



## Vision and Objectives - Learn for Life



Learn for Life

Bemuurde Weerd O.Z. 12  
3414 AN Utrecht

T: 06-31197742  
info@platformlearnforlife.nl  
www.lflplatform.net



Dutch Platform for  
International Adult  
Education

## Table of contents

1. What is Learn for Life? .....	3
2. What is the Learn for Life mission statement? .....	3
3. Who does Learn for Life focus on with regard to adult education and lifelong learning? .....	5
4. Why is the mission of Learn for Life so important? .....	5
5. How does Learn for Life set itself apart? .....	6
6. The European context of Lifelong Learning .....	7
7. What does Learn for Life do to achieve its mission and objectives? .....	8
Promoting adult education and lifelong learning .....	8
Lobbying and Advocacy .....	9
Contribution to European and international policy .....	9
Supporting professionals .....	10

## 1. What is Learn for Life?

Learn for Life is an independent platform for local, regional and national organisations that are active in the field of adult education and lifelong learning. The focus is on non-formal education but Learn for Life is also a network organisation, which works together with organisations who are involved in formal adult education.

Learn for Life evolved from the international commission of the Foundation for Adult Education Centre Work and historically also encourages acquisition and exchange of experiences in teaching adults from the perspective of European policy regarding lifelong learning. In 2015, Learn for Life merged with De Nieuwe BV, which evolved from the Advisory Group on Education (Beraadsgroep Vorming).

As part of its international focus, Learn for Life is a member of the EAEA, the European Association for Education of Adults.

## 2. What is the Learn for Life mission statement?

The mission of Learn for Life is to ensure that all adults have access to high-quality education (both formal and non-formal),

which is tailor-made to their learning and development needs, so that they can develop optimally and play an active role in society in the broadest sense of the word. We view adult education as a human right and of benefit to all.

For Learn for Life, adult education and lifelong learning are not only a means of contributing to the development of individuals, but also to (the growth of) a sustainable and inclusive society where values such as social equality, peace and justice, social cohesion, democracy, active participation, creativity and innovation play an important role. In this, Learn for Life subscribes to the Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century from the EAEA, which was published in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

As far as Learn for Life is concerned, adult education and lifelong learning represents more than just offering adults opportunities to develop in their careers and to participate in the job market. Adult education also contributes to adults' broader participation in society as active and responsible citizens and gives them the tools for personal development and growth. We are constantly anticipating new social developments such as the immigration crisis and integrating refugees into our society.

In addition, adult education contributes to social cohesion and an inclusive society in which all groups can participate and contribute.

Adult education and lifelong learning can be about the acquisition of basic skills such as

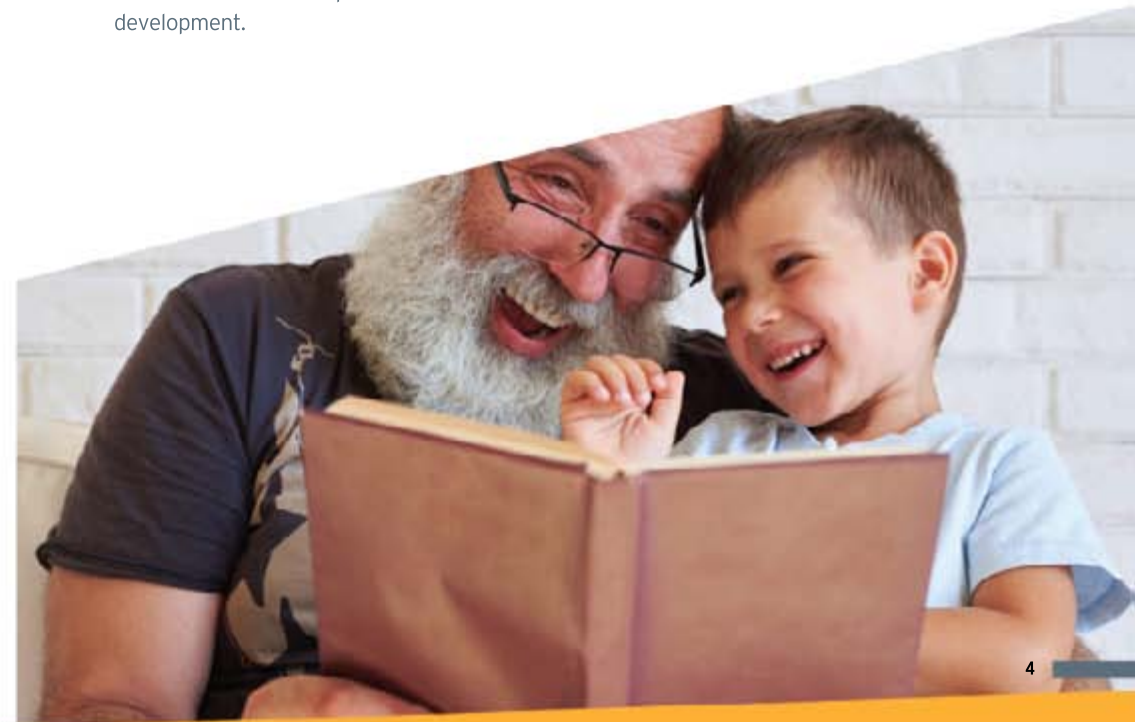
language, numeracy and computer skills, but also vocational training, hobby courses, creative development, and courses in sustainability, parenting skills and health literacy.

In order to achieve its objectives and maintain a broad perspective on adult learning and development, Learn for Life networks with a wide range of partners who are focused on various aspects of adult education, such as participation in the labour market, housing and integration and refugees, tackling basic skills and illiteracy, health literacy, tackling poverty and creating access to adult education in rural areas and areas with shrinking populations.

Lastly, Learn for Life aims to stimulate adult education and lifelong learning for groups who had mainly negative experiences with education in the past. Learn for Life wants to show them that adult learning and development can be inspiring and attractive for both their careers and their personal development.

As a result, Learn for Life supports all forms of adult education, which contribute to pleasure in learning and to the development of and increased confidence in one's own skills and competencies.

Learn for Life's main focus is non-formal education. In non-formal education, the focus is not on attaining official qualifications, diplomas and levels, which are tested through examinations. As a result, non-formal education is better positioned to anticipate individual learning objectives and focus on what adults can do. This form of education can often mean small steps in progression and results, which are more difficult to measure, such as personal development, self-confidence and social inclusion.



<sup>1</sup> Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, EAEA, Brussel. [www.eaea.org](http://www.eaea.org), <http://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/manifesto.pdf>

### 3. Who does Learn for Life focus on with regard to adult education and lifelong learning?

Learn for Life works for individuals and groups who do not have easy access to education, either because education is not easy for them or because they have to deal with physical or other disabilities or because they live in an area which is poor in education opportunities and therefore have a weaker position in society.

In addition, Learn for Life is aimed at professionals (paid and unpaid) who design lifelong learning for these groups in the field, or contribute to the development of adult education and lifelong learning through research.

### 4. Why is the mission of Learn for Life so important?

Many of the adults whom Learn for Life is aimed at are not easily motivated to start studying or learning again. They often view studying and training as an added source of stress.<sup>2</sup>

Only 17% of the Dutch population between 24 & 65 years of age avails of the services on offer. More highly educated people are increasingly signing up for schooling and development options, as reported by the Sap commission. However, this report also shows that less educated individuals are hugely underrepresented.

The number of early school-leavers is still far too high. In addition, there is an added difficulty for older people to return to the labour market after a period of unemployment or after redundancy. The number of people with poor basic skills (language, numeracy and computer skills) remains high. Lifelong learning has not been a priority in government policy over the last few years. Nevertheless, the cabinet's ambition to make the Netherlands a shining example of a knowledge and services economy requires investment in lifelong learning.

Furthermore, there is increasing inequality in society, both in terms of income and spending power, as well as the social and cultural context in which the highly and the less well-educated live. As far back as 2014, the WRR<sup>3</sup> and the SCP<sup>4</sup> warned of a further split in society in the publication 'Separate Worlds'.<sup>5</sup> Inequality is also on the increase in healthcare and when it comes to health and life expectancy, as well as participation in the digital knowledge society. This all contributes to an increased risk of the economic and social exclusion of the very groups Learn for Life wishes to serve.

### 5. How does Learn for Life set itself apart?

Lifelong learning is often viewed in relation to employability and career development. Many of the instruments employed by LLL are based on this premise. Learn for Life however focusses on a broad interpretation of lifelong learning and development,

as described in the Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and approaches lifelong learning not only from the angle of importance for the individual but also the importance for the development of an inclusive society. As Learn for Life sees it, this broad approach also means that there is more necessary for full participation than simply learning to read, write, do arithmetic and develop computer skills.

The development of Learn for Life also adds an international dimension to what we are working towards. We are active in European and international networks and projects and then transfer those experiences to the Dutch context.

Lastly, Learn for Life is a voluntary organisation and as such has an independent position in the field of education and lifelong learning. Learn for Life uses that position to promote cooperation and partnerships as stakeholders in the field. As a voluntary organisation, we are not in competition with other organisations in the field, but instead can play a unifying role.

<sup>2</sup> Advisory commission Sap, Continuing to learn works. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2017/04/04/advies-commissie-vraagfinanciering-mbo-doorleren-werkt>

<sup>3</sup> WRR is the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy

<sup>4</sup> SCP is the Netherlands Institute for Social Research

<sup>5</sup> Separate Worlds? Exploring socio-cultural contradictions in the Netherlands. 2014. A joint publication of The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) and the Scientific Council for Government Policy.

Ask many questions  
Life is a learning process.  
You are learner.  
Seek answers to the  
puzzles of your life

(Lailah Gifty Akita, Ghanese teacher and author)



# NEVER STOP LEARNING

## 6. The European context of Lifelong Learning

What Learn for Life does in the Dutch context dovetails nicely with what the European umbrella organisation EAEA highlights in its Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Building on its mission and vision, and rooted in international non-formal education, Learn for Life aims to contribute to the vision of the EAEA for strengthening adult education. We agree with the EAEA that non-formal education in particular contributes to:

- European strategies for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
- The values central to the European strategy, such as justice, social cohesion

and active citizenship, as well as creativity and innovation

- Increased employment opportunities by getting people (back) to work by recognising and enhancing their skills and competencies, and, if necessary, teaching them new skills
- Efforts to reduce the number of people (80 million) with poor basic skills. This group benefits less from lifelong learning than more highly educated people. Through adult education, less educated people can be reached and offered new opportunities
- The realisation of the EU goal of at least 20 million fewer people in (danger of) poverty or social exclusion. Through education and training these people can gain self-confidence and find ways of integrating socially or find a (better) job.

From employment and growth to the digital market, from climate change to the internal market, from migration to global questions and democratic changes, adult education is contributing to the achievement of both the EU Europe 2020 strategy and the agenda of Commission President Juncker.

In addition, education is an important tool in the realisation of the UN's 2030 agenda and the sustainable development goals which accompany it.

## 7. What does Learn for Life do to achieve its mission and objectives?

As a small voluntary organisation with a large network, both national and European, Learn for Life uses different methods to achieve its mission and objectives. As an organisation with limited resources, and reliant on volunteers who often combine their work for Learn for Life with a paid job or other activities, our contribution is modest.

Learn for Life is not in a position to undertake large-scale activity or research, but can, through a large network of partners, try, as effectively as possible, to contribute to the promotion of lifelong learning. This happens through participation in relevant (European) projects, lobbying, promoting research and taking part in (subsidised) projects and activities on a national and European level.

Learn for Life aims to be a unifying factor in the field of lifelong learning and adult education by setting up a network structure for professionals and organisations working towards our goals. They also want to form

a platform for this network, for opinion forming, knowledge sharing, and development through thematic meetings, round table talks and other forms of discussion and debate.

### Promoting adult education and lifelong learning

In its efforts to promote non-formal education and lifelong learning, Learn for Life has, over the last 6 years, focused mainly on organising the Festival of Learning. Learn for Life organises this day on a national scale and promotes local activities in the Week of Learning. From the start, the Foundation sought partners who wanted to contribute both financially, as well as through activities such as the Service Centres for Learning and Work, the Erasmus+ programme and the CINOP. The festival promotes lifelong learning through the election of toppers, learning masters and international projects and has grown into an important network movement. Currently, the Foundation is collaborating with partners to adopt a more regional approach to the festival and to limit the role of Learn for Life.

### Lobbying and Advocacy

LEARN FOR LIFE aims to encourage government, local, regional or national, in its management of adult education and lifelong learning (through the Education and Skills Training law and other legislation and incentive measures), as well as matching national to European policy regarding lifelong learning. The foundation will also respond if asked to do so and takes initiative by engaging with the relevant ministries and institutes on themes around internationalisation and adult education. The relevant ministries are the Ministry of Education and

the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

In addition, for the past few years, the foundation has - in cooperation with other parties - organised round table meetings with researchers and policy makers who are involved in adult education and lifelong learning on local, regional and national levels. Central to this are discussions and exchange of ideas on what European policy means - or should mean - in the Dutch context; and how non-formal education can be promoted.

### Contribution to European and international policy

Over the past 5 years, Learn for Life has not only followed developments in European policy with regard lifelong learning, but has actively tried to influence it through participation in various consultations and conferences (Future Forum), as well as through membership of organisations such as EAEA, EUNET<sup>6</sup> and EBSN<sup>7</sup>.

Learn for Life actively follows European policy on adult education through publications, forming networks and by - alone and in cooperation with others - developing and realising international projects. Examples of these are Learning Heart (2009-2011), Sowing the Learning Seeds (2010-2011), SMART (2010-2012), Vital Villages (Grundtvig workshop), I-CARE (2012-2014), SEA (2013-2014), Tackling Poverty (2014-2015), Mehrwert Europa Mehrwert Frieden (2014-2015), EIFEL (2015), AVA (2015-2016), Silver Learners (2016-2018), EI3I (2016-2018),

EISEL (2018-2019) and READ IT (2017-2019). The aim of participating in these European projects is to share our own experiences and learn from those of others. European funding for internationalisation programmes, such as the Erasmus+ programme make this possible.

Furthermore, Learn for Life is active in the field of awareness raising; publications on Dutch policy in relation to international development; and encouraging local and regional organisations to develop and grow their policy on internationalisation in non-formal education through the awarding of the annual prize for the most interesting project which promotes lifelong learning in an international context.

### Supporting professionals

Learn for Life focuses mainly on supporting professionals and (semi-professional) volunteers in non-formal education. In this, Learn for Life promotes exchange and cooperation between theory, research and practice within adult education. This is done by working together with universities, institutes for higher education, alumni organisations and research institutes.

In doing so, Learn for Life aims to promote exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of non-formal education and thereby improve quality.

Learn for Life board  
Utrecht, 2018



“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.” (Henry Ford)

<sup>6</sup> European Network for Education and Training. [www.european-net.org](http://www.european-net.org)  
<sup>7</sup> European Basic Skills Network. <http://www.basicsskills.eu>