



Life-long learning: Bringing the family perspective to the education field

Tuesday 16th April 2024
09.00-16.30 CET
Dublin, Ireland





*European expert meeting on families and life-long learning co-organised by
COFACE Families Europe and Irish Countrywomen's Association*

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Life-long learning across the lifespan of families

Learning and skills are needed for both families and professionals supporting families, especially during key life transitions. Those transitions can be early childhood, adolescence and youth, and later in life with entry into the third age. Depending on the respective situation in life, those education services and needs can include parenting workshops, services of professional community-based centres as well as upskilling, peer learning opportunities.

Lifelong learning (encompassing formal, non-formal¹, and informal learning), plays a vital role in shared responsibility for education between families and professionals. It empowers families by promoting continuous education and personal growth across the life course, encouraging collaboration among families and communities for knowledge exchange. Lifelong learning also recognises the value of prior learning within families, bridging the gap between experiences and formal education. With flexible and individualised approaches, families can engage in education according to their interests and styles.

Making education and life-long learning work for social rights

Life-long learning of families and professionals working with families can support upskilling and reskilling to boost inclusive societies, support social change, and increase resilience in the face of key transitions (digital, demographic, climate). It is time to open up education in order to make education and life-long learning more age, disability, migrant, and family-friendly, aiming for education transformations and fully embedding this family skills agenda in policy and funding programmes at national and EU level.

¹ Non-formal learning takes place outside formal learning environments but within some kind of organisational framework. It arises from the learner's conscious decision to master a particular activity, skill or area of knowledge and is thus the result of intentional effort.

In considering the burden of education on families, it is crucial to involve relevant organisations supporting families and relevant service providers in the further transformation of the education system. These organisations advocate for equitable access to education, highlight the consequences of relying solely on families, and promote policies that support educational equity and put them into practice. Collaborating with those organisations enables governments to develop more inclusive educational policies, considering the diverse needs of families and fostering a fair education system.

European context

The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) puts a strong focus on education and lifelong learning, and namely on guaranteeing the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions to the labour market. The [2023 European Year of Skills](#) agenda aims to raise awareness around skills and the need to improve and develop skills to address skills shortages, while also helping people to get the right skills for good quality jobs through reskilling and upskilling.

Advocacy and collaboration between education and social rights NGOs further supports equitable education. COFACE advocates for educational policies and initiatives that support the diverse needs of families, ensure educational equity, and foster a supportive learning environment for all types of families. It does this especially through its European Family Lab.

Objectives of the European expert meeting

This expert meeting will bring together speakers from Ireland and Europe to help pave the way for family-centred education and learning systems. The expert meeting will be an opportunity to:

- Discuss the links between education and social rights
- Spotlight the diversity of educational approaches by featuring professionals working with families in different EU countries, to share their insights on developing learning materials by-with-for families;
- Build partnerships with key education stakeholders at national and European level

Working language: English

Participation on invitation only: NGOs representing families, policy-makers, and researchers.

PROGRAMME

Monday 15th April 2024 - Arrival of delegates in Dublin

14.00-18.00 **COFACE Administrative Council**

19.00-21.00 **Dinner**

Tuesday 16th April 2024 - European expert meeting

9.00-9.15 **Registrations/coffee**

9.15-9.30 **Welcome**
Hilda Roche, National President of ICA
Annemie Drieskens, President of COFACE

9.30-11.00 **Setting the scene. Bringing the family perspective in education:
diversity of approaches**

*The family perspective in education consists of different approaches, namely education **by** families, education **with** families, and education **for** families. This session will reflect on these three dimensions, consider the pedagogical differences between the educational approaches, and explore diverse options to support lifelong learning with a family focus.*

- Beybin Elvin Tunç, Education Programme Coordinator, COFACE Families Europe
 - Andrea Lapegna, Deputy Director, Life-Long Learning Platform
 - Dearbhail Lawless, CEO, National Adult Learning Organisation of Ireland (AONTAS)
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11.00-11.30 **Stretching break**

11.30-13.00

The family perspective in education – country spotlights

This session will provide examples of how family-centred education is implemented in different EU countries, providing examples along the lines of the three approaches: education by, with and for families. Giving inputs about how to support families in learning, how they customise and deliver their education programmes with a family perspective; telling us their process and learning points about centralising families (either as a topic, or as participants, or as contributors, etc.) in their education programmes, as well as the added value and benefits of this approach.

- Victoria Forget, Operational Assistant for life-long education, Ligue des Familles, Belgium
- Rachel Cassen, Director, LEAP Ireland
- Daniel Martinovic, President, Rainbow Families Croatia

13.00-14.00

Lunch break

14.00-15.30

Opening up education to bring the perspectives of families: key recommendations and next steps

In this session, the transition from national to EU-level initiatives will be examined, with emphasis placed on the importance of advocacy, lobbying, partnership building and the development of education programmes tailored to the diverse needs of different families. Crucial strategies aimed at incorporating family perspectives into education policy will be explored. The focus will be on developing actionable steps to enhance education opportunities and lifelong learning policies by, with, for families.

- Dr. Justin Sinnott, Manager, Transformation Project Management Office, SOLAS-Learning works, Ireland
- Dr. Antonia Torrens, General Manager, KMOP, Greece
- Davide Muraro, Policy and Project Coordinator, European Association for the Education of Adults

15.30-15.45

Stretching break

15.45-16.30

Concluding session

During this session we will harvest the concluding reflections of all participants.

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