

# Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2012-2014 — UK

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## What are we aiming to achieve?

**From the outset NIACE established a number of aims and objectives for the work these were:**

**to ensure effective liaison** with the relevant ministries and stakeholders, the social partners, businesses, relevant nongovernmental organisations and civil society organisations in EU Member States (and other countries participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme);

**to improve coherence** between policies on adult learning and broader socio-economic policies;

**to coordinate actions** of these various actors, and sensitise them to European policies, wider national policies and good practices in other countries;

**to raise awareness of adult learning** and give a higher profile to EU activities like the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP);

**to focus is on 'increased participation of low skilled or low qualified adults** in learning and developing their skills.'

## How will we do this work?

NIACE as UK National Co-ordinator for the Agenda is running a number of innovation projects and peer learning activities in 2013 and 2014. These projects have been outlined below:

### **Measuring the social & economic value of adult learning**

*Project Manager: Penny Lamb, Head of Policy Development*

This project aims to pull together and share the best practice in this field, providing UK case studies for sharing across European countries, capturing economic and social value from case studies, and sharing emerging work on using outcomes frameworks for capturing wider value.

### **Adult learning and local democracy**

*Project Manager, Simon Beer, Programme Manager*

This project aims to promote the role of adult learning in Local Democracy Week (LDW) each October. In the UK educational activities during the week are predominately focused on school children. This project will share good practice from across Europe using examples where LDW is a success and share best practice and materials for developing democratic engagement activities linked to adult learning services provided locally. To raise awareness NIACE will develop a LDW Adult Learning Award for launch in October 2013.

## **Adult participation in workplace learning and its links with learning in the community**

*Project Manager, Dr. Fiona Aldridge, Head of Learning for Work*

For the last sixteen years NIACE had undertaken an annual national participation survey. Although, this indicated a relatively high adult participation rate compared to other European countries, participation from those groups with lower skills and less initial education was lower. Other UK surveys showed that employers tend to invest in more highly-skilled staff.

## **Follow up to the respective Literacy, Numeracy and Family Learning Inquiries**

*Project Manager, Jan Novitzky, Programme Manager*

A central concern across Europe is adult basic skills; literacy, language, numeracy and digital competences are necessary for greater workforce participation and social inclusion. In recent years, NIACE has published inquiries into literacy and numeracy in England. Working with UK partners and with the European Basic Skills Network, the aim is to exchange examples of promising policy and practice at national or regional level, facilitating cooperation between European stakeholders, in order to raise awareness about relevant issues to adult learning providers.

## **Self-organised groups and Community Learning Trusts**

*Project Manager, Susan Easton, Programme Manager*

The project looks at the influence of new and emerging technologies on non-formal pedagogies and in particular the work in developing countries such as that by Sugatra Mitra. It will investigate the transferability of such approaches to adult learning settings, working closely with the European Foundation for Quality in eLearning. It will establish a number of test sites in the UK linking closely with such initiatives as the Community Learning Innovation Fund.

## **Employability skills for young adults**

*Project Manager, Nicola Aylward, Project Officer*

Working with young adults and a group of employers, this project will look at what an 'employable citizen' of the future looks like, with the aim of building a community of practice of employers, learning providers and learner representative groups.

## **Supporting social inclusion in basic skills**

*Project Manager, Joyce Black, Head of Life Skills*

Working with the European Basic Skills Network, this project aims to bring together the thinking of 64 members from 34 countries. The project will identify specific initiatives, programmes or practices that are designed to deliver basic skills activities to socially disadvantaged adults, collecting effective practice examples aiming at identifying innovative elements that can be applicable in different social and cultural EU contexts.

## Who is this work for?

NIACE is delivering this programme of work on behalf of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and the European Commission for the European Union's [Agenda for Adult Learning](#).

## What is coming next?

### **Financing Adult Learning**

NIACE has contributed to the ongoing work and the [summative report](#).

### **Measuring the economic and social impact of adult learning**

Penny Lamb is currently developing case studies to share best practice as part of the UK report

### **Follow up to the respective Literacy, Numeracy and Family Learning Inquiries**

The next step of this project will be to undertake further desk research; launch the report of the inquiry into the learning family; develop further case studies, and run a Europe-wide webinar.

### **Supporting social inclusion through basic skills learning**

Link with European Basic Skills Network members to develop case studies; identify examples from Adult Learners' Week across a range of settings.

### **The role of adult learning in Local Democracy Week (LDW)**

NIACE will be holding an event in the UK Parliament in October 2014 and will develop an award for best practice to link with the UK-wide Adult Learners' Week.

### **Self-organised Learning and Community Learning Trusts**

The next step of this work will be to gather evidence from across Europe; establish a UK reference group; showcase work at the annual national digital learning conference; develop practitioner support materials and present at a national seminar.

### **Adult participation in workplace learning and its links with learning in the community**

a one-day CEDEFOP conference workshop will be held on the subject of 'The political and institutional landscape of work-based learning in continuing vocational education and training in Europe'; further research direct with learners; UK expert seminar; develop 2014 national adult participation survey; learner event to debate the survey findings.

### **Employability skills for young unemployed adults**

analysis of data from interview; presentation of research findings are UK Skills Show 2013; production of Guide for Young People Seeking Employment; Employer Engagement Good Practice Guidelines; presentation during Adult Learners' Week 2014.

Conferences to be held in April and May 2014 that will map activity against the themes of the EU Agenda for Adult Learning.

### What have we accomplished to date?

So far a number of activities have taken place:

- Two conferences (held in April and June 2013) with involvement from over 200 delegates attending including representatives from adult learner groups, learning providers, the European Commission, all EC countries, international adult learning organisations such as EAEA and ICAE.
- Extensive use of social media to promote the work. The use a special conference Twitter 'hashtag' ([#EuLearning](#)) which reached a total of just under 10,000 unique Twitter website users, extending the reach of the events beyond those who were able to attend in person. A conference 'video blog' by independent producer Stirring Learning has been uploaded to the [NIACE YouTube channel](#). A number of blogs have also been posted on the NIACE website and special edition of the magazine Adults Learning was produced.
- A submission to the Thematic Working Group on financing adult learning covering: general context of financing adult learning; policies, instruments/mechanisms and anticipated benefits of financing adult learning; funding mechanisms to support reskilling /upskilling and Innovation and Growth; and, funding implications of social inclusion and active citizenship.
- Presentations on the social return on investment in adult learning in Brussels, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.
- Presentation to the UK National Agency for Leonardo, Grundtvig and Transversal Programmes, Ecorys – and over 100 providers on 'Working with under-represented groups'
- Hosting a study tour from the Romanian National Coordinator and partner organisations
- An event in the UK Parliament in October 2012 on the role of adult learning in democratic engagement with speakers from all major political parties including an ex-Secretary of State, the vice-Chair of the Local Government Association (England), and Parliamentarian from the House of Lords (upper chamber).
- A further event in the UK parliament was held in October 2013 designed to reflect on current good practice, on the role that adult learning plays in supporting local/ national democracy and to find ways of building bridges between disadvantaged communities and the people that serve them. The event was attended by a number of MPs, MEPs and Peers as well as key stakeholders from the sector and was hosted by Scotland's Learning Partnership.
- Joint work with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) to undertake quantitative research and then follow up with qualitative research to look at why these gaps in participation still occur and what can be done about it.