

## **Summary reflections on the conference 'New Trends on adult Education'**

From presentations given by Maria de Graca Carvalho, Albertina Lima Oliveira, Georgios Zarifis  
Prof. Alexandre Kalache, Ralf Jacob, Marta Ferreira, Teresa Almeida Pinto.

Held in the European Parliament, Brussels on 16 November 2010.

By: Elke Toppelmann and Andrew Quinn

A mark of the interest in adult education is this conference and its registration of 200 delegates from than 25 countries. Its success has been in the content of the presentations and the following questions session.

The growing population of seniors, as a result of demographic changes, better health and other effects poses a real challenge for society. The EU, when it started its Lifelong Programme (LLP), recognised adults as an integral part of that initiative through its Grundtvig Programme but perhaps not with the same priorities as are required now, as we come to terms with our aging population.

The stark reality of the projection of the population in 2060, when there will be 2 working individuals for each elderly person, will present a new set of priorities and interventions which need to be address sooner rather than later. In order to ensure that we live in an inclusive society we have to ensure that we do not introduce barriers, for example a simple thing like the design of omitting a ramp, or between the working persons, paying taxes, and those who are marginalised because of their age. It is the statistical information, together with the results presented today on a study on 'older persons in rural areas', by Paladin, that we personally find very interesting and it is essential that we continue to provide evidence for adult initiatives through further research. Research is crucial for policy makers and project proposers as only with evidence can we help to steer a social change and funding strategy for the years ahead.

For us, in 2010, how do we respond to the changing population's age profile which will meet the needs of society, particularly seniors and promote economic growth? It is no surprise that our most disadvantaged in society are those less able to adapt to change, the poor, those with health problems, unemployed, amongst others are social and economic factors are putting them 'at risk'. It no surprise for us to learn that those who had a history of education in their earlier years are much more likely to succeed in later years, Education here is solution.

But there is a strong need to define the term 'disadvantaged', not just as an academic exercise but as a requirement to help underpin programmes, actions and priorities for the years ahead. Marta Ferreira-Lourenco, Head of Unit, Adult education and Grundtvig, European Commission has given us a unique opportunity to make our ideas felt though the public consultation on the future of Education and Training, which we urge you to participate in.

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=LifelongLearning&lang=en>

Two final points we wish to raise:

1. Facilitating active participation of our seniors in society is the major issue of the planned European Year 2012 of active ageing. Lobbying to redress the lack of access to Lifelong Learning will be a way to removing the barriers which older people are facing and supporting active ageing will contribute to a European society based on solidarity between generations.
2. Adults must have hope of improving their situation, they need it and society owes it to them to ensure that they can have an autonomous healthy life in old age – being protected in all stages of life and participating, not only in employment but also in all fields of an active citizenship, will produce a Europe for all ages.