



Advancing Adult and Lifelong Learning in Europe: Regional European CONFINTEA VI Follow-up Conference

November 2012 or spring 2013

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

In partnership with

European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC)

1) Rationale and Background

The agenda of **CONFINTEA VI** is to develop the broad spectrum of adult education in a lifelong learning perspective, thus harnessing the power and potential of continuing learning throughout life for personal fulfillment, sustainable socio-economic and cultural development and for a viable future for all. CONFINTEA VI is thus echoing the **Europe 2020** strategy which acknowledges skills development and lifelong learning as key elements in response to the current economic crisis and to the broader economic and social strategy of the European Union. Accordingly, CONFINTEA VI is fully in line with the **ET 2020** framework which calls for all education and training to be conceived in a lifelong framework, covering learning in all contexts – formal, non-formal or informal – and at all levels, from early childhood to higher, vocational and adult education. Finally, CONFINTEA VI is corresponding to the **renewed European agenda for adult learning** which highlights that adult learning is a vital component of the lifelong learning continuum, making an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.

Six International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEAs) have already been convened by UNESCO since 1949. The latest, CONFINTEA VI, was hosted by Brazil in December 2009 in Belém with the participation of 144 UNESCO Member States (including 30 European countries and EU Member States), representatives of civil society and learners. CONFINTEA VI adopted the **Belém Framework for Action**, which constitutes the most recent international policy document guiding the development of adult education, in order to move from “rhetoric to action”. Five regional preparatory conferences preceded CONFINTEA VI; the European preparatory conference was hosted by Hungary in Budapest in December 2008.

As an action-oriented policy document, the **Belém Framework for Action** prioritizes key areas and concerns in adult education. It contains countries’ commitments and recommendations to design effective and integrated policies, widen participation and improve quality and equity in adult education in a lifelong learning perspective. To ensure follow-up and implementation, the **Belém Framework for Action** includes mechanisms for countries to collect data and report on

progress and challenges. Moreover, a mandate is given to UNESCO to coordinate the “monitoring process at the global level to take stock and report periodically on progress in adult learning and education”.

The renewed **European agenda for adult learning** reiterates that implementing the **EU Action Plan adopted in 2007** highlighted the difficulty of adequately monitoring the field of adult learning, due to a lack of sufficient statistical data and the complexity of policy measures related to adult learning. Hence, UNESCO’s systematic and strategic approach to monitoring the implementation of the **Belém Framework for Action** comprises three levels: national, regional and global.

- To prepare national progress reports, reporting templates have been sent to UNESCO Member States – among them the 27 EU Member States as well as all non-EU countries from Europe – to help them assess and report on the progress in adult education policies and practice 3 years after CONFINTEA VI. Countries have been asked to submit their national progress reports by the end of February.
- The national progress reports will be important monitoring tools in themselves; but they will also help to generate regional overviews of the trends and strategic action points. For Africa and Asia, UNESCO is currently mobilizing partners for possible regional conferences where, on the basis of regional assessments, the priority concerns to strengthen adult and lifelong learning and forward-looking strategies can be discussed. In Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional CONFINTEA VI follow-up conference was hosted by Mexico in May 2011; it resulted in a regional implementation and monitoring matrix and 55 regional and national action points.
- A Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) will be prepared, integrating the results from all national progress reports as well as findings from commissioned papers on selected topics. The publication of GRALE is foreseen at the end of 2012.

2) Objectives of the Regional CONFINTEA VI Follow-up Conference

Against this background, the overall aim of the Regional European CONFINTEA VI Follow-up Conference is to monitor the progress and challenges in adult learning and education in Europe and to generate concrete action points for regional cooperation on selected issues in adult learning, with a particular focus on increasing participation and quality.

Concretely, the main objectives of the European Conference are:

- To assess the implementation of the **Belém Framework for Action** in the region, mainly on the basis of data and knowledge collected through the national CONFINTEA progress reports;
- To contribute to the **European agenda for adult learning**, in line with the priority areas for the period of 2012 – 2014;

- To develop region-specific strategies and action points to increase participation in adult learning with regard to mobilizing adult learners, facilitating access to learning opportunities and expanding validation mechanisms;
- To develop region-specific strategies and action points to improve quality of adult education with regard to the professional development of trainers/facilitators, relevant and effective teaching and learning methods and content, and enhanced cooperation with stakeholders;
- To strengthen the European monitoring instruments in the field of adult education;
- To create advocacy and momentum in the region for adult education in a lifelong learning perspective, and
- To reinforce cooperation in Europe.

3) Procedure

The Regional European CONFINTEA VI Follow-up Conference will be planned, prepared and implemented in a joint partnership between the **UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)**, on behalf of UNESCO, and the **Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC)**, on behalf of the European Commission. This includes specific follow-up activities resulting from the Conference. As the main regional stakeholder from civil society, the **European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)** will be invited to cooperate as an associate partner.

UIL will:

- Prepare, mainly drawing on the data and knowledge collected through the national CONFINTEA progress reports currently under preparation, a regional assessment of the progress in implementing the Belém Framework for Action and the challenges in adult learning in Europe as the key input for the Conference;
- Make available the 2012 Global Report on Adult Learning and Education as a background and reference document.
- Develop, in consultation with DG EAC, the programme of the Conference and identify key note speakers.
- Design, in consultation with DG EAC, region-specific follow-up activities on the strategies and action points resulting from the Conference, and co-author the report emanating from the Conference.

A Member State of the European Union will be sought to host the Conference. The host country will need to provide of the logistic infrastructure to act as the main organizer of the Conference. The host country will contribute human as well as a share of the financial resources for local costs.

Participants to the Conference will include adult education experts from governments, representatives of adult education associations from civil society, researchers and adult learners from the EU Member States as well as from EU accession and associated states. Due to

the enlarged concept of the UNESCO region of “Pan-Europe”, the participating countries will include Canada, Israel and the USA.

4) Expected Outcomes

Given the common principles and goals between the **Belém Framework for Action** and the **European agenda for adult learning**, the Regional European CONFINTEA VI Follow-up Conference will mutually benefit both agendas. It will also help countries in Europe to capitalize on their monitoring of adult learning and education. The progress and challenges discussed at the Conference will lead to a better understanding of criteria, methods and processes for successful adult education policies and practices, while the concrete action points will contribute to further developing the field of adult education in the countries as well as regionally.

The main outcomes of the Conference will include:

- Progress, gaps and challenges in adult learning and education in Europe assessed to design comprehensive, inclusive and integrated lifelong learning policies;
- Fresh and innovative practices in adult learning and education shared among European countries and stakeholders to improve provision and guidance;
- Elements for an action plan (strategies and action points) developed to increase participation through accessible, affordable and adequate learning opportunities which are horizontally and vertically linked across different learning modalities;
- Elements for an action plan (strategies and action points) developed to improve the quality of adult education through the professional development of trainers/facilitators and high-quality learner-oriented teaching and learning methods;
- European monitoring instruments and data collection mechanisms in the field of adult education strengthened;
- New funding mechanisms for adult learning and education explored;
- Advocacy and momentum for adult education in a lifelong learning perspective created;
- Cooperation and new partnerships in Europe reinforced; and
- Visibility of the European Commission enhanced.

These outcomes will, hence, contribute to the 2012 – 2014 priority areas of the **European agenda for adult learning**, while advancing the five priority areas of the **Belém Framework for Action** (policy, governance, financing, participation and quality).