



FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

Key Results 2025 **EAEA's General Assembly, Award Ceremony and Annual Conference**

June 2025 in Leipzig, Germany



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS



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FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS



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Background

EAEA General Assembly, Grundtvig Award Ceremony and Annual Conference are organised annually. The events are either hosted by one of EAEA's members or by EAEA in Belgium. The annual theme is chosen beforehand, and the Grundtvig Award aligns with this theme when selecting the nominations.

This year, the conference was co-hosted by DVV International, which represents the interests of approximately 850 adult education centres and VHS Leipzig, with its long tradition of adult education in the region.

Highlights

Trainspot2 and Citizens Xelerator projects received the 2025 EAEA Grundtvig Awards for their work connected to Flexible Learning Pathways.

Over 150 participants representing 22 countries met and discussed non-formal education in Leipzig. These discussions took place during the two days of annual events and were facilitated through two keynote speeches, a panel discussion and 9 different workshops.





Photos by Albrecht Heyde

Our host

Vhs Leipzig is the municipal continuing education center for all Leipzig residents. They offer their programs together with approximately 750 freelance instructors. They connect their traditions, which date back to the Enlightenment and workers' education, with the present and the future.

At the heart of their adult learning center are values of lifelong learning, diverse, high-quality educational opportunities, the combination of education, communication, and experience, individualised advice and competent service, as well as socially acceptable remuneration.

They offer educational opportunities for all-round and professional development, interesting leisure activities, and opportunities to get to know other people, their ideas, and experiences.

Vhs Leipzig

Founded in 1922, the Volkshochschule Leipzig has been a central part of the city's educational landscape for over a century. Early on, it helped define the so-called *Leipziger Richtung* in adult education, an approach that understood learning as more than the acquisition of skills, emphasizing personal development, democratic participation, and social responsibility.

Staying true to its original idea of “education for all,” the center continues to promote inclusivity, lifelong learning, and engagement with the community, adapting its work to the changing needs of society.



Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer

EAEA General Assembly

The General Assembly was opened with welcoming words by Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the president of the German Adult Education Association (DVV).

EAEA’s former President Uwe Gartenschlaeger welcomed the 150 participants, and presented the programme of the day. The first topic of discussion was statutory business, EAEA’s activity report of 2024, and workplan for 2025.

Other topics mentioned were highlights of 2024, last year's General Assembly in Helsinki, Key Activities and Challenges throughout the year. We touched upon the revision and translation of the EAEA Manifesto, the Power and Joy of Adult Learning, which we have since translated into seven languages.

2025 was also the election year for the new executive board. The nominees presented themselves, what their vision for EAEA would be and how they could develop it together with the staff to be the voice of adult learning and education in Europe.

Our new executive board in 2025 were:

Anna Delort (ACEFIR), John Evers (VÖV), Gustav Fridolin (Folkbildningsrådet), Esther Hirsch (DVV), Marta Jendeková (AIVD), Musa Kirkar (CIEPES), Dearbháil Lawless (AONTAS), Marianne Müller (SVEB), Balázs Németh (University of Pécs), Anna Skocz (sTOP), Oleg Smirnov (UAEA).

For the president of the board : Lauri Tuomi (KVS).

We also had to say goodbye to our former board members and president - George A. Koulaouzides, Alex Stevenson, Dina Soeiro, and Uwe Gartenschlaeger.

Keynote

The rise of populism in Europe - How can ALE respond to this? - Marina Weisband

In many countries, trust in democracy is eroding, fuelled by media that prioritises negative and sensational news. Weisband argues that this makes democratic adult education more important than ever, but it shouldn't be learning about institutions.

“It's about socialising people into a democratic role. Who am I in society? A consumer? A visitor? A victim? Or an active participant?” Weisband asked.

Weisband emphasised the need to counter learned helplessness through self-efficacy. People need to experience that they can change something. We need a place where people can come together as humans, not consumers, and where they can talk to others.



Marina Weisband



Panel discussion

The panel discussion explored how adult learning can support “preparedness” and democracy, and what this means for developing flexible learning pathways.

Adult education is a powerful tool to combat social polarisation and strengthen democracy, as highlighted by several experts. **Marta Jendeková** (Slovakia) spoke about the need to rebuild trust in divided societies. **Christian Soyk** (Germany) emphasized creating spaces where adult learners engage in political dialogue and decision-making. **Gustav Fridolin** (Sweden) reminded that while dialogue is key, core values like opposing racism must remain firm. **Per Paludan Hansen** (Denmark) called for unity and clarity in times of crisis. **Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer** (Germany) stressed the importance of resilience and active citizenship. Finally, **John Evers** (Austria) underlined that adult learning must support not just employment, but also personal growth, connection, and democratic engagement.



New members

Our new members have been voted in without any objections by the *ordinary members* at the General Assembly.

We were happy to be able to give out certificates to four out of eight new members that have joined EAEA.

Unfortunately, some of our members also changed their status from ordinary to associate, and some had to leave the membership.



Associate members

- Egina, Italy
- NoCode, Portugal
- Escola Árvore, Portugal
- Österreichische Jungarbeiterbewegung (ÖAJB), Austria
- General Secretariat for Vocational Education, Training & Lifelong Learning (GSVET&LLL), Greece
- Spanish Volunteering Platform, Spain

Ordinary members

- Cie Essevesse, France
- Organizata Joqeveritare THY, Kosovo





Grundtvig Award 2025

The **EAEA 2025 Grundtvig Award** highlighted flexible, inclusive adult learning that helps people adapt to challenges like digitalisation, climate change, and threats to democracy. Awards in local and transnational categories were presented by Lauri Tuomi, the new EAEA Board President. The ceremony took place at the historic Old Bourse of Leipzig.

TrainSpot2 project won the EAEA Grundtvig Award in the national category. Led by the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE), TrainSpot2 supports flexible, competence-based learning pathways for adult educators. It connects various digital learning platforms – such as EULE and the MOOC “Digital Trainer” – with the German National Education Platform. By interlinking different learning opportunities and supporting individualised learning paths, TrainSpot2 actively promotes learner autonomy, modularity, and transparency of learning outcomes.

eaea
GRUNDTVIG AWARD
excellence in adult education

Citizens Xelerator project won the Grundtvig Award in the category of transnational projects. The project strengthened democratic and civic literacy among adults by promoting social empathy, community engagement, and active participation in democratic life. Led by Mentortec and coordinated by partners in eight European countries, it created flexible learning pathways tailored to adults with unmet literacy and civic needs.

The project supported learners in developing personal, social, digital, financial, and green competences through real-world engagement. Tools like the LifeComp cards and the Citizens Xelerator Action Labs enabled participants to explore community challenges and launch civic initiatives.

Annual Conference

Keynote

Fostering Flexible Learning and New Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills - Elif Bahar

Elif Bahar from the OECD shared results from the 2023 Adult Skills Survey (PIAAC), covering over 160,000 adults globally. Strong literacy and numeracy skills were linked to better jobs, higher earnings, and greater well-being, while socio-economic background remained a key factor in outcomes. One in four adults face barriers to learning, mainly time, cost, and low confidence. The OECD recommends more flexible, modular learning and better recognition of prior learning to address these challenges.

Audience members urged the OECD to push for broader investment in both basic and transversal skills, and criticized the survey for excluding adults over 65.

Parallel workshops

This year for the Annual Conference we prepared 9 workshops:

1. *Promoting inclusion through Erasmus+:Flexible pathways and mobility in ALE*
 2. *Strategic leadership in times of rapid change*
 3. *The two faces of transitions*
 4. *Good policy communication for accesible learning pathways*
 5. *Flexible learning pathways and gender*
- *Learner agency and action: Addressing strategies for fostering self-determination and collective action in ALE*
 - *Digital pathways: Supporting literacy and assisting learning*
 - *Collaborative learning and community building: Creating pathways that connect learners with community resources*
 - *Leading inclusion, empowering adults through flexible learning pathways in a changing world*



Elif Bahar





Promoting inclusion through Erasmus+: Flexible pathways and mobility in ALE

The workshop explored how Erasmus+ can support inclusive mobility for adult learners facing barriers like poverty, rural isolation, disability, and migration background. Participants from across Europe, Canada, and Turkey shared experiences, including projects with refugees, seniors, and underserved communities. Key takeaways included the need for flexible formats, strong local partnerships, and better outreach to ensure equal access to Erasmus+ opportunities.



Strategic leadership in times of rapid change

The workshop “Strategic Leadership in Times of Rapid Change”, led by the Civil Society Academy, focused on the key skills and mindsets leaders need in uncertain times. Participants explored how to anticipate change, challenge assumptions, interpret data, and align team goals, using tools like McKinsey’s Three Horizon Model for strategic planning. Through interactive discussions, they identified critical signals and drivers of change, applying these concepts to their own organisational contexts.



The two faces of transitions

The workshop explored whether current societal transitions truly promote sustainability or reinforce inequality. Participants examined the role of adult learning in addressing structural injustices and empowering communities. Flexible learning pathways were discussed as tools for not just upskilling, but also fostering agency and systemic change.



Good policy communication for accessible learning pathways

The workshop focused on the importance of effective political communication in adult learning and education. Participants shared successful examples from their practice and discussed how clear messaging can strengthen the sector’s influence. The session also explored priorities for the future EAEA Board.



Flexible learning pathways and gender

The workshop explored how flexible learning pathways support gender equality in adult education, emphasizing data-based design and gender equality as a developable competence. Key concepts included gender mainstreaming, intersectionality, and societal stereotypes, shaping access to learning. Participants designed inclusive learning offers like health literacy programs for rural and migrant women and learned about initiatives such as MOVE-UP, the Gender Equality Task Force, and the GenderED Coalition.

Learner agency and action: Addressing strategies for fostering self-determination and collective action in ALE

Participants quickly identified how learners’ voices are often filtered through institutional priorities. Even when space is made to “listen,” decisions are still taken elsewhere. As one participant put it, “We ask for opinions, then go on with the same plans.” The real challenge is not to make learners speak more, but to ensure they co-create the systems that govern their learning.



Digital pathways: Supporting literacy and assisting learning

The gap between people who have access and know how to use technology is getting wider, as showcased in the latest PIAAC survey which also highlights a decline in literacy skills. These two challenges are interconnected. In this workshop, participants were able to explore different ways of learning and how stories are told using digital tools, where everyone feels included.



Collaborative learning and community building: Creating pathways that connect learners with community resources

The workshop focused on how collaborative learning empowers adult learners to actively co-create inclusive spaces within their communities. Participants explored how such spaces can serve as entry points for learners to engage in something larger than themselves. The session encouraged idea-sharing, collaboration, and collective decision-making.



Leading inclusion, empowering adults through flexible learning pathways in a changing world

The workshop explored how inclusive leadership at all levels could create flexible learning pathways for adult learners, especially those at risk of exclusion. It emphasized the need to consider digital, green, and AI-driven changes when designing inclusive learning strategies.



FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS



Education in turbulent times

Concluding words

Across the events, a clear message stood out: adult education must empower individuals to move from passive roles to active citizenship.

“In several discussions, we reflected on how we are living in strange, turbulent times – and how flexible learning is essential to ensure all adults can participate fully in society,” said EAEA’s newly elected President Lauri Tuomi from the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation at the closing.

Whether addressing misinformation, promoting diversity, or defending democratic values, the adult learning and education sector is vital in fostering a resilient, inclusive society.

“We can never rest – folkbildning is under attack,” warned panelist Gustav Fridolin, highlighting budget cuts and ideological challenges to non-formal adult education in Sweden. “But solidarity built our system – and solidarity will protect it.”



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Lauri Tuomi