

ASPBAE participates in DVV's 14th German Adult Education Conference 2016 and related events

7-10 June 2016, Berlin, Germany



Under the motto, '*Digital participation for all*', the 14th German Adult Education Conference included discussions on the impact of digitalisation on the education process and the risk of a digital divide.

The German Adult Education Association convened their 14th German Adult Education conference at the Berlin Congress Centre from 9-10 June. Under the motto '*Digital participation for all*', the conference included discussions on the impact of digitalisation on the education process and the risk of a digital divide. Opening remarks at the conference were given by the President of Germany, Joachim Gauck (who also inaugurated the event); Senator for Education, Youth and Science for the State of Berlin, Sandra Scheeres;

President of the Association of German Cities, Dr. Eva Lohse; and President of DVV, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer.

Sessions included parallel panels on topics such as how expanded learning environments change learning and identify and communication on the internet. Other issues discussed were education campaign for refugees, continuing education campaign for the digital society, and challenges for continuing education. The conference also included an Education Fair, an Advanced Learning Environments Lounge where information and projects were informally presented and discussed, and an Adult Education Festival of music and dance.

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, President of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), Camilla Croso, and President of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), Sandy Morrison, participated in the conference.

DVVI organised a Forum during the Conference on '*Digital –global – inclusive: More equitability through digitisation?*' where Camilla Croso, Sandy Morrison, and Le Huy Lam, Director of the SEAMEO Centre for Lifelong Learning, were among the panellists.

Speaking on whether digitisation provides an opportunity for educational justice or whether it strengthens the unequal access to education even more, ICAE President, Sandy Morrison, mentioned that there has been a spread in the sharing of indigenous knowledge and that it has opened up participation for societies that have historically been marginalised and where access has been difficult. She also said that, "*With a mobile society, the internet has been especially useful in establishing and maintaining connections and relationships wherever group members may be. Indigenous societies are no different and have like other societies maximised its use to create a presence and to tell their own stories in their own way; to teach their own knowledges; to create their own online communities, some of which have connections back to their ancestral lands; and to build linkages and opportunities including*



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employment and economic development. This development has been positive, has enhanced identity, and has been a tool for the perpetuation of language and cultures”.

GCE President, Camilla Croso, further highlighted that, *“The intention must be to address concrete educational issues – such as the democratisation of knowledge, improved learning, promotion of critical thinking, and of solidarity”.*

She further stated that, *“Inequalities and gaps are caused not only by asymmetric access to technologies, but also to asymmetric capacities to use different technologies... For educational justice to be promoted, it is paramount that the State ensure free connectivity access and consumption, as well as public debates on the technological instruments themselves, their packaging, and their content - all of which must not have a profit making motif, which will pose a risk of broadening divides...”*



ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, participated in a Round Table at the German Parliament, organised by DVVI.

Approximately 1500 participants from adult education institutions, research institutes, government, and the private sector participated in the conference. DVVI International was represented in the Conference through DVVI staff in Bonn in their various regional and country offices, and their international partners.



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At the front end of the Adult Education Conference, DVVI organised several events, optimising the rare occasion it is able to bring its various partners and international staff together in Germany.

On 8 June, DVVI organised a Round Table at the German Parliament on the theme *‘Tackling the Refugee Crisis – in Germany and Worldwide: The Role of Adult Education and Agenda 2030’*. The aim of the discussion was to, firstly, inform and exchange on how Germany deals with the refugee crisis and the role adult education plays in this regard. The debate also covered the role of education and development cooperation to prevent flight and migration in the future – from a German and international perspective. The discussion also focused on the relationship between the refugee crisis and the sustainable development goals. The panellists for the discussion, facilitated by Christoph Jost, Director of DVV International, were - Dr. Ernst Dieter Rossmann, Chairman of DVVI, Member of Parliament and Spokesperson of the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment; Dr. Bärbel Kofler, Member of Parliament and Official

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Representative of the German Government for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid; and Maria Khan, ASPBAE Secretary-General.

The refugee crisis is on top of the agenda in Germany now - it is foremost in the public debate and consciousness. More than 1 million asylum seekers have registered in Germany in 2015 alone.

The German folk high schools (German adult education centres) have been at the fulcrum of the refugee integration efforts, with (German) language classes one of the most immediate and highly in-demand tools for refugee integration. The German adult education centres have been important institutions for building a sense of German citizenship and national identity. They have offered spaces for mutual learning where citizens converge and discuss community matters that affect their lives. They play an active role in integrating a record number of refugees in the country and enjoy much prominence and are valued highly.



L-R - Dr. Bärbel Kofler, Member of Parliament and Official Representative of the German Government for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid; Sandy Morrison, ICAE President; and Maria Khan, ASPBAE Secretary-General, at the German Parliament.

Asked for her views on whether the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals were at risk due to the strong focus on supporting refugees and host communities and whether there was a need to rethink the SDGs, Maria Khan commented that, *"The SDGs were defined and agreed as the world confronted the unprecedented rise in the number of refugees and displaced people so addressing issues of forced displacement and the refugee crisis formed a strong part of the new development and education agenda. It is clear in the analysis and narrative of the SDGs that sustainable development cannot be realised without peace and security; in as much as peace and security stands at risk without sustainable development. The imperative to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development) are at the core of the new SDG agenda. Humanitarian assistance is essential – and is a befitting, moral response to the sheer reality and scale of human suffering and desperation. But without an investment in long term development, building lives of prosperity and dignity with justice – peace will continue to remain elusive."*

On the topic of investments in development cooperation and education to prevent migration and provide better living conditions, Maria Khan mentioned that education receives only around 2% of humanitarian aid. She mentioned a new financing initiative called 'Education Can't Wait' that attempts to change this. This new fund aims to mobilise \$3.5 billion over a five-year period to offer quality education to 13.6 million children in emergency situations over the next 5 years, and 75 million children by 2030. The fund target for the 1st year is \$150M.

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Maria stated that while welcome and certainly a good start, the initiative can and should go further. It focuses only on 3-18 year old children, fully ignoring the education needed by adults and other young people in emergencies. She also said that while education as a whole is underfunded, adult education is under-funded far more. She urged the adult education community to do much more to change this.

Maria Khan also participated in the DVVI Directors Meeting on 7 June where she offered an update on the follow-up processes and mechanisms related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and the SDG 4 in particular, related to education and lifelong learning. Following the update, the participants in the meeting deliberated on how DVVI, as a German organisation working in development cooperation for adult education at various levels - global, regional, and country level, including in Germany - can best contribute to and intervene effectively in the SDG/SDG4 processes in favour of youth and adult education.

ASPBAE also participated in a meeting of networks, hosted by DVVI and convened by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), to offer a space for ASPBAE, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), ICAE, and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to share their plans and updates on their campaigns and advocacy efforts, especially with respect to the SDG and SDG4 processes globally and in the different regions of the world. The participants of the meeting underscored the need for stronger, coordinated efforts to challenge the emerging trend to remove attention to adult literacy and adult education in the current efforts to concretise and roll out the new development and education agenda. While these form part of the new education agenda, the discourse on financing priorities within the existing financing frameworks for education – the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Education Can't Wait and the new Education Financing Commission – ignore adult literacy and adult education. ICAE was asked to steer in the efforts to organise a space where the different networks can deepen discussions on this and plan ways to address this worrying development.

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