

Finland – country report
Nordic-Baltic meeting, Stockholm
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Restructuring of organizations

The NGO organisations of folkbildning are restructuring themselves in Finland during 2013. FAEA will change its name and partly its member structure. It will continue as the umbrella organisation for all non-formal adult education in Finland. Aaro Harju was elected new chairman for FAEA in November.

Bildningsforum, the central coordination association for Swedish-speaking non-formal adult education in Finland is about to reorganize its activities within a “new” organization called Bildningsalliansen which has been founded from Förbundet för arbetar- och medborgarinsitut i Svenskfinland, FAMI rf, the organization for Swedish-speaking and bilingual municipal adult education centres . The idea is to expand the base of members to include folk high schools, study centres, summer universities and physical education centres. The recruitment process of new members is currently under way. Currently Bildningsforum employs five regional coordinators and one general secretary. The new organisation will be formally adopted on 18th March at the assembly. The spring of 2013 will entail mainly strategic work setting the new organization structure in place. It might interest this group to know that Bildningsalliansen has expressed an interest in Nordic issues, and would welcome a Nordplus project.

Actions to improve equal opportunities in learning

Shortly before Christmas the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) published a report with suggested actions to improve equal opportunities in education. The report builds on the development strategy for education and research 2011-2016 that sets a number of clear targets also in this field. The report is mostly focusing on formal education and vocational training. The aspect of opportunity mostly deals with socio-economic issues, such as family income and parents’ educational level as a factor in childrens’ education. While the aim on improving equal opportunities is very good, we are surprised at the absence of non formal adult education at every level in the report. Even the short chapter on adult education, while mentioning the word non formal adult education, spends the rest of the text discussing vocational training, an important topic for sure, and one that already has a lot of coverage in its own chapter. For some reason the Inquiry into the future of lifelong learning is not cited as a source at all, which is very surprising, seing as how the report otherwise quotes from other European research. We are sorry the report and the suggested actions are without the input of the non formal adult education sector, as it is very active in this field, as is contributing a lot.

Individual learning accounts

During 2012 a working group discussed the proposed new concept of individual learning accounts –a new way of subsidising adult education in Finland. This is a way of increasing demand through learning accounts and to increase the participation of under-represented groups by the use of study vouchers within folkbildning. Finland has had the system of study vouchers within folkbildning since 2008. The idea was brought forward that something new was needed, something that would encourage more people to actively engage in further education. Taken from the notion that the study vouchers

provided the learners with an active choice a concept was developed to implement learning accounts. Generally the group approached the concept critically, questioning what problems exactly this new system would fix. The proposal is careful to point out that a comparison with other countries having tried this provided no clear indication of success, in other words, there are no guarantees the system would improve the current situation. The proposal is now open to reactions from the stakeholders, and several responses are to be expected. As can be expected the sternest criticism was raised when the financing aspects were described. The researchers propose that almost one third of the money that currently goes directly to the adult education institutions within folkbildning, would finance the new study voucher system.