



Folkbildningsrådet

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*The European Commission  
Brussels*

## Response of Folkbildningsrådet to the Commission Working Document 'Consultation on the Future 'EU 2020' Strategy'

### **1. The priorities of EU2020**

Folkbildningsrådet, Swedish National Council of Adult Education, supports the three thematic priorities identified by the Commission. We welcome the importance given to lifelong learning and agree with the reference to strengthening education as one of the most effective ways of fighting inequality and poverty.

We share the view that empowerment and social inclusion is of vital importance for the future Europe. Lifelong learning opportunities must be accessible.

We want to stress that actions taken within these fields will have strong impact on the realisation of the objective of creating a competitive, connected and greener economy.

### **2. Aspects that should be included in the strategy**

#### **a) The role of non-formal lifelong learning for the EU2020 strategy**

Lifelong learning means learning in formal, non-formal and informal settings. It should be possible for adults to have access both to the formal educational system and to non-formal and informal learning related to the civil society/social economy and learning related to the workplace. The role and importance of non-formal learning for lifelong learning and for the thematic priorities of the strategy should be clarified and analysed in the text. It is not sufficient to rely entirely on the formal school system and the universities.

It is necessary to strengthen the role of adult learning in the European lifelong learning program. So far the focus to a large extent has been on the university sector. The allocation of resources has reflected this perspective; the Grundtvig adult learning program e.g. has received only 4 per cent of the total budget of the lifelong learning program. If the learning opportunities are to be extended to larger sections of the EU population, actions need to be taken when it comes to both policy and adequate funding in the EU programs. Policies and funding at the national level should also support this objective.

**b) Include a strategy for broad access to and participation in adult learning; take advantage of positive experiences from adult learning linked to civil society organisations**

Lifelong learning is needed if Europe will give its citizens the best opportunities to act as active citizen. The right to education must be seen not only in the perspective of the needs of the labour market, but as a basic democratic right. It is important to analyse and draw lessons from the results related to the goals of the Lisbon strategy. One example is participation in adult learning. This goal will not be reached at EU level by 2010. Experiences from member countries doing well in this respect should be analysed and taken into account in the new strategy.

One such example is Sweden, with an educational system with a high participation rate, where broad groups of participants can take part in both formal and non-formal learning according to their needs. The long-term success of Swedish *folkbildning* organisations, study associations and folk high schools, mostly NGOs, working at grass root level with adult learning rooted in the civil society, contributes to the high participation rates. By linking learning opportunities to organisations in civil society with its close connections to the citizens, the accessibility to adult learning is increased and the step to participation, especially for less experienced persons, is made easier.

There is a close connection between the development of a strong civil society that includes various forms of adult learning opportunities and the strengthening of democracy and social cohesion. Public support to civil society organisations in the member states contributes to this process. Basic public funding for adult learning at the national level is a means to reach sustainable structures for adult learning. Basic public funding constitutes a platform for the organisations when looking for additional opportunities of financing adult learning activities.

**3. For further comments on the Commission working paper we refer to the response by the EAEA.**

Folkbildningsrådet is a member of the EAEA (the European Association for the Education of Adults).

**Folkbildningsrådet - Swedish National Council of Adult Education**

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education is a non-profit association with certain authoritative tasks delegated by the government and the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament). The Council distributes government grants to study associations and folk high schools, submits budgetary documentation and annual reports to the government and follows up and evaluates folkbildning activities. The Council also works with certain assignments from the members. The National Council of Adult Education's office is located in Stockholm, at which some twenty people are employed.

*Folkbildning* is the liberal non-formal and voluntary educational system in Sweden constituted by folk high schools and study associations.

Folkbildningsrådet – Swedish National Council of Adult Education

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