the latest tendencies observed. ▶

Poland: Equal educational opportunities

Human destiny and educational destiny, which largely depends on family background, i.e. the parents' educational aspirations and the level of their education, are inextricably linked. This is why educational equal opportunity requires a closer look at these areas where getting an education encounters objective obstacles. ▶

NATIONAL
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Municipality reform causes concern among Adult Education Centres

Italy: Young people working for adult education

In cities which face a multitude of problems, such as Naples, children and teenagers can play a real part in cultural change and in helping to transmit to adults law-abiding norms and respect for the city. In this regard, integrated trial schemes are now being run in order to involve children and their families in a joint learning process.

Sweden: The two branches of Swedish adult education

Swedish adult education is a tree of knowledge with deep popular roots. It grew out of peasant society and drew its power from the newly formed popular movements and workers' organisations at the end of the 1800's and the beginning of the 1900's. Adult education today has two strong branches, sometimes with different aims and contents, informal and formal adult education.

Further news

Denmark: Migrants learn to ride a bike

Science: Andragogy – Raise and Fall of a Term

Book Review: A Woman's World

Finland. *The coming municipality reform may undermine public funding of non-formal education in Finland. Adult education centres are particularly concerned about securing the supply of education in rural areas.*

(Sirkku Määttä) There are currently over 500 municipalities in Finland, but this number will be considerably reduced as a result of the planned reform. The reform will change the structure of municipal services and the basis of public funding. The largest provider of non-formal education in Finland are the municipally owned adult education centres. There are about 230 of these centres and they operate within each municipality. The number of students at adult education centres each year is well over 600000, which for a country of 5.3 million inhabitants is a considerable number. Until now, municipalities have received State funding for adult education centre activities based on the courses organised by them, i.e. the number of lessons provided. The plan is now that the funding be determined according to the number of inhabitants.

Good work deserves recognition Adult education centres currently receive State aid to the amount of 57% of the calculated cost of a teaching hour. – The State contribution must be maintained at least at the current level in order to ensure continuation of the activities across the whole country, says Liisa Vornanen, chairperson of the Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres (KTOL). According to Ms Vornanen, the State contribution should not be changed to be based on the number of inhabitants, but remain based on teaching hours.

Towards large regional education centres The reduction in the number of municipalities will also reduce the number of adult education centres. Several education centres have already come together to form larger, regional education centres. – We are not against the education centres being combined to form larger units, but the amount of teaching should remain the same in the context of these reforms, says Ms Vornanen. At present, adult education centres have nearly 10000 branches in total. This means that an adult education centre can provide teaching even in villages where a bank, post office or school have closed their doors. The population in Finnish rural areas is aging and dwindling, as many move to the metropolitan area and other central areas in search of work. – Non-formal education improves the activity, mental agility, and performance of inhabitants. In other words, it is preventive work, the impact of which will be demonstrated in terms of future savings in social and health expenditure. Adult education centres are significant cultural educators and play an important role in the training and integration of immigrants, adds Ms Vornanen.

Education for all Many municipalities are having financial difficulties due to an aging population and growing social and health expenditure. Even adult

education centres have been targeted as means of making savings. Proposals for higher course fees have been put forward in places. Recently, the mayor of the medium-sized town of Hämeenlinna voiced his amazement at how adult education centres allow adults to engage in practically any kind of activity at low prices. – You can attend a course in line dancing or African cuisine for the same very cheap fee, whether you are unemployed or a hospital consultant, joked the Mayor. The truth is that the relatively large amount of State aid has made it possible to keep prices at a moderate level. However, the underlying principle of non-formal education is that money should not be an obstacle to learning, and all adult education centres are prepared to stand up in defence of this principle.

Renewing democracy: Gordon Brown's citizenship agenda

UK: *Active citizenship has emerged as a key component of UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown's emerging agenda, but what role can, or should, adult education play?*

(Paul Stanistreet) Gordon Brown's first two months as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have been beset with crises: the failed bombings in London and Glasgow; the floods, which devastated communities across the English midlands; the return of foot and mouth disease; and, now, a spate of shootings and murders which have led opposition leader David Cameron to speak of Britain's 'broken society'. Although Mr Brown has been quick to dismiss the Conservative's leader's suggestion as nothing more than a 'gimmick', much of his early repositioning of the Government has been around issues of community cohesion and democratic citizenship.

In a speech to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations this September the Prime Minister announced plans for 'citizens' juries', groups of independent citizens charged with discussing a specific problem, crime or housing, for example, and producing 'concrete proposals for change'. He also promised a cross-party conference to tackle the issue of low voter turn-out and a consultation, led by 'a representative sample of British people', on a 'British statement of values'.

Direct citizen involvement in policy making, Mr Brown thinks, 'can be the ally rather than the enemy of a renewed representative democracy ... the challenge of reviving local democracy can only be met if we build new forms of citizen involvement in our local services and new ways of holding them to account. So as we expand opportunities for deliberation, we must extend democratic participation in our localities.'