

# Lifelong Learning For All In Ireland

Paper 4



## Welcoming everyone

Adult education and lifelong learning play an important role as Ireland and countries across Europe adapt to changing demographics and migration. By welcoming and integrating migrants, and by ensuring access to lifelong learning for older people, adult and community education is able to build cohesion amongst seemingly disparate parts of our communities.

## Community Education

All avenues into lifelong learning are welcome and should be recognised and resourced. Yet there is little doubt that the community education sector in Ireland is best placed to welcome new citizens as well as those least likely to participate in lifelong learning (such as those with below secondary education).

At the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) 10 year anniversary celebration in November 2017, Tánaiste Simon Coveney said it well, “Community education in Ireland not only enhances learning but also fosters empowerment, and makes a strong contribution to civic society.”

**“When you start living in different country, education allows you to see its language, culture, people. It’s nice experience [sic]”**

**Learner at the National FET Learner Forum in Carlow 2018**

## Acknowledgements

AONTAS would like to acknowledge the work of the Learning and Work Institute in the UK, and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) for work on issues of adult education and lifelong learning.

## Social Cohesion, Demography, and Migration

This series on the value of Lifelong Learning For All In Ireland was inspired by presentations and conversations at the AONTAS Lifelong Learning for All policy event held 9 March 2018 at Buswell’s Hotel, Dublin, as part of the 2018 Adult Learners’ Festival week.

### Tolerance and Understanding

Often overlooked benefits of lifelong learning are the benefits that come from interactions with people outside our normal social and family circles. Engaging with people who are different from us is proven to widen our perspectives on the world and help us understand the people who inhabit the space in our communities alongside ourselves. The most successful platform of engaging at a community level in Ireland is through community education. At the 10 year anniversary of the Community Education Network at Croke Park in November 2017 Tánaiste Simon Coveney said “Community Education in Ireland not only enhances learning but also fosters empowerment, and makes a strong contribution to civic society.”

**AONTAS members are at the forefront of welcoming new migrants; and welcoming learners of all ages. Examples of success in these areas include 2017 Star award winners EPIC Programme, Warrenmount CED, and Fáilte Isteach.**

### Tolerance of Migration

A survey from the European Commission published on 13 April 2018 shows that in Ireland 80% of people think that the integration of immigrants is successful. This makes Ireland the EU country most likely to see integration positively. The survey also found that across the EU increased interaction with immigrants, as well as the

education level of the survey respondent, were both likely to indicate the persons positive or negative perception of immigration. The more interaction someone has with immigrants the more accepting they are of immigration. The more education someone has, the more accepting they are likely to be of immigration. Finally the survey found that Europeans generally believe everyone has a role to play in making migration and the integration of immigrants a success. 90% of Europeans and 96% of Irish citizens believe educational institutions have a role to play in making migration a success.

### Demographics, Ageing, and Community

A challenge for all countries in Europe is changing demographics. In most countries, including Ireland, populations are either ageing, becoming more urbanised, or becoming more dependent on technology. In most cases society is experiencing all three changes. These changes place challenges on ageing citizens who want to remain engaged with their communities but who are losing their social connections. Lifelong learning and efforts to engage adults in education help to combat these issues of social exclusion. In turn lifelong learning and adult education help to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of participants, something which is discussed further in Paper 3 of this series of papers.

## Equal Opportunity

Opportunity of education is not equal in Ireland today. At the CEN 10 Conference in November 2017 Tánaiste Simon Coveney stated that learning, as demonstrated successfully in many parts of Ireland through community education, “can also be a process of personal and community transformation for those who may not have had an equal opportunity for education in their youth.”

EUROPEANS SAY **EVERYONE** HAS AN **IMPORTANT ROLE** TO PLAY IN THE **INTEGRATION** OF IMMIGRANTS



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