

Fresh out the institutions

European Education Area's Working Groups: major changes are coming

You might be familiar with the Working Groups (WG) currently active under the European Education Area (EEA) framework - early childhood education and care, schools, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning, digital education, and equality and values in education and training.

Yet, things are about to change.

In July, the European Commission proposed a significant restructuring of this framework. **Under the new proposal, only three thematic WGs would remain: schools and early childhood education and care, vocational education and training, and higher education.** This would notably mean the discontinuation

of the dedicated Working Group on Adult Learning, alongside those on digital education and equality and values. AI and digitalisation would instead become transversal themes across the remaining groups. A fourth, overarching group composed of senior government officials would also be created to support the implementation of decisions emerging from the WGs.

Member States have reacted negatively to both the absence of a dedicated Adult Learning WG and the proposed overarching group, which they consider could unnecessarily duplicate the existing EEA High-Level Group.

Discussions on the Commission proposal are expected to continue in September. We will keep you posted.

European Skills High-Level Board presents its first conclusions [1]

On 15 July, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness **Roxana Mînzatu** received the first conclusions of the European Skills High-Level Board, presented by its Chair, **Ylva Johansson**.

The Board highlights persistent skills shortages across Europe, driven by demographic change and the green and digital transitions, and stresses the urgent need to strengthen adult upskilling and reskilling.

As we know, currently, only 39.5% of adults participate in training each year, well below the EU's 60% target for 2030. At the core of the recommendations is the creation and expansion of Skills Partnerships for Adult Reskilling (SPARKs): regional and sectoral skills ecosystems bringing together education and training

providers, businesses, social partners, research organisations and public authorities. Rather than creating entirely new structures, SPARKs would build on and scale up successful existing partnerships, bringing learning opportunities closer to workplaces and local labour-market needs. The Board also calls for a learner-centred framework offering accessible, flexible and labour-market-relevant learning opportunities for working-age adults. Recommendations include greater use and recognition of microcredentials, more agile funding and policy frameworks for education and training providers, stronger involvement of social partners in anticipating skills needs, and investment in guidance and employment services. The Board recommends that the Commission consider SPARKs in upcoming initiatives and within the European Semester, including its monitoring of adult learning, upskilling and reskilling.

1. [To read the conclusions, click here.](#)

European Parliament - CULT Committee

The European Parliament's CULT Committee **approved a report [2] on a new strategy for media literacy and digital learning** calls for a more coordinated EU approach, recognising these competences as essential for critical thinking, resilience to disinformation and responsible participation in the digital environment.

The report stresses that media and digital literacy should be developed **throughout the education pathway and within lifelong learning**, with particular attention to minors and vulnerable groups.

It calls for media literacy and digital learning to be integrated into education curricula from primary level, alongside sustained investment in educators' training.

Importantly for ALE, it also calls for increased resources and

training for non-formal and informal education, and asks that the upcoming **2030 roadmap on digital education and skills** adopt a lifelong learning approach. EU initiatives should reach all age groups, including adults and older people, while addressing the specific needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

UNESCO: International Review of Education - new issue [3]

The latest issue of UNESCO's **International Review of Education – Journal of Lifelong Learning** explores some of the key challenges facing education and lifelong learning as the international community looks towards the post-2030 agenda.

The issue brings together research from Hungary, Australia, Germany, Iran and Nepal, covering topics ranging from **sustainability** and **digital learning** to **adult learner engagement, inclusive learning spaces**, vocational training and Indigenous language education.

2. For the full report, click here.

In his introduction, editor Paul Stanistreet warns that, as **countries continue to fall short of SDG 4 targets and education funding comes under increasing pressure, governments may concentrate resources on formal schooling while further reducing support for adult education and lifelong learning.**

He argues for a more **interconnected approach to education** – one that recognises learning throughout life as essential to wellbeing, agency, inclusion, decent work and active citizenship.

The issue makes a strong case for placing the right to lifelong learning at the heart of the post-2030 education agenda and moving beyond a narrow understanding of education centred primarily on human capital and economic outcomes.

UNESCO: what else?

Sixth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 6)

GRALE 6 will examine how adult learning and education can both respond to and shape major global transformations, including digitalization, economic and health crises, environmental challenges and conflict. It will explore the capacity of ALE systems to adapt to disruption while considering a key tension: **whether adult education should primarily help learners become more resilient and adaptable to change, or empower them to exercise greater agency and actively shape their communities and environments.**

New greening curriculum indicator under SDG 4.7.1

A new greening curriculum indicator has been incorporated into SDG indicator 4.7.1 to provide a more objective measure of how environmental sustainability, climate change and biodiversity,

are integrated into national curricula. Analysis covering 110 countries shows significant room for improvement, with a global average score of just 40 out of 100. Environmental and sustainability topics receive considerably more attention than climate change and biodiversity.

The indicator will help countries identify gaps and track progress in equipping learners with the knowledge and skills needed to respond to environmental and climate challenges.

Theme	Keywords	Total # of Keywords
Environment and Sustainability	- environmental* - sustainability - greening "sustainable development"	4
Climate change	"climate change" "global warming" "greenhouse gas**" "climate justice" "renewable energy"	5
Biodiversity	- biodiversity - ecosystem* - extinction* - invasive species	4
Total number of keywords		13

Source: UNESCO

Inside the EU: what you need to know beyond ALE

Dear members,

We know our sector does not exist in isolation. We know that what happens across the wider European political landscape inevitably affects our work, our organizations, and the communities we serve.

The financial situation is becoming increasingly challenging. We are all aware of the European Commission's priorities, but there is another layer that deserves our attention. For months, Transparency International EU has been raising **concerns about the growing corruption across Europe**. Every month brings new investigations and allegations involving the misuse of public money and EU funds. We cannot ignore these developments, as they will inevitably have consequences for our sector.

In **France**, Marine Le Pen was found guilty of misusing EU funds that had been allocated for parliamentary activities to benefit her national party. In **Spain**, a corruption investigation has involved senior figures linked to the ruling PSOE. The allegations concern suspected bribery and irregularities in the awarding of public contracts. The investigation is ongoing, and Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has not been charged. In **Romania**, prosecutors, together with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), arrested a mayor allegedly caught accepting a bribe linked to an EU-funded project. According to investigators, the mayor requested 5% of the contract's value in exchange for facilitating payments under the project.

The former **Identity & Democracy (ID)** group in the European Parliament, whose members largely joined today's **Patriots for Europe**, is also under investigation for the alleged misuse of approximately €4.3 million in EU funds. The allegations concern irregular contracts, questionable procurement practices, and expenditure unrelated to parliamentary activities.

Over the past two years, the EPPO has significantly intensified its enforcement activities. **The number of investigations has risen substantially, and the estimated financial damage linked to ongoing cases now exceeds €67 billion**, primarily due to VAT and customs fraud, as well as the misuse of EU funds.

As you can see, while NGOs continue to face constant criticism and political attacks, serious cases of fraud and corruption are unfolding around us. **What does this mean for our sector? Experience has shown that when uncomfortable issues emerge, public attention is often redirected elsewhere.** We should therefore be prepared for continued pressure on civil society organisations, including further attacks on NGOs and increasing financial constraints.

Despite these challenges, **we are not powerless.** This is precisely the moment when our collective voice can make a difference. We encourage you to contact your ministries, Members of Parliament, political representatives, and other decision-makers.

You do not have to act alone: make use of EAEA's network, reach out to us and to fellow members, and coordinate your efforts. Together, our advocacy will have a far greater impact than any individual action.

We have already shared with you the campaign materials on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), as well as a template letter that you can use when contacting your national ministries. We encourage you to make full use of these resources, and to get in touch with us if you would like to coordinate further actions and maximise our collective impact.

Interesting readings and resources

Education International,
*Funding the future:
Education unions, students,
and civil society mobilise to
boost global education
financing.*

Education International,
*PISA 2025: Education
unions get ready for action
on new data*

OECD,
*A Conceptual Foundation for
the Development of a
Lifelong Learning
Measurement Framework*

**Transparency
International,**
*Transparency International
2025: while corruption
spreads, here's proof
change is possible*

European Commission,
*EU Digital Legislation's
Implications for Education
and Training,*

European Commission,
*Advancing digital education
for every learner: Inspiring
practices from across the
EU*

News from the Bubble issue 08/2026

Greta Pelucco
Policy and Public Affairs Director
greta.pelucco@eaea.org



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.