



Co-funded by
the European Union



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Herding cats: European advocacy for adult learning and education

July 2023
Gina Ebner, EAEA

What is EAEEA?

- It works with **adult education** and **lifelong learning**
- It concentrates on the **non-formal, mainly non-vocational sector** (general / liberal adult education)
- It is an association with **120 members**, from **43 countries**, representing **5000 associations**



EAEA's role

- Strengthening the European ALE community
- Providing information and feedback to members and ALE community
- Monitoring European developments, i.e. policy trends, development, implementation
- Being a 'critical friend' to the EU institutions working on ALE
- Reporting the members' feedback (country reports)
- Developing proposals for improvement
- Providing advocacy tools for the members
- Capacity building
- Represent civil society in adult learning



What's the role of civil society?

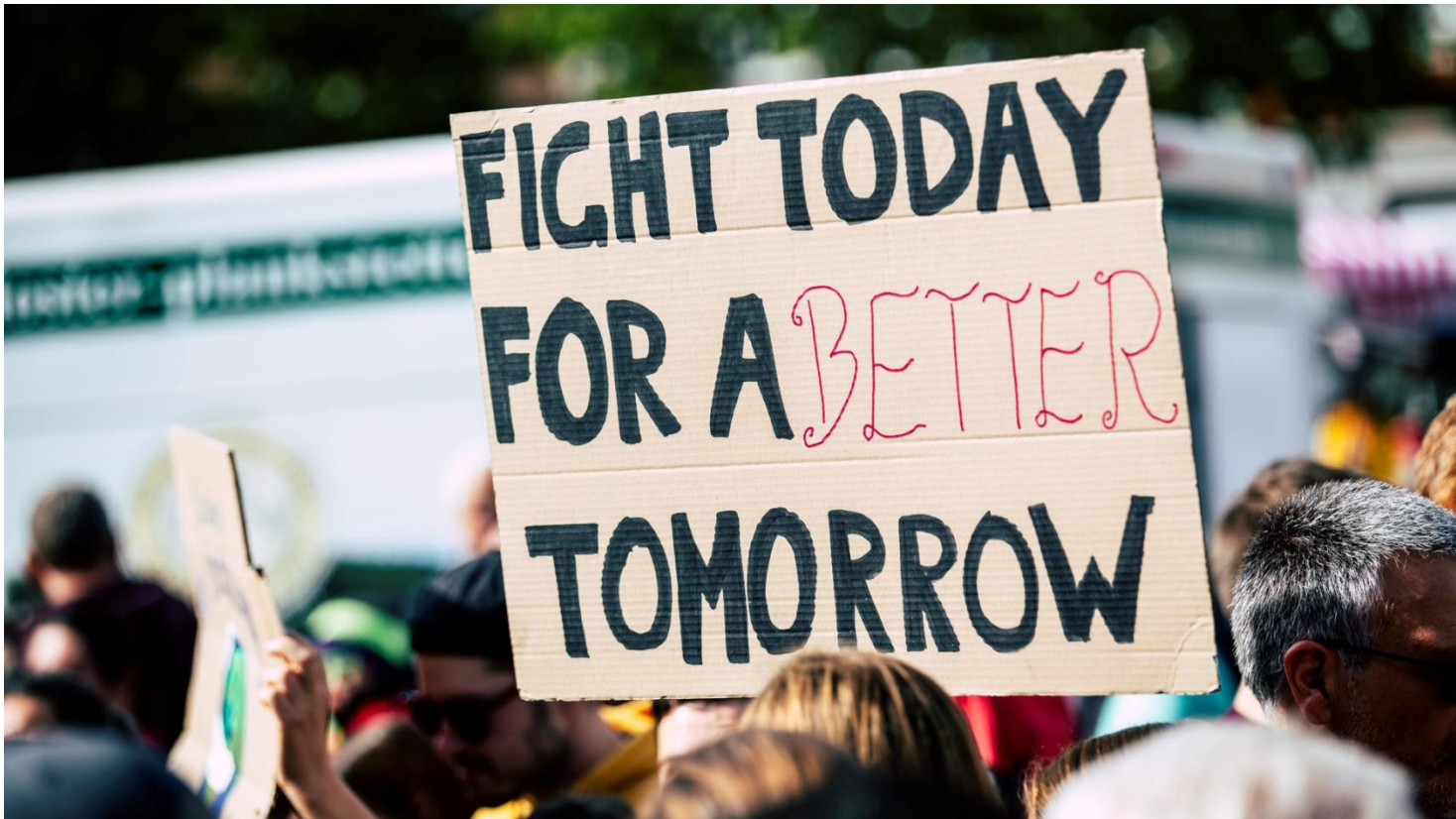


What's the role of civil society?

- Non-governmental, non-commercial, representing citizens' interests
- The ones really working with the issues at the grassroots level
- Provide a different outlook on policies
- Represent the grassroots level
- Can make policies more effective (?)
- Can help implement policies
- Or oppose / boycott them



Advocacy



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Advocacy

- **“the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal : the act or process of advocating something”** (Merriam-Webster)
- an activity by an individual or group which aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions
 - lobbying (often by lobby groups) is a form of advocacy where a direct approach is made to legislators on an issue which plays a significant role in modern politics
- a means of seeking change in governance, attitudes, power, social relations and institutional functions



Advocacy: Why?

- Adult education and lifelong learning are still marginalized on the political agenda
 - despite everything we know about the benefits of ALE (employability, active citizenship, health, personal well-being and development etc.), it is still a neglected sector in terms of financing and governance
 - there is still a strong believe among policy-makers that ALE is mainly a leisure activity without any broader impact



Advocacy: Why?

- Terminologies: ‘general’ / ‘liberal’ ALE; lifelong learning: from ‘cradle to grave’ that also includes life-wide learning
 - ALE is a part of it but not a synonym for lifelong learning!
- The power and joy of learning (see our Manifesto)
- Supporting innovation, exchange, infrastructure, professional development, access ... for ALE at every level – for and with our members
- many of us work with very vulnerable target groups that deserve possibilities to learn, to be included, to be heard



Everyone is talking about skills!

- Little understanding of the power of adult learning and education (see also our manifesto) – is this still true?
- European Year of Skills
- Competence frameworks in a number of areas (see GreenComp)
- Life Skills?
- Focus on tools and technical instruments (Individual Learning Accounts, microcredentials, Qualification Framework, etc)



Advocacy: How?

- Advocacy aims to influence policy making processes
- Advocating = informing + connecting



Advocacy: How?

- It needs a **credible, coherent and clear** message
- It requires mutual trust
- It can be campaigning, 'classic' lobbying, consulting... => communication!
- It includes policy monitoring and analysis



Advocacy: Towards whom?



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Advocacy: Towards whom?

- Towards European institutions:
 - European Commission (DG EAC, DG EMPL, DG INTPA)
 - European Parliament (CULT Committee, EMPL Committee, DEVE Committee)
 - European Economic and Social Committee (Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship Section)
 - Committee of the Regions (SEDEC Commission)
 - Cedefop
 - European Training Foundation
- To EU Member States and regions (mainly through our members, but also EU Presidencies)



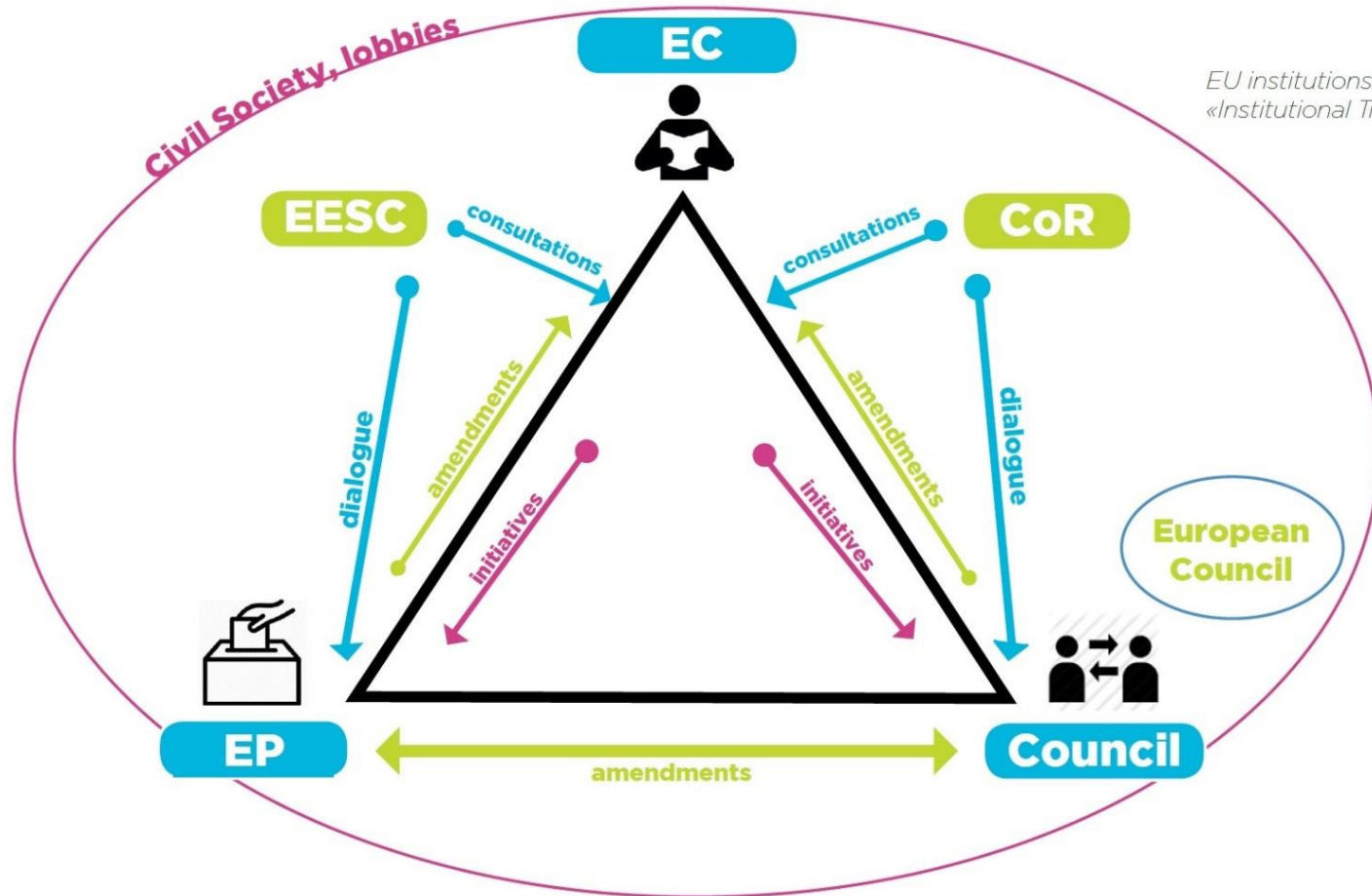
Advocacy:

who are we working with?

- United Nations, especially UNESCO and UIL
- OECD (especially Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs)
- Other international organisations, such as ILO
- other NGO networks, private sector and other stakeholders, such as social partners, think tanks etc.
- Our network:
 - our ‘umbrellas’, e.g. International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL), Social Platform, CONCORD, SDG Watch Europe, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum,...
 - our **members**



Advocacy



EU institutions: the «Institutional Triangle»

How does it sound so far?

HERDING CATS:

“A futile attempt to control that which is inherently uncontrollable.”



Our challenges: general

- Diversity and fragmentation of ALE in Europe
- Fragmentation of governance across institutions (different ministries, levels etc.)
- Northwest vs. South and East
- Lack of understanding what ALE can achieve
- ALE has never been more important than now (for peace and reconciliation, 'green skills' and sustainability, skills needed for employment, refugees, etc.) but no follow-up from the policy-making levels
- Concept of ALE as a private/individual responsibility rather than as a part of general education systems



Our challenges: advocacy

- Civil society excluded from many political processes
 - little trust in civil society – not considered as serious player
 - civil society's role often limited to consulting when needed
- Measurability is new paradigm; but:
 - measurability of the multiple impacts of ALE is difficult (e.g. better health, participation in democratic processes, better well-being, etc.)
 - Not enough funding for research
- Staff changes in European Institutions (esp. EP and Council) but also civil society – not enough 'long-term relationships'
- ALE fragmented even at the EU level (DG EAC vs DG EMPL, DG CONNECT, DG FISMA, DG INTPA)
- Institutions' view of CSOs as multiplier for them



Our challenges: advocacy

- Still low participation in ALE – increase in participation threatened by higher energy prices, changing political priorities etc.
- Financing levels of ALE
- Accelerated digitalisation of the sector, i.e. institutions and learning programmes
- Outreach and access of the most disadvantaged groups



Our opportunities

- European Year of Skills
- Need for digital skills, health competences and older learners as target group highlighted through COVID
- A new (holistic!) policy for adult education and learning - 'Bildung'
- Change-oriented/transformational adult learning and education
- Greater visibility of EAEA – and hence non-formal ALE – at the European level in other education sectors and even beyond education (e.g. labour-related / social policy-related sectors,...)
- Greater visibility of the role of Eastern partnership countries



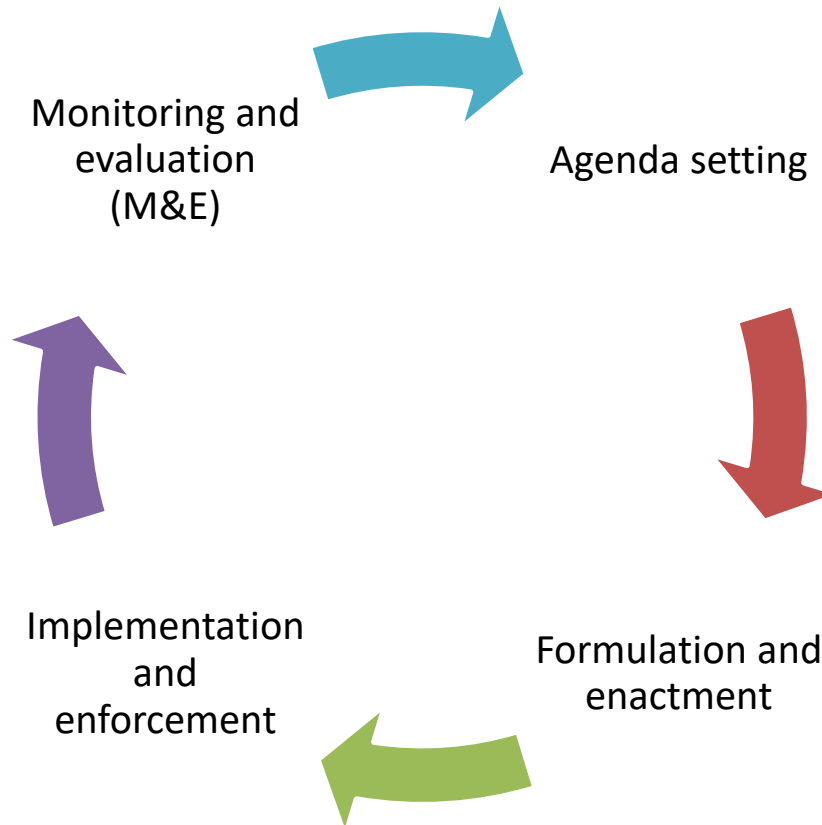


EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

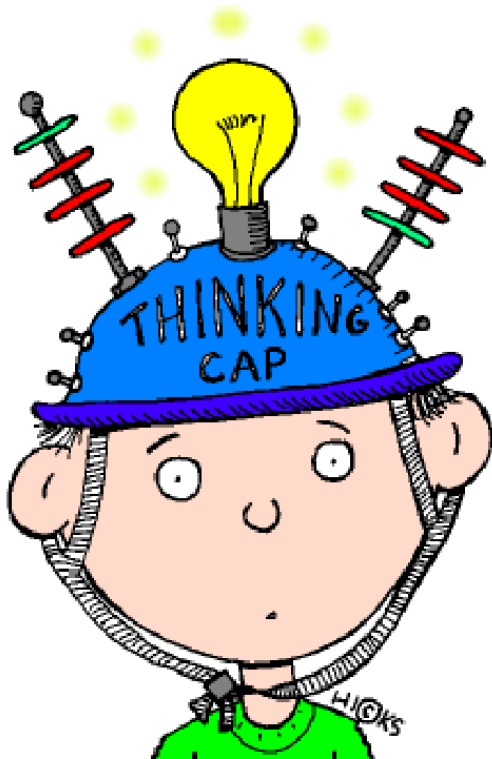
Questions? 😊

Advocacy

Phases of decision-making



Techniques and methods



Which advocacy methods and techniques are you using in your organisations?

Examples of advocacy campaigns



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Examples of advocacy campaigns



ERASMUS+:

**WHY SHOULD THERE BE
KA1 LEARNING MOBILITY
FOR ADULT LEARNERS?**



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Examples of advocacy campaigns

Why do we need the new Agenda for Adult Learning?

**Participation in adult learning
is currently 11,1 % in the EU
(15% target set for 2020).**

A New European Agenda for Adult Learning after 2020 should provide a broad framework for further development of adult learning in Europe.

#ALEsupporter #ALEagenda2027



@EAEA2020



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Examples of advocacy campaigns



Festival of Learning 2020 – Learning and Work Institute UK:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prkS5es-oWM>



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Examples of advocacy campaigns

You learn more than you know

SoMe campaign



"I took dancing classes, and learned how to stand on my own two feet"



"I took coding classes, and learned to decode other people"





EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

THANK YOU!