

Baltic Sea NGO Forum, 12th and 13th of May, 2008 in Riga - The working group “Non formal education (lifelong learning):

Draft of statement

General views on the topic

We think that our European ideals of humanism and democracy implies an educational policy of lifelong learning that maintains and promote a strong and independent sector of liberal adult education and voluntary NGO-work in the civic society.

We recommend the governmental bodies of the Baltic Sea region to consider the view of the European Parliament and the Council regarding key competences for lifelong learning seriously, where the main aims of livelong learning are not only to promote employability in a global knowledge economy, but also to promote personal fulfillment, active citizenship and social and cultural cohesion in a human world.

The conditions in the different states of the Baltic Sea Region

The educational traditions and legal and financial conditions of non-formal adult education in the countries around the Baltic Sea are quite different. The Nordic countries have a long democratic tradition of liberal adult education, folk high schools and voluntary associations that combines legal and civic independency and extensive financial support of the state or municipalities. The Baltic States, Russia and Poland had in the communist area a tradition of public support to cultural activities and adult education, but not of civic and political independency, and the united Germany has a very complex tradition to build on.

But in recent years all countries are confronted with a shift of paradigm in the area of adult education from a humanistic agenda with focus on democracy, culture and human formation to a neoliberal agenda with focus on employability, global economy and development of competences for the working life. The common consequence is an increasing deficit of independent learning capacity in the civic society and a weakening of our living representative democracy.

We recommend the national governmental bodies of the Baltic Sea region to consider the priorities regarding the future conditions of liberal adult education and independent NGO-activities. A democratic development of active citizenship and a living civil society implies both a higher level of public financial support and a lesser degree of legal control of the associations' activities.

The conditions of cross-national cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region

The governmental support to cross-national cooperation in the area of liberal adult education and NGO learning activities in the Baltic Sea Region includes unilateral, bilateral and multilateral programmes.¹ But we see two main problems:

First: The Baltic Sea Region as such is not in focus in the different programmes.

The most important international programmes with the highest economic and educational impact in the Baltic Sea region are the EU programmes as the “Grundtvig action”, “Europe for citizens” and the “Culture Programme”. But these programmes exclude Northwest Russia, and there is a need of a special EU-programme here

The Nordic countries have a wide range of bilateral programmes, and the Nordic countries have also multilateral programmes for cooperation with the Baltic countries, and with Northwest Russia, and the new NGO-programme embrace all the Baltic Sea States except Germany.

But the Baltic Sea Region as such is not in focus in the different programmes; especially the northern states of Germany as Slesvig-Holsten and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and the Gdansk-region in Poland are not part of the Nordic-Baltic programmes, in spite of these countries very close cultural and economical relations to the other countries in the Baltic Sea Region

Secondly: Contrary to the EUs programmes for lifelong learning as *Grundtvig* and *Europe for citizens* that values active citizenship, cultural cohesion and personal formation with focus on the civil society, the main Nordic- Baltic programmes are more focused on promoting employability (or competences) for the labour market, and consequently the traditional values of liberal adult education and NGO-work are marginalised in the programmes annual priorities.

The Nordplus Adult programme mainly support applicants from the formal adult education system and institutions from the municipal and state sector (58 % of the grants) with focus on employability, and less than 25% of the projects aims at active citizenship, cultural cohesion and personal formation. This programme policy is contrary to the originally mission-statements of the programme, that emphasized special consideration to the traditional sector of liberal education and voluntary associations in the civic society.

The corresponding Nordic Network for Adult Learning, NVL that only includes the five Nordic countries mainly focuses on learning activities with relation to employability, whereas the non-formal learning activities in the traditional liberal adult education and the voluntary associations with focus on active citizenship, cultural cohesion and personal formation has a low priority.

We recommend the governmental bodies of the Baltic Sea region to promote

- A more common frame of the different multilateral programmes of livelong learning especially The Nordplus Framework, so these programmes include all the countries in the Baltic Sea Region; especially the northern states of Germany as Slesvig-Holsten and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and the Gdansk-region in Poland.
- A higher priority in the Nordplus Adult programme of the traditional liberal adult education and the voluntary associations with focus on active citizenship, cultural cohesion and personal formation
- An enlargement of the Nordic Network for Adult Learning, NVL to become a true Baltic Sea Region Network for Adult Learning; and an adjusted mandate with more focus on the liberal adult education and NGO-work in the civic society.

The 30th of April 2008, proposed by

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Notes

ⁱ The governmental support to cross-national cooperation in the area of liberal adult education and NGO learning activities in the Baltic Sea Region has many forms:

Unilateral: For example the Danish Folk High School Grant to Danes stay at folk high schools in other Nordic countries, but not in the Baltic countries, or the Danish support to participation of young people from the 12 new EU member states in courses at Danish Folk High Schools.

Bilateral: The Nordic countries have a lot of bilateral programmes, for example the Foundation for Danish-Swedish Co-operation, the Norwegian-Finnish Culture Foundation, the Foundation for Swedish-Icelandic Co-operation etc., whereas there are few bilateral programmes of cooperation between the Nordic countries and the other countries in the Baltic Sea region.

Nordic Multilateral programmes: A good part of the programmes cover only cooperation in the Nordic countries as well as the self-governing areas the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Aland Islands, for example the Nordic Cultural Fund (annual 3.3 million €), the Nordplus Nordic Language and Culture programme (1.3 million €), Nordic Summer University (0.13 million €).

Broader Multilateral programmes: There is a wide range of multilateral programmes supporting cross-national cooperation, but the most important in this context are

- EU's Grundtvig programme (50 million € in 2008 growing to 130 million € in 2013). Covers all the 27 countries of the European Union, the EFTA and EEA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and candidate countries as Turkey and some Balkan states; but Russia is not included. The programme has a clear focus on active citizenship, cultural cohesion and personal formation,
- EU's NGO-programme "Europe for citizens" (25 million € in 2008 growing to 30 million € in 2013). Covers the 27 member states, the EFTA and EEA and the candidate countries; but Russia is not included. The programme promotes NGO-work in the civil society.
- The Nordic-Baltic programme Nordplus Adult (1.3 Million € in 2008, and about 0.3 million € for the traditional liberal education and NGO-work), where Germany, Poland and Russia are excluded. The programmes main priority is employability, and the majority of grants support institutions from the formal adult education, vocational adult in-training courses or municipals institutions as job-centres, prisons etc. and non-formal institutions for vocational empowerment of marginalised groups etc.
- The corresponding Nordic Network for Adult Learning, NVL (0.9 million € in 2008) only includes the five Nordic countries, and its main focus is on vocational adult education or empowerment for the working life.
- The new Nordic-Russia Knowledge Building and Networking Programme (annual total of 3.3 million € but only a small part are relevant for NGO-work). The Baltic countries, Poland and Germany are not included.
- The new Baltic Sea NGO-programme (0.7 million € in 2008) seems promising, and it includes all the states of the Baltic Sea Region except Germany.