
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

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Adult education in Arab countries to be discussed at the CONFINTEA VI preparatory conference in Tunis

Adult education is at the heart of a regional conference in Tunis from 5 to 7 January, organized by UNESCO and the Government of Tunisia. The conference is intended to provide an overview of the situation in Arab states and to draw up new lines for action. It is one of a series of preparatory meetings ahead of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education being held in Brazil in May 2009.

Hosted by Tunisia and co-organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg (Germany), UNESCO's Regional Office in Beirut (Lebanon), The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the government of Tunisia, this conference will bring together Ministers of Education, delegates from governments, multilateral organisations and regional NGOs, as well as experts and participants from the private sector, universities and the media, from 22 Member States in the region.

The conference, entitled "Investing in Adult Learning: Building Knowledge and Learning Societies in the Arab Region," will look at a range of experiments being carried out in the region on adult learning and education and will identify the key issues, trends and challenges in the field. The conference will also emphasise the importance and relevance of adult learning in today's world and encourage investment in this sector, including in literacy programmes. At the end of the conference, a report will be adopted, based on a series of national reports, together with a plan of action for the region.

Despite the progress made in basic education and schooling in Arab countries, almost 40 % of those over 15 years of age – nearly 70 million people - are illiterate. Women and girls who have received no schooling are under-represented in this group, especially those living in rural areas. The emergence of knowledge economies and societies makes adult education more necessary than ever.

The Tunis conference is the fifth regional preparatory meeting leading up to the sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) which will be held in Belém (Brazil) from 19 to 22 May 2009. Its objective is to renew commitments and to give new impetus to action in the area of adult education.

For further information on the conference:
www.unesco.org/confintea6

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