
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

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UNESCO conference will review adult education for equity and inclusion in Europe, North America and Israel

Adult learning and education in Europe, North America and Israel are the focus of a conference to be held in Budapest from 3 to 5 December 2008. Hosted by Hungary and co-organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, the conference will bring together education ministers and other government representatives with multilateral partners, regional NGOs, experts and stakeholders from the private sector, universities and the media.

Entitled *Adult Learning for Equity and Inclusion in a Context of Mobility and Competition*, the Conference will explore trends and practices in adult learning, with emphasis on participation and inclusion. Particular attention will be paid to policy frameworks, governance and financing; quality; literacy, basic skills and key competencies; and monitoring and evaluation.

Thirty-eight of the 52 UNESCO Member States in the region of Europe, North America and Israel have submitted national reports on the situation and development of adult education. Findings from these studies are included in a regional report to be discussed by conference participants.

National reports show that a majority of countries are moving towards rationalization of provision, increasing co-ordination, quantity and accountability. Whether adult learning and education should be primarily focused on economic, social or cultural objectives, or a combination of all three, is an ongoing debate. These policy discussions are accompanied by a search for an appropriate model for funding adult education and learning, and getting the right balance between the state, employers, civil society and individuals. The European Commission has noted important gaps in the coherence, co-ordination and comprehensiveness of lifelong learning strategies in the European Union; Israel has recognized a need to foster human capital development and intercultural solidarity; and the USA acknowledges a requirement to invest more in adult basic education.

The Budapest conference is one of five regional preparatory meetings organized by UNESCO between September 2008 and January 2009. Along with a comprehensive review of key issues and challenges in adult learning and education, it will also propose strategies and recommendations to reinvigorate policies and action. These proposals will inform discussion at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA VI, in Brazil in May 2009.

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