



ROADMAP FOR POPULAR ADULT EDUCATION IN FINLAND 2030



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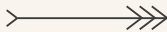
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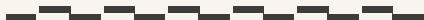
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Introduction

The current decade has begun with a lot of reasons for concern: a pandemic, accelerating climate change, economic polarisation, Russia's war in Ukraine, and the challenges to Western democracy are just a few examples of the many factors making the future unpredictable. There is reason to be worried as problems are accumulating, and fear and insecurity take hold of the mind.

‘Popular adult education is a historical phenomenon whose Finnish variation and implementation has placed Finland on the world map as part of the Nordics and Europe.’

This is a freely translated quote from the strategy #VST22 of Finnish Adult Education Association (FAEA), that assertively emphasizes *ecosocial Bildung* as the symbol and commitment of the 2020s. This demonstrates the long and impactful arc of non-formal and popular adult education evolution in Finland, as part of a wider phenomenon. The question is: *how will this arc of development continue?*

Modern strategy work is no longer linear, it doesn't follow the logic of production lines and obvious cause-and-effect relationships. In the strategy #VST22 clear distance was taken from that type of outdated thinking:

‘We are living in a world where everything affects everything. The ecosystem thinking is a guiding principle of the 2020s in politics, finance, and in the merging learning environments of the popular adult education.’

In the educational narrative, the term “ecosystem” is now linked, not only to natural ecosystems but also to *digital transformation* that creates seamless ecosystems as part of lifelong learning and employment services in Finland. FAEA is asking *whether all citizens have equal opportunities to be part of the ecosystem of continuous and lifelong education?*

In educational policy, a strong transition from degree-based to competence-based policies is taking place. This gives popular adult education an opportunity to influence on *how it will appear on the renewed map of the education system*. The roadmap is seeking an answer to this key question, relying on *value-based education policy, where popular adult education is seen as a platform for lifelong learning*.

The roadmap of Finnish popular adult education is aiming for this ambitious goal in education policy on three in-twined paths of change:

*ecosocially sustainable,
recognized and validated, and
flexible and emergent
popular adult education.*



1 Ecosocially sustainable popular adult education





Characteristic for a civilized community is that its members are helping out the strength in the others' uniqueness... and the strength of the community is greater than the potential of its individual members.

(Maria Joutsenvirta & Arto O. Salonen)¹



The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development has in its strategy for 2022–2030² highlighted the diverse meaning of education and Bildung (sivistys) in the implementation of the United Nations Agenda 2030:

'[...] the shift towards a more sustainable society is made possible by changes in our worldview, a broader and deeper understanding, as well as new skills and knowledge. Learning and education are keys to social change. Education shows and has an influence in the form of competence, creativity and an intergenerational sense of responsibility. It does not involve only thinking and reflection but also practical measures. Education and cultural change lead towards more sustainable lifestyles and comprehensive wellbeing. The value base for sustainable lifestyles builds on the notion of humans being part of nature and depending on the vitality of ecosystems. Education, science, culture and the arts maintain and renew the identities of individuals and communities, providing tools to better understand the human-nature relationship and interaction.'

The commission has identified six areas of change, among them *Education, competence and sustainable lifestyles*. This includes *revising society's value base and mainstreaming sustainable lifestyles, promoting cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education, and strengthening understanding and competence that supports sustainable development*. A shift in the education paradigm towards ecosocial Bildung is seen as an important driver in this change.

Ecosocial Bildung gives equal emphasis to the ecological, economic and social aspects of sustainable development. While the ecological sustainability is underrepresented in the educational offerings, it is present in certificates for sustainability, in the society's commitments, and in the daily routines of work and study. In recent years, the organisations within the Finnish Adult Education Association (FAEA) have made progress in including ecosocial Bildung, transformational learning and everyday sustainability competences, among others, in their projects and course programmes. The transformation has begun, but there is still much to be done when moving from projects to long-term, everyday activities within the popular adult education institutions and organisations.

Considering its activities, value-based popular adult education identifies the values that are both sustainable and change-oriented. The ecosocial Bildung approach responds to this challenge by acting as a sparring partner, encouraging the organisations to do more through civic activism and within a larger political change movement in the society.

A document by European equality bodies, *Valuing Equality*, includes a cluster map that can be used to measure equity and achieved equality based on various values.³ The strength of the cluster map is that it makes the values visible.

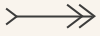
*What values are promoting,
neutralising or slowing down equity
and equality in practice?*



The following values promote equality and equity

- ▲ **universalism**, including, e.g., broadmindedness, protecting the environment, inner harmony, social justice, wisdom, world peace, and unity with nature.
- ▲ **self-direction**, including, e.g., freedom, curiosity, creativity, self-respect, and choosing one's own goals.
- ▲ **benevolence**, including, e.g., honesty, helpfulness, a spiritual life, loyalty, meaning in life, and true friendship.

Universalism, self-direction and benevolence are self-evident values of ecosocial Bildung, to be considered also when evaluating the Finnish Act on Liberal Adult Education. Obviously, popular adult education embraces even some traditional values as well as values related to security and performance orientation. The organisations maintaining and supporting the popular adult education institutions have much influence on shaping of the value profile and mission.



2

Recognized and validated popular adult education





The first step towards recognized and validated popular adult education is to acknowledge the diversity and unique characteristics of the various institutions mentioned in the Liberal Adult Education Act as they have been shaped in the course of history:

‘The five different types of popular adult education institutions – *adult education centres, folk high schools, educational centres, summer universities and sports institutes* – each have developed and continue to develop within their own institutional track. Initially, the operations were based on very autonomic definitions of each institution’s mission. As laws regulating the funding of the institutions have been introduced since the turn of the millennium, *the steering by state has gradually increased*. The relationship between the popular adult education institutions and the state can be characterised by *resource dependence*.⁴

In the current challenging situation, the role of FAEA has been described as *the expert organisation bringing together the area of popular adult education, characterised by expertise, cooperation in representing common interests, organisational development (including projects), and transition from repetitive and organisation-focused ways to renewing and networking activities*.⁵

FAEA’s mission in relation to policies in education and Bildung can be summarized as follows:

FAEA makes it possible for popular adult education to transition towards recognized and validated popular adult education in Finland and even internationally.

The workshops for this roadmap have raised a need for a *structural change* post Covid-19 as offering of remote courses is in a steady increase even without social restrictions. This can also be seen as a demonstration of digitalisation where several technical interfaces can be served on the same platform of the digital ecosystem.



How will the different types of institutions within popular adult education relate to the future of digital platforms that will allow the educational offerings to the whole population or even abroad? How will the next reform of popular adult education be like, including re-evaluation of structures and funding later in the 2020s?

The recognized and validated popular adult education relies on research-based information, leading with knowledge, and shared expertise between researchers and educational institutions. The joint research programme Freedom and Responsibility of Popular Adult Education (SVV) – between three universities and FAEA – strengthens the adult education work's impact through multidisciplinary and critical interaction. Research on popular adult education is funded and coordinated long-term, allowing a recognised and validated position for the whole sector, both in Finland and internationally.

The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (Kvs) will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2024. Countrywide, the year will be designated as a year focusing on *sivistys* and *Bildung*, as the *Year of Sivistys and Lifelong Learning*. It will give the organisations within popular adult education a great opportunity for cooperation in lifting their profile and gaining visibility in the Nordics, in Europe, and even globally.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has in its action plan *The Nordic Region – towards being the most sustainable and integrated region in the world* focused on three themes: *A green Nordic Region* promoting a green transition of our societies, *A competitive Nordic Region* based on knowledge, innovation, mobility, and digital integration, and *A socially sustainable Nordic Region* promoting inclusivity, equality and interconnectivity.⁶

The recognized and validated popular adult education is strongly tied to the transition of education policy from degree-oriented to competence-based policies, in connection with the lifelong learning reform. The competence-based systems are linked to digital study registers and European principles of MyData, stackability and portability. Individual studies and badges will become visible even without a connection to a degree.

European Council resolution on a *New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021–2030*⁷ includes alignments for a holistic education policy making types of adult learning and education (formal, non-formal, and informal) more equal. Participation rate for adults (25–64 years old) should rise to 47% by 2025, and to 60% by 2030. Concurrently, the learning and teaching needs of people in age bracket 65+ will also be invested in.

The Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) hosted by Morocco in June 2022 adopted a draft for *Marrakech Framework for Action – Harnessing the transformational power of Adult Learning and Educa-*

tion.⁸ The framework will steer the lifelong learning polities of the 2020s as the ministers of education from each of the 142 member countries have signed the proclamation. The framework emphasizes the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), concern for the climate change and increasing illiteracy, and gives recommendations for ecologically, economically and socially sustainable education policies globally by 2034.

Climate change, accumulation of education, and ageing of the population create huge challenges but also offer an opportunity to reach a recognized and validated position as a platform for lifelong learning. This will, however, require own initiative for structural development in the field of popular adult education.



Competence badges and informal micro-competences that are planned and defined within the wider national framework of competences, are a *new way of making completed courses and study units within popular adult education visible. Individual accounts in learning registers* are part of the same education policy narrative, having been subject to much critical debate on European level.



3

Flexible and emergent popular adult education



Transformative learning and education is not only transforming the individuals, it is equal sharing of learner's perspectives in communities and spaces.
(Deborah Oniah)⁹

Agile learning is increasingly seen as part of the continuous learning that takes place at work ‘.. by developing the work, for example by testing, solving problems, evaluating actions taken, and continuously improving the activities.’¹⁰

The ecosystem for agile learning includes even values close to popular adult education as mentioned in a strategy book for agile learning by Leenamajja Ojala and Soili Meklin: ‘In the system for agile learning, knowledge and technology are currently emphasized. The experts on mind, psychologists and other experts on people are still scarcely represented in the ecosystem for agile learning. The ecosystem needs more experts on people. It would be important to that even humanity, emotional intelligence and Bildung would get developed. The learning strategy should consider people competences and developing of the human aspects, because they will be ultimately critical to success.’¹¹

The actors within popular adult education should define their view on and position in the ecosystem of agile and continuous learning, which gets progressively stronger connected to the open data and digitisation trend within technology and AI of the 2020s. This rapid process of social change also entails challenges from the viewpoints of inclusion, equality and equity.

The flexible and emergent popular adult education sees the rapid techno-economic transformation in a constructive and critical way, as the changes drive polarising changes in structures and interaction. The instrumental view of human beings where a human becomes an *ability-capital machine*¹², does not create a sustainable future for the entire living biosphere.

How will the popular adult education emerge in the light of the planetary phenomena and challenges of the 2020s? At the moment, in the early 2020s, small significant glimmers of light can be seen on the horizon of significance. The change path can be described as follows:

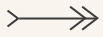
The societal and democratic debate on Bildung becomes livelier and anchored in wider networks. Popular adult education does not have a monopoly on the Bildung debate, but thanks to our freedom, we can take the initiative and boldly introduce the value discussion of Bildung in the siloed education system. Further, that discussion can be brought to the core of the societal debate, for example regarding the transitional stages of work and life, the state of democracy and human rights, and the holistic two-way process of immigrant integration.

Flexible and emergent popular adult education starts with the human and grows in communities. The emerging popular adult education emphasizes neither narrow competences nor confrontation between 'hard' natural sciences and 'soft' humanistic concepts of Bildung: 'There are tens, if not hundreds, of talents and abilities: spatial creative, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, artistic, and social ability, and ability related to self-awareness. It is not good for the society if the "soft Bildung" gets pressed under the boot. It is important to understand that talent develops through a process.'¹³

The United Nations Agenda 2030 has defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for macro-level changes in the society. However, the agile change will start with each individual's inner world, on a micro level. Collaboration MindShift, in Sweden, has developed a framework for Inner Development Goals (IDGs), including five parts:

*Being – relationship to self,
Thinking – cognitive skills,
Relating – caring for others and the world,
Collaborating – social skills, and
Acting – driving change.*¹⁴

*Emerging work on education and Bildung will require warm networks of a new type, as well as strategic partnerships with other change agents. Popular adult education actors will choose their strategic partners based on values, among the brave and change-oriented members of the warm networks.*¹⁵



4

Quality goals by year 2030





ECOSOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE POPULAR ADULT EDUCATION:

The ecosocial Bildung challenges the actors within popular adult education to clarify the interaction between values and everyday operations. The organisations and educational institutions will transition from repetitive activities to ecosocially sustainable and renewing activities.

Ecosocially sustainable Bildung will become an integrated part of the organisations and educational institutions through certification systems. Agenda 2030 sustainability goals will be taken into account in a holistic way. By 2030, every popular adult education organisation and institution will have obtained a certificate for sustainable development.

Popular adult education is part of the Nordic, European and global green transition where citizens of all ages realign towards a sustainable future.

The popular adult education roadmap will promote networks for sustainable future by including the groups most in need of education, and by creating low-threshold services and learning paths during transition to increase wellbeing of the citizens and to ensure the unity of the society.

Funding for popular adult education is secured through a predictable and long-term system of government transfers and grants as part of the ecosystem for lifelong and continuous education.

Popular adult education's national network will be utilised more effectively than before in promoting the accessibility and equality of education. Popular adult education will be seen as an important actor supporting the transitions between second and third level studies, in learning at work, and in the competences and well-being of the senior citizens.

**The well-being of nature and the planet
will also increase human well-being.**



RECOGNIZED AND VALIDATED POPULAR ADULT EDUCATION:

The role of popular adult education becomes highly visible by guarding the unity of the nation and the equality of education. That is relevant for the European and global education policy, where Finland is seen as a forerunner.

Popular adult education is a platform for lifelong learning for all citizens, including new immigrants yet without Finnish citizenship. Popular adult education acts as a reliable partner and comprehensive promoter of integration through education.

The Finnish education system recognizes and validates studies in popular adult education as developing civic competences and general knowledge that is not limited by degrees or professions. The freedom in setting the study goals is seen as a resource for both work and life in general.

The preservation and development of democracy is the broader social ethos of popular adult education. Active and democratic citizenship grows from learning communities and communal learning.

The accessibility of education and the equality of opportunities must be ensured by year 2030 despite the demographic and economic development that is polarized and concentrated in growth centres.

Popular adult education balances the digital polarisation and defends the citizens' digital rights and rights to data. Digital citizen skills enable inclusion, interaction and lifelong guidance.

Discretionary learning and individual accounts in learning registers must not risk the funding of popular adult education. On the contrary, they must be seen as part of the equal and fair income system for the students.

Popular adult education's diverse and competence-based course descriptions are registered in the national KOSKI system and combined – in applicable parts – with the national framework for qualifications and other competence modules.



FLEXIBLE AND EMERGENT POPULAR ADULT EDUCATION:

Flexible and emergent popular adult education reaches the individuals most in need of education and the ones living in vulnerable conditions. Low-threshold training/education enables equal and flexible progress on the learning path.

Popular adult education is a catalyst for change in the society, a pluralistic and multicultural agent for a change that promises all citizens inclusion and reliable partnership along the path of lifelong learning.

Popular adult education offers an accessible, open and community-oriented learning environment.

Popular adult education invites for critical thinking and dialogue, opening space for participatory democracy and deepening the connection with nature.

Popular adult education is based on a holistic view of a human, in which people and their communities blossom and grow to their full potential following their values towards their inner goals.

Popular adult education promotes and caters for physical, mental and spiritual well-being by increasing physical exercise in all age groups equally.

Actors in popular adult education and other education together will build interfaces for learning through warm networks locally, regionally and nationally.

*Art and culture oriented Bildung
creates empowering and
resilient lifelong well-being.*

NOTES

- 1 Maria Joutsenvirta & Arto O. Salonen: *Sivistys vaurautena. Radikaalisti, mutta lempeästi kohti kestäväää yhteiskuntaa*. Basam Books 2020, 183 pp.
- 2 *Strategy of the National Commission on Sustainable Development 2022–2030*. Publications of the Prime Minister's Office 2022:12. Especially the chapter 1.2 Education, competence and sustainable lifestyles, pp. 20–29.
- 3 Elena Blackmore, Bec Sanderson & Richard Hawkins: *Valuing Equality*. Public Interest Research Centre 2012. <https://equineteurope.org/publications/using-values-to-create-a-more-equal-accepting-europe> The cluster map can be found as appendix to this roadmap. The cluster map was used at a workshop of the EAEA seminar Transformative learning and values on 31 May 2022. https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/valuing_equality.pdf
- 4 Jenni Pätäri, Sini Teräsahde, Aaro Harju, Jyri Manninen & Anja Heikkinen: *Vapaa sivistystyö eilen, tänään & huomenna. Vapaan sivistystyön rooli, asema ja merkitys suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa ja koulutusjärjestelmässä*. Finnish Adult Education Association (FAEA) & Freedom and Responsibility of Popular Adult Education (SVV) programme 2019, p. 7.
- 5 Finnish Adult Education Association's action plan for 2022, point 3. *Sivistyskeskusteluun ja -työhön vaikuttaminen uudella tiekartalla* (Influencing the discussion and work on Bildung through a new roadmap)
- 6 Nordic Council of Ministers: *The Nordic Region – towards being the most sustainable and integrated region in the world*. Action Plan for 2021 to 2024. Nordic Council of Ministers 2020. <https://doi.org/10.6027/politknord2020-728>
- 7 *Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021–2030*. 14485/21. Council of the European Union 2021. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14485-2021-INIT/en/pdf>
- 8 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning: *CONFINTEA VII Draft Marrakech Framework for Action. Harnessing the transformational power of Adult Learning and Education*. 17 June 2022.
- 9 Deborah Oniah's presentation at the EAEA seminar Transformative learning and values on 31 May 2022. Deborah Oniah is Nigerian adult educator with transformative learning, living in Ireland.
- 10 Leenamajja Ojala & Soili Meklin: *Ketterä oppiminen 2 – strategiasta käytäntöön*. Kauppakamari 2021, p. 257.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Heikki Kinnari: *Elinikäinen oppiminen ihmistä määrittämässä. Genealoginen analyysi EU:n, OECD:n ja UNESCO:n politiikasta*. Turun yliopisto 2020. Doctoral thesis.
- 13 Professor emeritus Kari Uusikylä criticised meritocracy: 'Ei ole tervettä, jos koko ajan pitää olla jotain enemmän kuin muut' (It is not healthy if one constantly needs to be something more than others). Yle 31 August 2021. <https://yle.fi/aihe/a/20-10001088>
- 14 For more information: Inner Development Goals (IDG) framework www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org/framework
- 15 According to Anne Birgitta Pessi, warm networks are formed through interaction, compassion and co-passion, as well as from the social capital of trust, solidarity and cohesion. More information in her lectures, e.g., a lecture about the power of human interaction held on 10 February 2020.

APPENDIX: Cluster map of values (Valuing Equality)

Figure 2. Values map including value groups

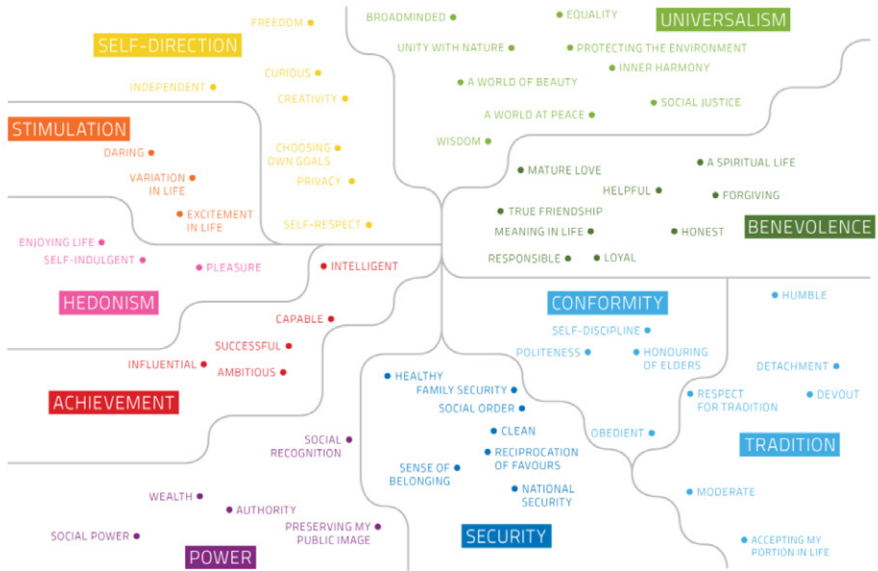












Table 1. Value groups and definitions

	UNIVERSALISM UNDERSTANDING, APPRECIATION, TOLERANCE AND PROTECTION FOR THE WELFARE OF ALL PEOPLE AND FOR NATURE.		POWER SOCIAL STATUS AND PRESTIGE, CONTROL OR DOMINANCE OVER PEOPLE AND RESOURCES.
	BENEVOLENCE PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE WELFARE OF PEOPLE WITH WHOM ONE IS IN FREQUENT PERSONAL CONTACT.		ACHIEVEMENT PERSONAL SUCCESS THROUGH DEMONSTRATING COMPETENCE ACCORDING TO SOCIAL STANDARDS.
	TRADITION RESPECT, COMMITMENT AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE CUSTOMS AND IDEAS THAT TRADITIONAL CULTURE OR RELIGION PROVIDE THE SELF.		HEDONISM PLEASURE AND SENSUOUS GRATIFICATION FOR ONESELF.
	CONFORMITY RESTRAINT OF ACTIONS, INCLINATIONS AND IMPULSES LIKELY TO UPSET OR HARM OTHERS AND VIOLATE SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS OR NORMS.		STIMULATION EXCITEMENT, NOVELTY AND CHALLENGE IN LIFE.
	SECURITY SAFETY, HARMONY, AND STABILITY OF SOCIETY, OF RELATIONSHIPS, AND OF SELF.		SELF-DIRECTION INDEPENDENT THOUGHT AND ACTION - CHOOSING, CREATING, EXPLORING.



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