International Council for Adult Education Strategic Guidelines
2024- 2027

- PROPOSAL -

Preamble

In the spirit of collective ambition and guided by the principles of empowerment and inclusivity, we present this Strategic Guide for the future work of ICAE. This document embodies our unwavering commitment to advancing ALE as a dynamic force for transformative change, championing human rights, and promoting social justice.

As a reflection of our dedication and exchange within the ICAE network, this guide offers a visionary framework that celebrates the diversity and resilience of our shared journey. Rooted in the collective wisdom, shared experiences of our global community, and invaluable contributions of our predecessors, it aspires to shape the future of ALE while respecting the autonomy and creativity of those who will carry it forward.

The guiding principles of the document reflect our belief in the transformative potential of adult education. While it sets forth a visionary path, it does not seek to prescribe a singular course of action. Instead, it serves as a compass, based on rich experience of ICAE in the past years, offering inspiration and guidance for the exciting journey that lies ahead.

May this Strategic Guide serve as a source of inspiration, fostering dialogue, creativity, and collaboration. May it empower the next generation of leaders within ICAE to continue our collective efforts in shaping a more equitable, just and informed world.

While resource availability for the current Strategy implementation is limited, it also serves as a framework for future scenarios, including the possibility of additional funding. To address both aspects, the Strategy will be operationalized and elaborated through the development of Annual Action Plans. These plans will outline the strategy's implementation with existing resources while remaining adaptable to potential funding increases, ensuring flexibility and adaptability in the implementation of Strategy.

Looking back: A brief review

The recent stage of ICAE's work was marked by significant challenges, but also many achievements. The global landscape, including the position of civil society, continues to worsen, and the circumstances for the work and activities of global NGOs have become more challenging. In addition, the decreased importance of youth and adult education in global agendas has led to further financial and funding cuts, which have affected ICAE and its work.

In 2020, ICAE faced big changes as it moved from the Philippines to Serbia, which required considerable adaptations, and changes in regulations and practices. Furthermore, the financial crisis of 2018-2019 continued into 2020-2021, which forced ICAE to reduce operational costs, staff costs, and Secretariat costs to a minimum. Despite these challenges, ICAE remained committed to its mission and members, and continued to be the voice of adult education and lifelong learning in the global advocacy spaces, especially for the review of SDGs. ICAE also remained the main civil society partner of UIL/UNESCO and took part in all important international activities relevant to education of youth, adult, and older people.

Thanks to its strong network, ICAE was able to be present in many advocacy spaces and to be the voice of grassroots-level NGOs, linking global agendas and local/national civil society actors. Despite the considerable disruptions to ICAE's operations caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the organization swiftly adjusted to the new circumstances, thanks to its longstanding use of ICT tools since 2014. ICAE continued to be active in all advocacy spaces, advocating actively for the human rights approach to education and lifelong learning, elimination of all discrimination and inequalities. ICAE also continued capacity building through webinars and maintained intensive communication with its members through virtual communication, organising a massive ALE campaign using ICT tools and social media. Most important in the last period, ICAE organized the Civil Society Forum before the CONFINTEA VII and actively participated in the later, contributing significantly to the Marrakech Framework for Action. ICAE remained the only global voice for adult education in the UN context and for the SDGs review, serving as a co-chair of the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group and taking part in the Coordination Mechanism of Major Groups and other Stakeholders.

Strong links with the members and several European projects helped ICAE to survive this period financially. In 2022, the Open Society Foundation recognized ICAE's efforts and achievements by providing an initial grant that allowed us to effectively engage with CONFINTEA VII and conduct IALLA. This was followed by a second grant that will allow us to conduct CONFINTEA VI follow-up activities.

Global challenges and threats to the human right to ALE

The problem of youth and adult education and lifelong learning (LLL) is significant. 758 million adults, including 115 million youths aged 15-24, lack basic literacy skills, with women being disproportionately affected. Adult learning and education remain neglected within SDG 4, with only a few countries achieving the goal of a 50% improvement in adult literacy as of 2015.

Numerous threats and challenges profoundly affect adult education. Pandemics, such as the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, disrupt education systems worldwide. The digital revolution, driven by AI, and the growing demand for digital skills pose challenges and risks of exclusion. The ever-changing landscape of work requires continuous knowledge and skill updates for adults. Additionally, the increasing impacts of climate change and environmental degradation add further complexity, while issues like migration, conflicts, and gender inequality continue to hinder access to education, particularly for women, refugees and migrants.

The challenges to democracy have been mounting, as authoritarian tendencies in governments increasingly restrict civic activism and reduce their accountability to citizens. Education emerges as a pivotal tool in bolstering democracy by informing and empowering populations.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated financial difficulties for civil society organizations and the adult education sector. Low-income countries face significant annual funding gaps, while the privatization of education systems poses a threat to the fundamental right to education.

ICAE's core principles:

- **Education as a fundamental human right, a common good and a collective endeavour**:
    - ALE advocates for education as a fundamental human right, emphasizing inclusion, equity, cooperation, participation, and solidarity. It assures the right to quality education throughout life and strengthens education as a public and common good.
    - ALE is a basic right enabling all other rights, fostering peace and democratic global citizenship education, and supporting educators who work to raise awareness and teach about human rights, contributing to the safeguarding of democratic values.

- **Learner centred**: ALE places learning at the forefront, empowering adults of all ages to take control of their own lives and confront dynamic changes in local and global contexts. It helps address challenges across political, social, economic, and cultural spheres throughout different stages of life and work.

- **Participatory, inclusive and emancipatory**: ALE promotes genuine participation and inclusivity, embracing diverse backgrounds, characteristics and experiences. It helps to challenge prevailing paradigms, unjust societal structures, and global power dynamics, inspiring transformation and innovation toward distributive justice and a future-oriented approach. ALE plays a pivotal role in achieving equality among individuals, with a particular focus on gender equality, as well as equality among countries.

- **Democratic:** ALE embraces empathy and solidarity whilst empowering people to challenge the power relationships, structural inequalities and financial interests behind the problems, contributing to a vision of society that values justice, solidarity and socio-ecological well-being.

- **Lifelong and lifewide**: ALE advocates for inclusive and equitable lifelong learning opportunities, beyond traditional educational settings, including special importance of non-formal education and learning. It recognizes the vital role of adults in decision-making across diverse life domains, emphasizing that adulthood constitutes the longest phase in most people's lives, shaping homes, communities, countries, and the world.

Mission: (acc. to the Constitution)

ICAE's mission is to promote right to education and learning for young people and adults, which includes older people, in pursuit of social justice within the framework of human rights in all their dimensions, to secure the healthy, sustainable and democratic development of individuals, communities and societies.

Vision:

A world in which democratic participation, justice, equality, respect, care and solidarity among diverse people are core values and in which adult learning and education are recognised as a public and common good and a driver/catalyst for active citizenship and informed participation, peace, social and ecological justice and sustainable development. ALE, as an integral part of the right to lifelong learning, contributes to the attainment of all other human rights and to a better future for all.

Four goals, along with a set of prioritized objectives, are as follows:

GOAL I: Advocacy, policy contribution and enhancement of alliances for the right to adult learning and education in the global agendas;

GOAL II: Advancement of capacity building and training programmes, and research and development;

GOAL III: Promotion of an integral, holistic and intersectoral approach to lifelong learning;

GOAL IV: Strengthening organisational development, governance, networking and communication.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Engage with policymakers at the national and international levels and advocate for policies that promote youth and adult learning and education across various agendas

OBJECTIVE 1.2: Empower civil society and citizens to actively monitor and engage with agendas, initiatives, and programmes relevant for adult learning and education.

OBJECTIVE1. 3: Organize and support awareness campaigns, in collaboration with members and partners, to prioritize youth and adult education, lifelong learning, and non-formal education in diverse agendas. Enhance the visibility and recognition of ALE at all levels, strengthening ICAE's global partnership role.
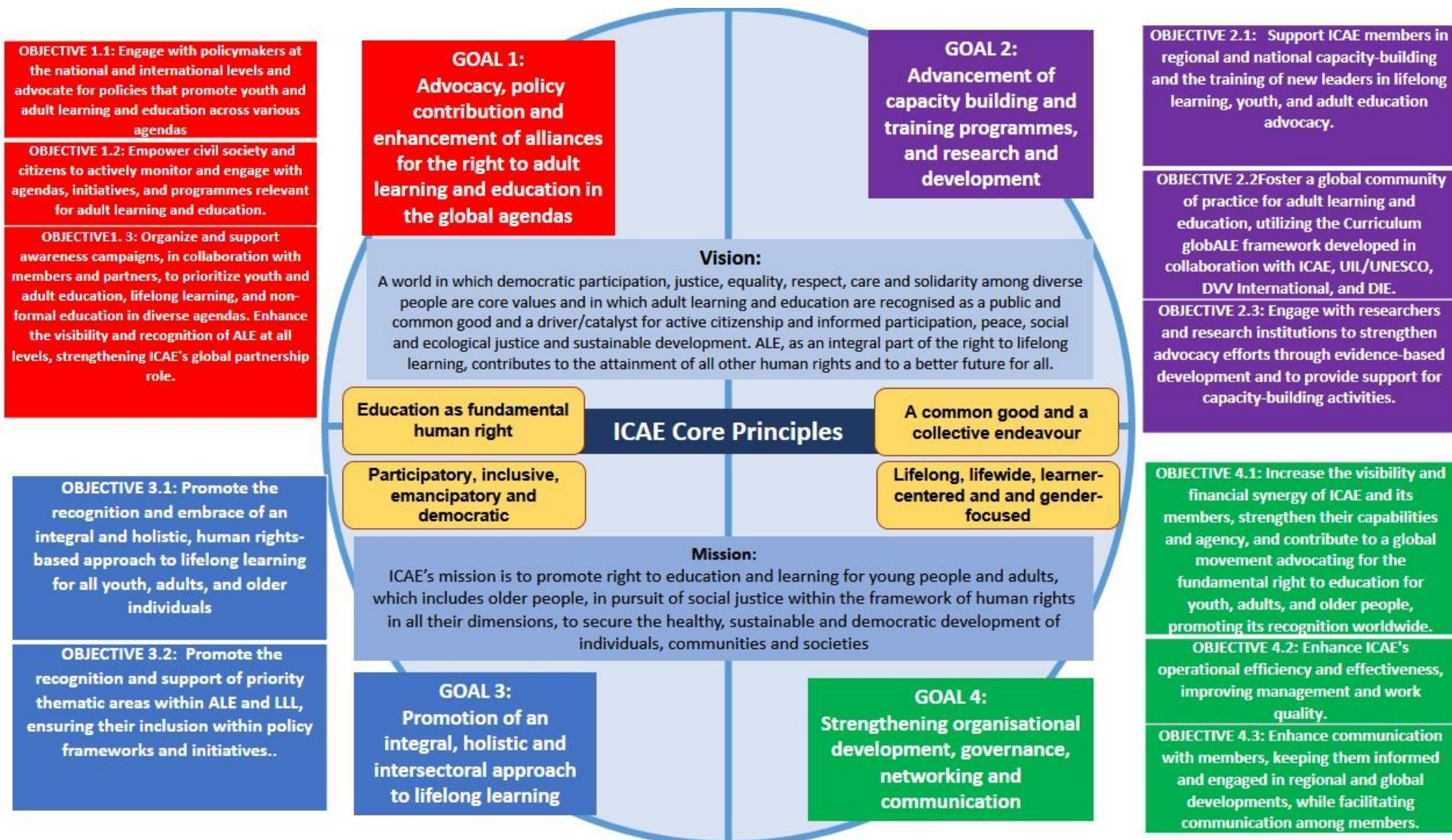
GOAL 1:
Advocacy, policy contribution and enhancement of alliances for the right to adult learning and education in the global agendas

GOAL 2:
Advancement of capacity building and training programmes, and research and development

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Support ICAE members in regional and national capacity-building and the training of new leaders in lifelong learning, youth, and adult education advocacy.

OBJECTIVE 2.2 Foster a global community of practice for adult learning and education, utilizing the Curriculum globALE framework developed in collaboration with ICAE, UIL/UNESCO, DVV International, and DIE.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: Engage with researchers and research institutions to strengthen advocacy efforts through evidence-based development and to provide support for capacity-building activities.

Vision:
A world in which democratic participation, justice, equality, respect, care and solidarity among diverse people are core values and in which adult learning and education are recognised as a public and common good and a driver/catalyst for active citizenship and informed participation, peace, social and ecological justice and sustainable development. ALE, as an integral part of the right to lifelong learning, contributes to the attainment of all other human rights and to a better future for all.

Education as fundamental human right

ICAE Core Principles

A common good and a collective endeavour

Participatory, inclusive, emancipatory and democratic

Lifelong, lifewide, learner-centered and and gender-focused

Mission:
ICAE's mission is to promote right to education and learning for young people and adults, which includes older people, in pursuit of social justice within the framework of human rights in all their dimensions, to secure the healthy, sustainable and democratic development of individuals, communities and societies

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Promote the recognition and embrace of an integral and holistic, human rights-based approach to lifelong learning for all youth, adults, and older individuals

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Promote the recognition and support of priority thematic areas within ALE and LLL, ensuring their inclusion within policy frameworks and initiatives..

GOAL 3:
Promotion of an integral, holistic and intersectoral approach to lifelong learning

GOAL 4:
Strengthening organisational development, governance, networking and communication

OBJECTIVE 4.1: Increase the visibility and financial synergy of ICAE and its members, strengthen their capabilities and agency, and contribute to a global movement advocating for the fundamental right to education for youth, adults, and older people, promoting its recognition worldwide.

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Enhance ICAE's operational efficiency and effectiveness, improving management and work quality.

OBJECTIVE 4.3: Enhance communication with members, keeping them informed and engaged in regional and global developments, while facilitating communication among members.

GOAL I: ADVOCACY, POLICY CONTRIBUTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF ALLIANCES FOR ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION RIGHTS IN GLOBAL AGENDAS

OBJECTIVE 1: Engage with policymakers at the national and international levels and advocate for policies that promote youth and adult learning and education across various agendas.

Specific objectives:

- Engage, in collaboration with regional members, with policy makers and stakeholders at national, regional, and global levels, including UN, UNESCO, UIL, EU institutions, and other relevant stakeholders and multilateral platforms.
- Participate actively in global policy creation and monitoring processes, particularly those related to Agenda 2030/SDG 4, HLPF, CCNGO, CONFINTEA VII follow-up, MFA implementation, and 'Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education'.
- Promote the vital role of adult learning and education as integral components that bridge various agendas and domains, emphasizing their significance in achieving diverse goals and objectives.
- Advocate for the recognition of the importance of youth and adult education within the lifelong learning framework by funding through relevant financial schemes, policy programmes, and development cooperation initiatives. Assist in tailoring policies, programmes, and funding to meet the needs of marginalized groups.

OBJECTIVE 2: Empower civil society and citizens to actively monitor and engage with agendas, initiatives, and programmes relevant for adult learning and education.

Specific objectives:

- Enhance partnerships and agreements with civil society organizations and networks, including the encouragement of regional organization creation where needed. Build coalitions and broaden alliances for ICAE, while deepening cooperation with grassroots organizations and social movements, such as the World Social Forum.
- Facilitate the participation and active engagement of civil society representatives from local and national levels, in collaboration with ICAE regional and national members, in relevant regional and global fora, events and initiatives.
- (Co)organise civil society events, such as global and regional meetings for policy monitoring, side-events and various advocacy initiatives.
- Facilitate two-way links between global and local contexts by aligning global goals with regional and national priorities. Enhance the visibility of local efforts and facilitate the effectiveness of global agendas at the local level.

OBJECTIVE 3: Organize and support awareness campaigns, in collaboration with members and partners, to prioritize youth and adult education, lifelong learning, and non-formal education in diverse agendas. Enhance the visibility and recognition of ALE at all levels, strengthening ICAE's global partnership role.

Specific objectives:

- Coordinate social media campaigns independently and in collaboration with members to strategically target key stakeholders. Utilize compelling visuals and messaging to effectively raise awareness about the benefits of adult education. Build upon the outcomes of the 'we-are-ALE' campaign and actively involve its network.
- Foster collaborative partnerships with local community organizations to promote the recognition of local and national adult education and non-formal education providers. These partnerships will involve organizing activities and events to highlight their contributions, leveraging ICAE's network of regional and national members to engage with local communities and amplify our impact.

GOAL II: ADVANCEMENT OF CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES, AND RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE 1: Support ICAE members in regional and national capacity-building and the training of new leaders in lifelong learning, youth, and adult education advocacy.

Specific objectives:

- Continue organising IALLA (International Academy for Lifelong Learning) with participants from all world regions, covering diverse topics.
- Strengthen IALLA alumni network, foster exchange and mutual learning.
- Organise webinars and ICT-based trainings, workshops and knowledge exchange meetings.
- Offer members and partners resources, including toolkits, guides, manuals, and best practices, to enhance their capacity-building and enable the development and delivery of effective adult education programmes and initiatives.

OBJECTIVE 2: Foster a global community of practice for adult learning and education, utilizing the Curriculum globALE framework developed in collaboration with ICAE, UIL/UNESCO, DVV International, and DIE.

Specific objectives:

- Facilitate global collaboration among adult education practitioners, policymakers, and researchers to exchange knowledge, best practices, and innovative approaches in LLL and ALE, fostering a shared vision and understanding of key challenges and opportunities.
- Promote the regional and national implementation of Curriculum globALE to foster comprehensive lifelong learning and adult education programmes with a focus on universal values such as human rights, equity, dignity, and inclusion.
- Support and promote the professionalization of ALE, including professional development, social recognition, and working conditions for practitioners and organizations involved in ALE.

OBJECTIVE 3: Engage with researchers and research institutions to strengthen advocacy efforts through evidence-based development and to provide support for capacity-building activities.

Specific objectives:

- Gather and analyse information to identify best practices, assess needs and challenges, and evaluate the effectiveness of different interventions and measures, thus strengthening policy and advocacy actions.
- Collaborate with relevant organizations and platforms, including UIL (esp. in monitoring of MFA), UNESCO, GEMR, Global Alliance for Literacy), ESREA, universities, socially engaged scholars, and others, to advance knowledge in the field of youth and adult education, including literacy, basic skills, and broader fields of education, through research and critical inquiry.
- Strengthen research capabilities to empower civil society organizations for effective engagement in policy forums. Focus on evidence-based advocacy and analysis, particularly in human rights, the right to education, equal access for diverse groups, and thematic areas like sustainable development, climate justice, and decent work.

GOAL III: PROMOTION OF AN INTEGRAL, HOLISTIC AND INTERSECTORAL APPROACH TO LIFELONG LEARNING

OBJECTIVE 1: **Promote the recognition and embrace of an integral and holistic, human rights-based approach to lifelong learning for all youth, adults, and older individuals.**

Specific objectives:

- Foster intersectoral collaboration and partnerships to promote education and LLL across multiple sectors, including workplace, family, community, social services, and education.

- Work together with ICAE members to support policies and programmes that promote lifelong learning and education for marginalized and vulnerable populations, with a particular focus on women.

- Support the development and implementation of programmes and initiatives that promote a holistic approach to education and skills development, with a particular focus on basic literacy, vocational training, and citizenship.

- Promote and facilitate the comprehensive integration of a human rights-based approach throughout all aspects of and across all relevant domains and endeavours.

OBJECTIVE 2: **Promote the recognition and support of priority thematic areas within ALE and LLL, ensuring their inclusion within policy frameworks and initiatives.**

Specific objectives:

- Support literacy and basic skills as foundational components of comprehensive LLL strategies, serving as the cornerstone for knowledge acquisition and skill development in all areas, with particular emphasis on empowering women.

- Support vocational education and training programs to facilitate employment, job advancement, and career development, fostering equitable and sustainable economic growth, decent work, human dignity, and enhanced social mobility.

- Utilise digital literacy and ICT skills to reach out and include groups facing barriers to digital inclusion, such as language, disability, or income disparities. While harnessing the benefits of technology and AI, remain vigilant about potential risks, including issues related to privacy, accessibility, ethical considerations, and the risk of over-reliance on ICT, reducing education to technological solutionism. Additionally, support effective digital pedagogies and innovative teaching and learning models across face-to-face, distance, and blended formats.

- Foster global citizenship and intercultural competence within lifelong learning, cultivating awareness, understanding, and a culture of peace. Encourage engagement with global issues and diverse cultures, including education for sustainable development and climate justice, while emphasizing critical thinking and social justice.

- Promote reflection, exchange, and intervention on emerging thematic areas in the current global context where education of youth, adult and older people can make significant contributions.

GOAL IV: STRENGHTENING ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE, NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVE 1: Increase the visibility and financial synergy of ICAE and its members, strengthen their capabilities and agency, and contribute to a global movement advocating for the fundamental right to education for youth, adults, and older people, promoting its recognition worldwide.

Specific objectives:

- Develop further and actively implement existing sustainable funding strategy that includes diversification of funding sources, such as grants, individual donations, corporate sponsorships, and partnerships with other organizations.

- Strengthen relationships with existing funders and partners by providing regular updates on project outcomes, impact, and financial management, and by building a culture of transparency and accountability.

- Collaborate with members to develop organizational mechanisms that maximize resources and enhance financial synergy. Explore opportunities for joint fundraising and project applications, including intergenerational, intersectoral, and inter-thematic approaches.

OBJECTIVE 2: Enhance ICAE's operational efficiency and effectiveness, improving management and work quality.

Specific objectives:

- Improve communication channels among staff, partners, and stakeholders for timely information exchange, feedback, and sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

- Enhance monitoring and evaluation processes to support programmes and projects in meeting their objectives, and to facilitate that data is collected, analysed and used to inform decision-making.

- Use modern digital tools to improve management practices, such as project management software, data analysis tools, and virtual collaboration platforms.

OBJECTIVE 3: Enhance communication with members, keeping them informed and engaged in regional and global developments, while facilitating communication among members.

Specific objectives:

- Develop further and actively implement existing communication strategies and plans to inform members about relevant regional and global developments in youth and adult education and lifelong learning. Utilize social media outreach, public relations campaigns, and events.

- Implement strategies to overcome language barriers and enhance access to ICAE's resources and services for non-English-speaking members, including translating key documents and materials.

- Facilitate member engagement through online forums, webinars, and events for sharing best practices, idea exchange, and project collaboration.