



European Basic Skills Network Pécs Conference Declaration 2023

§1. The European Basic Skills Network (EBSN) is an association of policy level stakeholders engaged in adult basic skills. Its objective is to promote excellence in policy design and policy implementation, at European and national level, in a field that has considerable impact on education, employment, social inclusion, the fight against poverty, and sustainable economic growth.

§2. The participants in the European Basic Skills Network 2023 conference titled *Aspects of Quality in Basic Skills Provision – Professional Development at All Levels of Implementation*, held in Pécs, Hungary, hereby pledge to continue working to support quality in basic skills learning in local, regional, national and European systems of adult learning, education and training.

§3. This Conference Declaration builds on and upholds all previous EBSN Conference Declarations¹, which called on policy makers to develop coherent, adequately financed national policies and programmes for basic skills, develop models for learner-centred delivery and adequate systems for continuous professional development of practitioners² working with adult basic skills.

§4. The participants in the EBSN 2023 conference pledge to continue working to meet the need for upskilling of basic skills practitioners and recognition of their professional status throughout Europe, by:

- ▶ Taking account of previous and ongoing projects aiming at the professionalisation of basic skills teachers and trainers and exploring future directions by using tools that already exist,
- ▶ Contributing where possible to the evaluation, dissemination, and, if possible, adaptation of EBSN Professional Development Series,
- ▶ Exploring the potential of policies such as the EU approach to micro-credentials in flexible pathways, to make basic skills trainer qualification more attainable,
- ▶ Cooperating with the EBSN and with their national networks to adapt the Professional Development Series and the EBSN Capacity Building Series to the needs of their respective countries,
- ▶ Sharing within the EBSN network their experiences, project results and effective practices regarding the establishment of sustainable models for learning, including blended learning, in basic skills provision and professional development for teachers and trainers.

§5. Quality improvement in basic skills learning strongly depends on research and innovation in this field. Therefore, EBSN calls for more concentrated action amongst academic institutions, policy makers, basic skills providers, practitioners and learners and other stakeholders to collaborate on new research agendas and the sharing of effective practice.

Global Context

§6. Participants of the EBSN Conference 2023 recognise that the aftermath of the global economic, political, and humanitarian crises of COVID and the war in Ukraine has led to many challenges in European societies. Reforms establishing social cohesion and resilience should regard adult basic skills as a key element and a gateway to successful skills policies.

¹ [Berlin 2018](#), [Tallinn 2019](#), [Online 2020](#), [Valletta 2021](#), and [Vienna 2022](#)

² The term 'practitioners' encompasses a range of role descriptions used in EBSN member countries, such as tutor, trainer and teacher.



§7. Accordingly, EBSN conference participants conceptualise adult basic skills as not limited to literacy, numeracy or digital skills, but as encompassing wider competences such as:

- ▶ financial and health literacy
- ▶ entrepreneurship
- ▶ environmental awareness
- ▶ critical thinking
- ▶ digital and online safety
- ▶ active democratic citizenship, peace-fostering values and conflict-solving skills

§8. Participants of the EBSN 2023 conference support work to address international economic, social and environmental challenges, including UNESCO's Global Alliance for Literacy³ and the CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action 2022⁴, where these align with the EBSN Conference Declarations. We continue to welcome the possibility to cooperating with basic skills stakeholders beyond Europe.

Policy Context

§9. EBSN conference 2023 participants note that central financial measures addressing the training needs of individuals can be steered to help adults with basic skills needs to engage in basic skills development programs and can also help them to (re-)discover benefits to learning in general. This declaration calls for adequate and sustained investment in adult basic skills at the EU and national levels.

§10. Participants of the EBSN Conference 2023 welcome the New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030's⁵ call on Member States to "raise the occupational status of and support the professionalisation of adult educators and trainers and improve their initial and continuous education and training and professional development, including by supporting the use of innovative approaches."

§11. Alongside the New European Agenda for Adult Learning, participants note a number current and emerging EU policy initiatives which have the potential to boost opportunities for adults to learn basic skills, and/or the professionalisation of basic skills practitioners. Examples include:

- ▶ The European Year of Skills 2023
- ▶ The European Skills Agenda and Upskilling Pathways recommendation
- ▶ Individual Learning Accounts

§12. Conference participants are supportive of these actions, and other equivalent national initiatives, where the implementation aligns with EBSN conference declarations. They also call for action to raise awareness of the impact of basic skills programmes. Many EBSN member countries cite examples of initiatives such as learning festivals, promoted by learning city-regions and other learning communities and networks organisations, to highlight the benefits of basic skills.

Endorsed by the participants at the EBSN's 2023 Pécs Conference, June 16th, 2023

³ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/global-alliance>

⁴ <https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/marrakech-framework-action>

⁵ [Council Resolution on a New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030](#), p. 13.