



FinALE “Where to Invest”

Funding Adult Education

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Executive Summary

This research was commissioned by AONTAS, the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation. The researchers acted in an independent capacity seeking advice and support from AONTAS where necessary. The research forms part of the European Commission (EC) funded Erasmus+ project entitled **Financing Adult Learning in Europe** (FinALE).

The research employs a mixed-methods methodology and measures types of, and experiences with ways in which community education is funded across six European countries. Quantitative results are through synthesised findings from n102 providers participating in an embedded survey and recruited through their connections to AONTAS (Ireland), Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal), Niedersächsischer Bund für freie Erwachsenenbildung e.V (Germany), Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria), The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark), and the Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland.

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of survey participants self-identify as locally managed community education providers and 26% are private adult education providers. Ten percent (n10) identify themselves as public adult education providers with a final 5% citing other. The research also offers a more in-depth analysis of findings from a sub-set of n56 participants who are members of the Irish-based AONTAS Community Education Network.

The literature reviewed as part of this report identifies a European-led policy shift towards a prioritisation of the needs of the labour-market. Community education has always supported and upskilled those who are unemployed or people who wish to secure more sustainable employment. However, current policy changes have led to a prioritisation of an employability agenda to the detriment of the other functions of community education such as personal development, community cohesion and collective action for social justice.

The research draws out the important role played by independent not-for-profit providers. These providers largely work with specific population groups such as those who have left school before completion, people parenting alone, those who are long term unemployed, minority groups such as migrants and Irish Travellers, and others who are impacted by structural inequality.

There is congruence with these report findings from previous research (AONTAS, 2013; Fitzsimons, 2015) where multiple funders and different funding models are accessed by a single community education provider. The most common model uncovered in this study is **Programme Funding**; a model FinALE describe as where “a provider is contracted to provide a range of courses, based on estimated levels of student interest and potential uptake. The provider proposes anticipated costs which are based on individual circumstances.” Sixty-four percent (64%) of participating organisations are in receipt of programme funding with 35% of all survey participants identifying this as the principal model of funding they receive.

The second most prevalent model is **Project Funding**, a model FinALE describes as where “a funder contracts providers for a service which, as well as delivering learning, may have several other strands outside the normal scope of a provider's activity. This might include developing new courses or recruiting particular types of learners and will involve cooperation with other organisations or providers. Projects are of a fixed duration and budget, meaning that once completed, there is no expectation that funding will continue. - Similarly, funding may not be given if project objectives are not met”. Fifty-percent (50%) of all participants receive some form of project funding, with 20% identifying this as its principal source of funding.

The third most common model is **Formula Funding**. FinALE describe this as where “a standard amount paid to achieve a specified outcome. Outcomes/performance may be measured through teaching hours, student enrolment levels, or programme completion rates. Contracts awarded based on statistical criteria e.g. infrastructure, no. of people reached etc. Funding aims to cover full costs of a programme, but provider has flexibility regarding how income is spent on different cost elements. It might also include partial funding of programmes or organisational issues such as staffing salaries etc. The formula can also include expected income from learner fees”. Ten percent (10%) of all participating organisations identify formula funding as the model most associated with their funding, whilst a further 15% identify this model as the second most popular model they work within.

A majority of 62% believe the model of funding they are currently operating within is useful and appropriate to their activities. When asked if the process of applying for funding is simple and uncomplicated, 43% agree, 38% disagree and 20% are not sure if they agree or disagree. There is mixed-opinion on the ease of administration, where 49% agree their

funding model is easy to administer, 20% are not sure, and 22% disagree. This variety of responses is likely to depend on both the model in use and the jurisdiction in question.

For many years, literature on funding for adult education has raised concerns about the uncertainty of funding for community education (Committee on Adult Education, 1973; Fleming, 1989; AONTAS CEN, 2011; Fitzsimons, 2017). This study, somewhat confirms this assertion with just 42% disagreeing with the statement “*The funding model my organisation/institution uses ensures we are sustainable and guarantees our future as providers of adult education*”. Thirty-seven percent are in agreement with the remaining respondents not sure.

One fifth (20%) of all those surveyed believe that the current model they are working within is ineffective in reaching the target population their organisation would ideally like to be working with whilst a further 24% are not sure. There is also concern about the burden of responsibility with just 37% believing this is equally shared between employers, providers, learners and the State. A sizable 38% are not content with current the balance of responsibility.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the people who access community education are unfamiliar with how providers are funded. Many qualitative contributions describe a situation where learners are unaware of the funding challenges providers face with 39% of providers unaware of how learners feel about how community education is funded.

The Irish context

Community education in Ireland carries the same principles of democracy, participation and equality that characterise international models of practice. In this research, the landscape of community education in Ireland is drawn out across two interdependent trajectories; 1) that which is **directly** funded by the state and delivered through a national network of Education and Training Boards (ETBs), and that which is **indirectly** funded by the state and managed by independent non-profit organisations. These latter organisations are the focus on this report with all n56 participating organisations recruited through the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN). The CEN describes itself as “a political platform of independent community education groups” (AONTAS CEN, 2008). The research was

conducted over three phases; an online embedded survey (n56 respondents), one-to-one interviews (n8 participants) and e-interviews (n6 participants). A key limitation to Europe wide research is inconsistency in terminology (EAEA, 2016). To combat this, some survey responses were re-categorised by the researchers to ensure consistency across how Irish providers classify funding.

Where to invest? mirrors previous research on funding for community education confirming that independent Irish providers rely on a multiplicity of funders. Much financial precarity is uncovered for some providers with some research participants operating on a year-to-year or even course-by-course basis. This instability is not new, rather similar findings date back to the 1970s (Committee on Adult Education, 1973).

There have been some developments since then, particularly the funding of a vibrant Community Sector during the 1990s and 2000s which relied on both national and European grant aid for its actions (Fitzsimons, 2017). Some of the funding accessed by independent providers is through the state managed Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES), a scheme managed by state run ETBs.

Since 2008, there has been a significant downsizing of this sector resulting in both financial restrictions and non-negotiable closures and mergers (Harvey, 2012; Bissett, 2015; Fitzsimons, 2017). In 2015, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) was introduced. SICAP has an operational budget of €25 million, €19 million of which is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) through its Programme for Employability (Pobail; 2016, p. 8). Its three goals are: 1) To support and resource disadvantaged communities and groups addressing exclusion and inequality, 2) To address educational disadvantage through life-long learning that uses community development approaches and, 3) to engage with those unemployed so they can be supported into the labour market by improving their “work-readiness” and by supporting entrepreneurialism. Many community sector organisations that previously operated independently have been subsumed into larger organisations (once Local Area Partnerships) who successfully tendered for contracts to implement a programme of work that satisfies SICAP goals.

A strong European Commission (EC) employability agenda has also initiated other changes such as the closure of Vocational Education Committees (VECs) now merged into ETBs along with Ireland's National Training and Employment Authority, FÁS. A new Further

Education and Training Authority, or SOLAS (est. 2013), has resumed responsibility for the ALCES, as well as other budgets that are also associated with local delivery of education. SOLAS's 2014 Further Education and Training (FET) strategy cites an operational budget of €640 million. In 2016, €10,727,731 (or 1.64%) of its total budget was spent on community education. The FET strategy outlines plans to replace Ireland's needs-based funding model with an outcomes based model (SOLAS, 2014, p. 115). Critics of the FET strategy view its emphasis as overly weighted towards a strong labour-market focus with a limited acknowledgement of the broader functions of education, with community education principally viewed as a way to recruit the most marginalised onto these types of programmes (Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 146; O'Reilly, 2014, p. 163).

Findings from this study demonstrate how 48% (n27) organisations cite **Programme Funding** as the principal model they draw from. Seventeen (n17) of these providers cite an ETBs as their principal funder. Eleven of organisations also rely on other funding such as small grants, learner fees, and philanthropic donations. Other's funded via programme funding cite the Community Services Programme (n4), Drugs Rehabilitation Programme (n1), Training and Support Childcare Programme (n1) as their main source of funding.

Twenty-three percent (23%) access **Project Funding**, this represents n13 participating organisations, n8 of who are funded through SICAP. Two (n2) are Family Resource Centres thereby funding through TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency. A further n2 draw from Community Grants, one cites a Department of Justice grant administered through the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks (NCCWN). One research participant (n1) does not specify the source of project funding. Many of these organisations also rely on other sources of funding.

Seven organisations (16%) receive **Direct Grants**. Three of these (n3) grants are for addiction related services, n2 access funding via the Health Services Executive and n4 organisations receive funding from an either an Urban Regeneration Company, The Higher Education Authority, an ETB, and as a subsidy from a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) respectively.

Four organisations (8%) cite **Learner Fees** as their principal source of funding each of which also cite heavy reliance on other such as volunteerism and philanthropy.

One organisation (2%) cite **philanthropic funding** as their principal source, 2% (n1) cite **Formula Funding**, 2% (n1) cite loans and a final 2% (n1) cite **Training Leave**.

Across all participating organisations, n27 (48%) rely on more than one source of funding. Six different government departments are named as funders of Community Education. These are the Department of Education and Skills, Department of Social Protection, Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Health, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Eight organisations in SICAP are funded are funded through the cross-departmental classification of 'The Irish Government and European Social Fund'.

A majority of 57% agree with the statement '*The funding model I currently use is useful and appropriate to my institution/organisation*', 30% disagree and 13% are not sure if they agree or disagree. Where research participants choose to comment further, emerging themes related to restrictions placed on providers by funders, uncertainty about the security of funding into the future, and the demands associated with meeting funder requirements.

Forty-three percent (43%) agree with the statement '*the funding model my organisation/institution currently uses makes the process of applying for funding simple and uncomplicated*' whilst 39% disagree and 21% are not sure. Contextual comments reveal a sense that applications forms can be cumbersome, that there is inconsistency in the information sought, and that, for some organisations, there is very short notice before confirmation of funding is received. There is mixed opinion on the administrative demands placed on organisations once funding is received. Fifty-one (51%) agree '*the funding model my organisation/institution currently uses is easy to administer*', 33% disagree and 16% are not sure.

This survey sought practitioner opinion on the current sustainability of funding asking people to respond to the statement '*the funding models my organisation/institution uses ensures we are sustainable and guarantees our future as providers as adult education*'. Fifty-nine percent (59%)

of survey respondents disagree with this statement, with 23% agreeing, 18% are not sure if they agree or disagree. Contextual themes to emerge a demoralising impact is reported as providers survive amidst a climate of uncertainty. Some of those in receipt of three-year funding are positive about the sustainability of this model.

When asked about the impacts of funding on the work of community education, dominant themes to emerge relate to difficulties providing ancillary supports such as additional tuition and outreach work. Most 59% agree *'the funding model I currently use is effective in reaching the target group my organisation/institution would ideally like to work with'*, a statement 20% disagree with. Almost half of all respondents are unsure of learner thoughts on how community education is funded with 36% agreeing learners seem satisfied with current models used.

There is some criticism of other stakeholders principally employers and also the state. When responding to the statement *'the funding model my institution/organisation uses reflects a balanced responsibility between government, employers, individuals (learners) and other relevant stakeholders'*, 29% agree, whilst 48% disagree. Twenty-three percent (23%) are not sure if they agree or disagree. For those who are critical, a dominant theme is deference to an employability agenda that raises questions about authentic interest in combatting exclusion outside of through the provision of work-related training.

Eight (n8) one-to-one interviews enable more in-depth themes to emerge. Participating providers report a sense of unfairness and perceived lack of transparency and equity in the allocation of resources. Interviewees report a disconnect between them, and their funders as their activities are sometimes 'shoehorned' into prescriptive funding models. Specifically issues again emerge about a weighty employability agenda and an inflexible, outcomes model which thwarts innovation and development. Research participants believe there is limited understanding of what outcomes really mean for the people that they work with and how this approach to funding doesn't reflect the diversity of community education.

There is some frustration with labour-market activation targets that some providers must work to with a sense of clarity required as to what is 'activation' actually means. Other pressure identified is a funder-led push towards accreditation, the insistence on progression

even when this might not be the right thing for a participant, and inconsistency in how ETBs award funding. There is also praise for the flexible and supportive attitudes from staff within ETBs.

Fears about future costs emerge relating to costs when re-engaging with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the national authority for the accreditation of learning.

Providers make specific recommendations namely multi-annual funding, more holistic policy development, research and advocacy, national dialogue, and greater collaboration across providers. Innovative suggestions include online collated funding resources, an innovations fund, and the development of alternative ways to measure the outcomes of community education.

All (n6) of those to participate in e-interviewing believe it is vitally important that community education providers retain their independence. The most commonly cited reason is the benefits to the participants of community education who are often disinclined to access education directly provided by the state. Another strong theme relates to the importance of independent Boards of Directors, spaces identified as more flexible, and made up of the population groups who typically access community education. When asked about potential mergers with ETBs, many of those to participate pointed out the benefits both to ETBs and independent providers with the current separation. There is however a sense that regardless of strong relationships between ETBs and local providers, decisions about their working relationships could be decided by central government.

Towards sustainable funding for community education

The research suggests a needs-based, multi-annual model of funding. A model for implementing this approach is proposed which begins with a locally-led, community-based needs assessment. This is to identify key educational issues, both individual and collective. Three principles underpin this approach 1) inclusionary philosophies and approaches; 2) A commitment to self-assessment; and 3) assuring a range of outcomes.

A needs based approach appreciates that the impacts of community education are long term and difficult to measure, understands the importance of local knowledge and resources, and

emphasising the strengths and assets within local communities. Continued collaboration is also a central feature of needs-based approaches.

Further research recommendations:

- Each partner organisation should carry out in-depth country specific research that more holistically uncovers ways in which community education is funded.
- FinALE should create a position paper that outlines its support for aspects of European policy that emphasise community engagement and active citizenship.
- Community educators should have open, discursive conversations with the participants of community education about the precarity of funding.

Additional recommendations for Irish providers

- Further research to draw out the nuances of funding being accessed. This specifically relates to ETB funding and should include a quantification of independent organisations funded through the ALCES budget.
- The membership of the AONTAS CEN should build on the need-based model (offered as section 7.1) and promote this amongst its membership.
- AONTAS CEN should prepare a summary report that can be circulated as a lobbying tool. This should be made available to members and non-members thus creating a united perspective in seeking a more sustainable financial future.

Chapter One – Introduction

This report is the product of research commissioned by AONTAS as part of the European Commission (EC) funded Erasmus+ project entitled **Financing Adult Learning in Europe** (FinALE). In consultation with providers, the research draws from a mixed-methods research methodology to measure the funding experiences of n102 participating organisations across Europe. Although perspectives are gathered from six participating countries, the report particularly emphasises the Irish experience. Fifty-six (n56) research participants are based in Ireland and, from this sub-set, n8 providers participated in in-depth qualitative interviews and n6 participated in e-interviews, both of which generated rich data on provider experiences¹.

This report acknowledges the breath of adult education provision across Europe. One consequence of this is an inconsistency in terminology across different jurisdictions. As part of our efforts to address this, this report begins by explaining its interpretation of community education. This chapter then provides more details on FinALE before outlining the specific purpose of this research. Finally, an overview of the report is provided.

1.1 What is community education?

Community education is difficult to define. This isn't a bad thing rather something that allows for variation, innovation and creativity. At its broadest, community education refers to organised adult learning that happens outside of schools and colleges. More specifically, those who deliver community education usually present it as different to what most people experience in schools and colleges. This difference is captured through certain guiding principles, or values. To summarise these briefly, community education is built on a belief that participants enter into a learning space with a whole host of existing knowledge, values and experiences. Rather than stifle these through teacher-talk and an overly prescribed curriculum, community education interprets learner insight as a legitimate form of knowledge that is often under-appreciated in today's market-led society. As part of this process, community education adopts principles of democracy, dialogue, participation, and collectivism. In practice, it is often very hands-on.

¹ Four participants of e-interviews also participated in one-to-one in-depth interviews.

Community education is ‘not just *for* the people but *of* the people’ (Connolly, 2008 p. 6) and an emphasis on social justice and equality is often at its core. Most community educators know that social and economic conditions remain the most likely determining factor in whether a person enters into Higher Education (O’Connell *et al*, 2006; McCoy *et al*, 2014). One purpose of community education is to address this inequality through multiple access pathways. However, community education isn’t only focused on equality within education but focuses on much broader inequalities such as financial injustice, gender inequality, racism and racial discrimination and perceptions of ability/disabilities. These inequalities are structural in nature (Baker *et al*, 2004) meaning the locus of change is not with the individual but with wider systemic solutions. Community education thus frequently has a political dimension and usually targets specific population groups such as people who have left school before completion, those living in geographical communities that are described as ‘disadvantaged’, people who are unemployed, people who are parenting alone, and minority groups such as Travellers and migrants.

1.2 What is Financing Adult Learning in Europe (FinALE)

Frequently community education is talked about in the wider context of adult education, a distinct field of practice and academic discipline that shares many of the characteristics described thus far.

This particular research sits within a wider research project undertaken as part of a European Commission (EC) funded Erasmus+ project called **Financing Adult Learning in Europe** (or FinALE). FinALE has eight partners across Belgium, Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Switzerland and Portugal, each of which are adult education associations. These partners are: The European Association for the Education of Adults (Belgium), Niedersächsischer Bund für freie Erwachsenenbildung e.V (Germany), Individual Learning Company (United Kingdom), The European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (Belgium), AONTAS (Ireland), The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark), Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal), Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria), and the Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland.

FinALE is grounded in an understanding of adult education as an instrument in social cohesion for a changing world. Those involved in FinALE believe adult educators have agency and that, through research and cooperation, providers can influence change. This includes future decision-making on how adult education is funded. For FinALE, there is urgent need for providers to address these questions:

- Why is investment in adult education necessary?
- How should the financing be measured so that the measurement is comparable across countries?
- Which fields of adult education should be supported?
- How does funding of adult education impact the lifelong learning of individuals?
- What is European best practice of funding adult education?²

1.3 The purpose of this research

The research has three specific purposes:

- 1. Quantification of FinALE devised models of funding that are applied to community education and measurement of how providers experience these models of funding.**

Six countries participate in this aspect of the study across Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Portugal. Specifically, participants are asked to identify with proposed models of funding and to comment on their experiences across access and administration, suitability and sustainability and perceptions on the balance of responsibility across all stakeholders involved in community education.

- 2. In-depth analysis of funding community education in the Irish context.**

This aspect of the research builds on previous research by AONTAS (2011) by mapping a representative sample of AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) members. This aspect of the research:

- Profiles the diversity of providers.

² This information is taken from the FinALE website <http://www.eaea.org/en/projects/eaea-coordinated-projects/finale.html> where further information on the project can be obtained.

- Uncovers perceptions on the effectiveness of current funding.
- Gathers provider's suggestions for change.

3. Propose a future direction for funding community education

This report draws from an analysis of survey and interview findings and proposes a multi-annual, needs-based approach to funding.

1.3.1 Research methods

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach using quantitative and qualitative methods. Mixed-methods research addresses blind-spots in each approach when used separately (Creswell and Plano-Clarke, 2010).

Quantitative research was facilitated through an on-line, anonymous embedded survey (see appendix 1). Nine survey questions are quantitative. One question asks participants to choose their organisation type and one uses ranking of pre-determined funding models. These models (see appendix 2) were defined by FinALE partners. Seven questions use Likert scales to determine provider attitudes to set hypotheses. These captured providers opinion on the appropriateness of their funding model, the ease at which they apply for funding, sustainability, ease of administration, effectiveness in reaching their target group, the balance of responsibility across stakeholders (such as employers and learners), and the learner perception on how community education is funded.

Once the survey was designed, it was distributed using the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) software package. A pilot version of the survey was initially circulated across three participating countries so that selected providers could act as critical friends. This process resulted in some minor modifications before the survey was launched in May 2017. Each participating adult education association took responsibility for circulation.

When all responses were received, each FinALE partner received all findings from their individual survey. Each country took responsibility for qualitative analysis.

In Ireland, the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) circulated the link to each member organisation and this was followed up by a reminder email and telephone appeal to all available members.

1.4 Limitations of the research

This research is presented with significant limitations. These are not unexpected when working transnationally. A recent report by the European Adult Education Association in Europe (EAEA, 2016) identified some key difficulties in attempts to collaborate across European providers. Specifically, the report refers to the imprecise nature of terminology and unclear division of responsibilities when interpreting legislation on adult education. The report also identifies the challenges of cross-European collaboration given the diversity of 'the adult education sector' which incorporates public and private providers, non-governmental organisations and national institutions (EAEA, 2016, p. 6).

Given this wider context, two key limitations emerged:

- Whilst the researchers were originally commissioned to offer a European comparative analysis, this was not possible given the disproportion in responses received. As chapter three details, over 50% (n56) of all survey participants are based in Ireland with the response rate across other participating nations ranging from n7 to n11. Chapter three does report on combined survey findings but this is not offered as a synthesis and not a comparative analysis.
- Given the imprecise nature of terminology, difficulties emerged when research participants were asked to choose from finite categorisations designed by FinALE. This was confirmed to the researchers through inconsistencies in survey completion and through direct communication where some research participants contacted the researchers to seek guidance on how to complete the survey. A key recommendation from this research is thus, that further research which is tailored to each country's individual experience is needed.

1.5 Outline of the report

This introductory chapter seeks to give the reader an overview of the research purpose and an outline of the methodology used. The report has six other chapters.

Chapter two offers an account of relevant European policy on adult and community education. It also reviews some literature that critiques European policy direction, particularly its emphasis on employability.

Chapter three focuses specifically on the Irish experience. It offers an overview of community education in Ireland and offers an overview of funding for community education in Ireland.

Chapter four presents quantitative survey findings that combines the experiences of n102 providers across six participating nations.

Chapter five presents qualitative and quantitative findings specific to the Irish context which are drawn from the aforementioned online survey as distributed across six participating countries.

Chapter six digs deeper into the Irish experience and reports on findings from one-to-one interviews with self-selecting community education providers and with n6 follow-up e-interviews.

Chapter seven draws from findings across each research phase to present an integrated analysis of how community education is funded across Europe. This analysis forms the bases of a model of funding for the future and provides concluding remarks and recommendations from the research.

Chapter Two – The European Context

Adult educators across Europe have frequently benefitted from their membership of the European Union. Over the years, community education providers have accessed funding through such schemes as The European Social Fund (ESF, est. 1957), a fund the EU describes as the main financial instrument for investment in people, and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Many non-profit community education providers began accessing European funding in the 1980s. This was through the Poverty 1 and Poverty 2 programmes; mechanisms which emphasised models of self-help (Curley, 2007) and which focused on the needs of communities experiencing social exclusion, high unemployment and limited access to public services. Other European funding initiatives that have benefitted the recipients of community education. These include the *New Opportunities for Women* (NOW) programme which was launched in the 1990s, *The Equality for Women Measure* (2007-2016) and the *European Integration Fund* (EIF).

Rather than provide an exhaustive chronology of every funding opportunity available, this chapter provides a policy context for the financing of community education. It also draws the reader's attention to criticisms of European policy direction.

2.1 The European Policy Context

Over the years, a number of European policy interventions have shaped the direction of European funding. From the 1990s onwards, the concept of Lifelong learning has been an important cornerstone in European policy convergence. Discourse in lifelong learning marked a strategic turn in the EC's interpretation of adult education as the emphasis deliberately moved towards a strong employability agenda and the need to tackle long-term unemployment (Murray et al, 2014; Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 136-137).

This transition was influenced by some key policy developments. One starting point is to examine the EC communiqué, a *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* which was published in 2000. This publication came on foot of a decade long emphasis of lifelong learning including 1996 being named the year of European Lifelong Learning. The memorandum describes lifelong learning as the pathway to a 'knowledge society', a social model which emphasises technological and intellectual progress as the route to economic prosperity (European Commission 2000: 3). The memorandum calls for changes in how adult education is

delivered, suggesting education and training systems “must adapt” to an altered economic environment.

Although the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) favours employability, it also commits to the promotion of active citizenship. However, this is mostly couched amidst a person’s participation in the work force as can be see within the excerpt below.

Active citizenship focuses on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life, the chances and risks they face in trying to do so, and the extent to which they therefore feel that they belong to and have a fair say in the society in which they live. For much of most people’s lives, having paid work underpins independence, self-respect and well-being, and is therefore a key to people’s overall quality of life. Employability – the capacity to secure and keep employment – is not only a core dimension of active citizenship, but it is equally a decisive condition for reaching full employment and for improving European competitiveness and prosperity in the “new economy”. (European Commission 2000: 5)

Many adult educators across Europe welcomed the Memorandum’s inclusion of active citizenship (Connolly 2006: 114) as well as its recognition of formal and non-formal learning (AONTAS 2001: 1). However, the AONTAS formal response to the EC also cautioned against the potential for education to be viewed solely through the lens of employability and human resource development (AONTAS, 2001).

The 2001 communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* reported back on the memorandum’s Europe wide consultation process and claimed a mandate from providers that “confirms lifelong learning as a key element of the strategy . . . to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world” (European Commission 2001: 3). *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (2001) centralised the self-directed individualised learner and encouraged people to engage with flexible, measurable, transferable knowledge so that they could maximise employment opportunities.

There were other key policy interventions. *A Programme for Education and Training* (2002) formed part of the Lisbon goals which were set in the lead up to the European Union constitutional document *The Lisbon Treaty* (2007) of 2007, the constitution of the EU.

A Programme for Education and Training (2002) interprets lifelong learning, and also human resource development policy, as an economic imperative.

In 2011, the European Commission (EC) asserted its commitment to adult learning through its *Council Resolution on a renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning* (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011). Although interpreting adult learning as covering the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities, ‘both general and vocational’, the document carries a strong labour-market emphasis outlining the EC’s commitment

To improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society. Adult learning provides a means of up-skilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as makes an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011, p. 1)

In support of these policy ambitions, each European Commission coordinates a network of national coordinators and each member state has set targets for adult learning and the European Commission regularly publishes progress reports on the implementation of national strategies.

Across these policy documents there is broad support for informal and non-formal education. Although its capacity to support active citizenship and creativity is maintained, informal and non-formal learning is principally interpreted as also part of the wider employability agenda.

2.2 EU Funding for Lifelong Learning

This section does not provide an exhaustive account of funding possibilities in the implementation of EU policy rather it highlights key interventions supported by the EC.

2.1.1. The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)

In realising European policy objectives, the EC established the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) which ran from 2007-2013. This programme integrated previous programmes³ and had an operating budget of just under €7 billion.

The LLP sought to contribute to the development of lifelong learning by improving quality, attractiveness and opportunities for lifelong learning for all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. As well as emphasising employability and support for entrepreneurialism, LLP also supported inter-culturalism, active citizenship, and equality (EC, 2014, p. 118).

The bulk of the LLP budget is managed by National Agencies and networks each of which distribute funding at national level. At the mid-point evaluation stage, the EC noted 40,000 contracts between such national agencies and recipients of LLP funding (EC, 2011, p.7).

The review also emphasised the role of the EC Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) which managed larger scale initiatives funded through the LLP.

2.1.1 European Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET2020)

The influential *European Strategic Framework for Education and Training* (ET2020) was adopted by the EU in May 2009. Its priorities are:

- To make lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- To improve the quality and efficiency of education and training
- To promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- To enhance creativity and innovation at all levels of education and training.

ET2020 links citizenship to individualised policies on education and training and not more customary structures of democracy such as by encouraging participation in local

³ These projects were Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and eLearning (EC, 2011, p. 12)

government. It also sets specific targets for member states including an employment target of 75%, a reduction of early school-leaving to 10% and that 40% of all young people to hold tertiary qualification. ET2020 has no specific funding allocated rather member states hold responsibility for ensuring sufficient money is allocated to realise its priorities. The EC suggests that member states avail of other European funding possibilities.

Much early ET2020 implementation was through the aforementioned Lifelong Learning programme (LLP) 2007-2013. Since the dissolution of this programme, the EC draws out coherence between the ambitions of ET2020, and other key European funding streams such as the European Social Fund (ESF) which was originally established in 1957. The priorities of the ESF have changed over the years and its current objectives have a particular emphasis on education as a route to employability and labour market activation (<http://www.esf.ie/en/About-Us/>, 2017). When reviewing the ET2020, the EC note ESF expenditure of €12.3 million on promoting education and training throughout working life noting,

Compared to the other priorities receiving ESF this priority received a relatively large allocation (approximately 11% of the total allocated). In addition, the other three priorities which best fit ET 2020...show that a total allocation of 34.3 million euros was spent in Member States on activity that will help ET 2020 to be realised. This shows that around 46% of the total allocation of ESF in the 2007-2013 period is directly helping Member States to reform, improve or change their education and training systems which is in line with the overall objective of ET 2020. (EC, 2014, p. 125)

A second funding avenue of relevance is the Erasmus+ programme, the successor to the LLP. This programme has a budget of €14.7 billion. The EC (2014, p. 119) claims a “close relationship between the strategic objectives of ET 2020 and Erasmus+” believing the latter will contribute to European objectives on employability, education and training.

Congruence is also claimed between ET2020 and the lesser known 7th Framework/Horizon 2020 (EC, 2014, p. 117).

2.1.3 Private sector support

Despite the private sector benefiting significantly from the EC’s employability agenda, there is no concrete directive regarding private sector investment in education and training.

There are examples of private sector funding for non-profit social initiatives. In 2015, Observatoire de la Fondation de France carried out a review of Philanthropy across Europe. This found that all European states currently recognise the role of private philanthropy in benefitting public interest. The report highlights the introduction of tax incentive mechanisms and tax-breaks that encourage donations and explains how European philanthropy is largely concentrated to large corporate foundations.

There is also a diverse array of government funding schemes especially designed to promote training and skills development for those in employment (LLLight in Europe, 2015, p 103). These include direct benefits via tax relief, and incentives for companies to invest in staff development.

2.3 Criticisms of the European policy agenda

There has been criticism of the European employability agenda. Much criticism locates European policy direction amidst a wider process of globalisation which forms part of a neoliberal, market-driven model of capitalism. Neoliberalism is based on the principle of trickle-down economics. This model believes that if we support entrepreneurialism at the top of society, the benefits will be widespread. Part of this support is to ensure that education responds to market demands where the needs of employers and large corporations are centralised. Another part of the neoliberalism is the privatisation of once public services. This is undertaken as a way to tackle inefficiency. Critics of neoliberalism outline the shortfalls in new public managerialism (NPM), the process used to implement neoliberal change (Lynch et al, 2012; McGlynn, 2012; Fitzsimons, 2017). New public managerialism replaces traditional needs-based approaches with outputs based models which are enforced through measurability and compliance with performance models. Critics of neoliberalism believe this socio-economic approach has colonised adult education spaces and transformed them into spaces that satisfy market need and which negatively impact adult education's pursuit of equality (Brookfield and Holst 2011; Mayo and English 2013; Murray et al. 2014). In doing so, lifelong learning fails to appreciate the multifaceted dimensions of unemployment, and how underachievement in education is both a cause and symptom of structural inequality.

There are other reproaches to the European policy agenda from both practitioners and from policy makers themselves. The EC communication *Education & Training 2010, the success of the Lisbon Strategy hinges on urgent reforms* (EC, 2007), is highly critical of the national progression rates in advancing the European Lifelong learning agenda. This document repeatedly repeats a strong employability agenda and interprets Europe wider progress as worryingly behind schedule in addressing long-term unemployment. In an apparent slight to the population groups traditionally engaging in community education, the communique criticises what it calls an “over-exclusive emphasis on rescuing those who slipped through the initial education nets” continuing “this is perfectly justifiable, but does not on its own constitute a lifelong learning strategy which is genuinely integrated, coherent and accessible to everyone” (EC, 2007).

Some oppositional voices emerge from civil society. In 2014, The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL), an umbrella association for 36 organisations active in the field of education and training, published a mid-point review of ET2020. This review illuminates a range of shortfalls in European policy’s employability agenda and encourages a more holistic, humanistic vision of learning that would appreciate the wider benefits of education beyond employability. The review document criticises austerity measures that have weakened education systems across Europe and suggests each country commits to a minimum fiscal expenditure on education (EUCIS-LLL, 2014: 2). EUCIS-LLL ask critical questions relating to the investment of money and the difficulties in measuring the wider benefits of education, a factor underappreciated by those responsible for ET2020 budgets. It claims,

Current EU indicators seldom measure the social human capital of learning or the wider benefits of learning. It is necessary to invest in instruments to measure qualitative progress and to balance the use of indicators with quality data, in partnership with stakeholders. (EUCIS-LLL, 2014, p. 3)

The report recommends that the EC is more proactive in its support for bottom-up, civil society organisations claiming they play an important role as intermediaries between citizens and the European Union.

There has also been competing criticism from within the private sector. Some claim that the current goals of ET2020 should be more directly linked to the outcomes required to meet the job-needs of the private sector (BusinessEurope, 2014; LLLight, 2015). However, advocacy organisations in support of businesses cite evidence of an under-appreciation of the role of companies in supporting staff development initiatives and also uncertainly amongst employers organisations on the effectiveness of Lifelong learning policies (LLLight, 2015, p. 113). The European Commission has offered criticism of the level of private sector investment. In a 2010 communique they state:

The European Union is still well behind in this area compared with its main competitors in the international arena and in particular suffers from a level of private sector investment which is too low in higher education and continuing training. At the same time, there is no evidence of any great headway being made in more effective use of available resources. (EC, 2010, p. 1),

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter offered an overview of some European policy of relevance to how community education is resourced across Europe. It began by acknowledging direct financial supports through membership of the European Union and also draws out EC directives which ensure national funding in the area of adult education.

A strategic turn is identified from the 1990s onwards when a strong employability agenda dominated policy direction. This has been criticised by some for its potential to undermine the wider benefits of adult and community education.

A significant observation from this review is the decentralised approach taken by the EC in funding its current lifelong learning strategy ET2020. This decentralisation is congruent with the bottom-up principles of community education and has the potential to allow local innovation and needs-based responses. It also empowers national governments to set their own country specific objectives in achieving wider European ambitions. However, the weight of employability discourse within EC communiqués are likely to create tensions in both national and regional implementation of funding accessed through the ESF and Erasmus+ programmes. Where nation states mirror the marketised ambitions of the EU, this can create incongruence between the community education organisations who aspire to

a needs-based approach that emphasise the wider benefits of learning, and government policies that adopt an outputs based, economic model as the benchmark for development.

Chapter Three – The Irish Context

3.1 Introduction to the Irish context

When the Irish based community educators describe their work, the features of community education that are introduced in chapter one equally emerge. Members of the AONTAS Community Education network, an amalgam of independent, not-for profit providers, describe their practice as:

A process of personal and community transformation, empowerment, challenge, social change and collective responsiveness. It is community-led reflecting and valuing the lived experiences of individuals and their community. Through its ethos and holistic approach community education builds the capacity of groups to engage in developing a social teaching and learning process that is creative, participative and needs-based. Community education is grounded on principles of justice, equality and inclusiveness. It differs from general adult education provision due to its political and radical methodologies. (AONTAS CEN, 2008, p. 1)

Although some Irish contributors have sought to capture the work of community education in Ireland (such as; AONTAS 2004; Bailey et al 2011; 2012; Fitzsimons, 2017), little has been gathered about how it is typically funded. This research addresses this gap in literature by offering a historical and political context to how community education has been funded. This is complemented by in-depth findings from a sub-set of n56 Irish based research participants which are presented as chapters five and six.

Contemporary community education in Ireland is usually dated back to the 1970s and 1980s. Sometimes this was through state organised initiatives, most of which were organised through evening classes that emerged from Ireland's national network of Vocational Education Committees⁴. (AONTAS, 2004, p. 9). These structures were directly funded and managed by the state. Other times this was through bottom-up, politicised activism that formed part of a wider global social change movement (Fitzsimons, 2017). In Ireland, this activism particularly centred on the Women's movement; a politicised literacy

⁴ The Vocational Education committees (VECs) were established on foot of legislation in the 1930s and were given initial responsibility for state delivered, post-school vocational education. This remit was extended to include non-Church school provision across Ireland.

movement; and a broad-based, anti-poverty/community development movement. As these organisations grew, many received state grant aid, both nationally and from European sources. These structures were thus often indirectly funded through government approved grant-aid.

These two avenues; community education **directly** funded by the state and community education **indirectly** funded by the state and delivered by non-profit, independent organisations are intimately connected. When tracking funding, it helps to separate the two. This chapter does this by presenting an account of direct funding through Vocational Education Committees (VECs, now merged into and Education and Training Boards). It then focuses on indirect funding, most of which is channelled through what is commonly known as The Community Sector, or The Community and Voluntary Sector.

3.1.1 Previous research on funding for Community Education

There is some previous research on how community education in Ireland is funded. In 2011, the AONTAS CEN published results from what it described as a small-scale study undertaken to determine the funding streams accessed by its members. From n40 participating organisations, one key finding was that 10 separate government departments were providing some funding for CEN members. Principally, these were the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The same study also identified other funding sources namely charities, businesses, EU funding, and ‘other sources’. Independent, non-profit organisations were also found to be accessing funding through the ALCES programme (2011, p. 5) though this is not quantified. Strikingly, multiple, concurrent, funders were drawn out with 78 funding streams identified across n40 participating organisations.

Fitzsimons (2015, p. 268) identified a similar multiplicity of funders where, from n219 participating community educators, organisations drew from the Department of Education and Skills (37%), Pobail⁵ (22%), other state funders (21%), Department of Children and

⁵ **Pobal** is an intermediary non-profit company that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU

Youth Affairs (8%), the HSE (5), self-generated (2%) philanthropy (35%), The Training and Employment authority (FAS, 1%) and 'other' (3%). One organisation in that study identified 15 separate funding streams. When the practitioners participating in Fitzsimons's research were asked about issues affecting their work, 19% cited a lack of funding as a major concern.

Practitioner concerns about funding are not recent. In a government commissioned report from the 1973 called *Adult Education in Ireland* (or the Murphy report⁶), the committee consulted with adult and community education providers about issues affecting their work. Funding emerged as a particular concern. The report lists an array of funding sources namely student contributions, special collections, government grants, loans from banks and other lending institutions, foundation grants and awards, local taxes and from industry, the combined revenue from which it is "not possible to estimate" (Committee on Adult Education, 1973, p. 129) and draws attention to the precariousness of this arrangement. The report claims many VEC providers believe their work is not viewed as a financial priority sharing "when finance becomes scarce, adult education usually suffers disproportionate cutbacks" (1973; p. 57). The Murphy report recommends an overhaul of funding including greater financial resources and a separate devolved state budget for the improvement and extension of existing services (1973; p. 129).

3.2 Funding community education through the Department of Education and Skills.

Although voluntary, politicised community education was evolving simultaneous to the work of the Committee on Adult Education (1973), the core activities reviewed were locally-based day-time and evening classes organised through Ireland's VEC network. These courses weren't part of a particular government initiative but were ad hoc and mostly emerged from the interests and interactions of individual educators. Attendees reflected inequalities within the education system such as women, the working class and people with

⁶ Although the report talks about "adult education" more broadly, there is little doubt but that its understanding extended to community education.

difficulties reading and writing (Fitzsimons, 2017 p. 73). In seeking to address finance issues, the Murphy report recommended a more structured state approach to adult education.

These recommendations were somewhat implemented in 1979 when 50 Adult Education Organisers (AEOs) were appointed within VECs by the government Department of Education (since re-named the Department of Education of Skills). Although a welcome development, AEOs were not given a specific budget (Fleming, 1989, p. 2). Fleming blames a political culture of marketization that has shaped society from the 1970s onwards. This, he argues, set adult education apart from the state's previous commitment to support learning for the target groups who typically engage in community education. He explains,

Adult education is the only part of the education system that must be self-financing. This strong systemic statement puts the life-long learning of adults at the bottom of the list of educational priorities in Ireland and places a disproportionate burden on the poor. (Fleming, 1989: 4)

In 1985, funding for community education was ring-fenced through the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES). This was largely as a result of recommendations from a second government report entitled *Lifelong Learning: Report of the Commission on Adult Education* (1984), or the Kenny Report as it is commonly known. The commission (whose membership included representation from AONTAS as well as those from universities and VECs), adopted a needs-based approach within its terms of reference where local and national administrative, educational and resource requirements were the determining factor in the allocation of budgets. This led, three years later to the establishment, of the Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS, est. 1988).

In 2000, the state policy document *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (the white paper, DOES, 2000). The white paper was published following a lengthy consultation process with the providers of community education, many of whom were independent to the state. It offers two definitions of community education. First community education is described “as an extension of the service provided by second and third-level education institutions into the wider community” and secondly it is interpreted as a collective endeavour, “not only in terms of its content but also in terms of its methodologies and decision-making processes [...] in which those who are affected by decisions are empowered to participate in making decisions” (DOE, 2000, p. 110). Although the white

paper believes the distinctions between these definitions may be blurred, each approach share “a common goal of the collective empowerment of the participants based on an analysis of the structural barriers to people’s life chances” (DOE, 2000, p. 110). This policy document was an important turning point in direct funding for community education as it led to the appointment of dedicated Community Education Facilitators (CEFs) in each VEC. The white paper also paved the way for the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI, est. 2002). These programmes formed part of the DOES’s wider commitment to lifelong learning which included other programmes often delivered through a community education model such as VTOS and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

Since then the provision of community education through the state has remained relatively static. Bailey et al (2010, p. 30) offer the following table of DOES community education provision:

Funding Programme	Learning Programme/ Course	VEC Personnel	No. of Programmes
Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES) allocated by DES to VECs	Community education courses funded by either tutor hours, small grants or a mixture of both to small community groups	Community Education Facilitators (CEFs) (although they may not directly manage the budget)	Total number not available
BTEI Community Strand allocated directly from DES to community groups	BTEI courses free for those with less than upper secondary education	At national level – Further Education Co-ordinator at local VEC level – CEF supports Community Strand	45 in 2009

Table 1 - DES Funded Community Education (taken from Bailey et al, 2010, p. 30)

3.2.1 The influence of the European Employability agenda

Chapter two of this report identified a strategic turn in European policy direction towards a strong employability discourse. European directives such as the *Memorandum on Lifelong*

Learning (2000) called for radical changes to the way in which education and training is organised within member states. Irish policy makers and legislators largely complied with these directives and, in 2013, a new Further Education and Training Authority; or SOLAS⁷, was established. SOLAS merged all VECs with the Irish National Training and Employment Authority (or FÁS) and created 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in their place. SOLAS took over responsibility for the ALCES as well as other budgets that are also associated with local delivery of education. These include Community Training Centres, previously under the remit of FAS, Adult Literacy groups including family literacy, the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and the Refugee resettlement ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) programme.

SOLAS's Further Education and Training (FET) strategy (which was published in 2014) cites an operational budget of €640 million. The most recent spending figures for community education (SOLAS, 2016) detail expenditure of €10, 727,731 on community education, €35,190,133. Expenditure on community education per Education and Training Board (ETB) is contained within table 2 overleaf:

Cavan/Monaghan	€394,000
City of Dublin ETB	€1,746,000
Cork ETB	€1,073,000
Donegal ETB	€500,000
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB	€1,650,000
Galway and Roscommon ETB	€525,000
Kerry ETB	€418,000
Kildare and Wicklow ETB	€601,000
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	€337,000
Laois and Offaly ETB	€295,715
Limerick and Clare ETB	€816,500
Longford and Westmeath ETB	€225,200
Louth and Meath ETB	€620,816
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB	€574,000
Tipperary ETB	€381,500
Waterford and Wexford ETB	€570,000
Total expenditure across ETBs	€10,727,731

Table 2 - Funding for community education across each ETB in 2016 (SOLAS, 2016, p. 21-22)

⁷ SOLAS is an acronym for Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanúnaigh Agus Scileanna,

This expenditure represents 1.64% of the total SOLAS FET budget or 0.11% of the total education budget (AONTAS, 2017).

3.2.2 Future changes to Department of Education and Skills Funding

In 2012, the *Department of Education and Skills, Operational Guidelines for Providers 2012* reasserted a broad-based understanding of community education describing it as “a hybrid approach of a community organisation and a community development model under which education is delivered in local areas in response to the community’s identified needs” (DOES, 2012, p. 3). This regulatory document, produced in consultation with CEFs, states “community education can transform individual lives and contributes to social cohesion. It enables civil society to play a key role in education with local groups taking responsibility for, and playing a role in organising courses, deciding on programme content and delivering tuition” (DOES, 2012 p. 3).

However, this commitment to a needs-based model of funding is somewhat undermined within the SOLAS FET strategy. The document outlines plans to replace needs-based funding on a phased basis with “a ‘strategic input/outcomes-based’ funding model” where funding to providers would be weighted in accordance with the type of provision and range of performance indicators across strategic, economic and social inclusion (SOLAS, 2014, p. 115). The strategy continues:

A significant amount of state funding of further education and training has tended, in many instances, to be determined more by legacy formulae than by evidence-based needs. Continuing to offer more or less the same course profile from one year to the next is not appropriate. There is broad consensus that the current funding model around FET needs to change and respond to demonstrable demand and need as well as reflecting the local, regional and socio-economic profiles of ETBs. The aim is to replace current funding arrangements for all FET provision, on a phased basis, with an outcomes based funding model. (SOLAS, 2014, p. 117).

Although the strategy fails to inform the reader where this ‘broad consensus’ lies, it continues:

In this new approach, a range of elements of funding to providers will be weighted in accordance with, for example, the type of provision in question, the scale and profile of industry within the ETB catchment area and the profile of learners being served. The funding approach will operate on the continuous improvement model, whereby SOLAS will evaluate the FET

provision of each ETB...and agree corrective/preventative actions if required. (SOLAS, 2014, p. 117).

Critics of the FET strategy view its emphasis as overly weighted towards a strong labour-market focus with a limited acknowledgement of the broader functions of education, with community education principally viewed as a way to recruit the most marginalised onto these types of programmes (Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 146; O'Reilly, 2014, p. 163)

3.3 Funding for the Community Sector and other community education providers

Thus far, this chapter has outlined funding for community education via state run ETBs and has identified a budget of just under €11 million. As stated earlier in this chapter, DOES funding is one of two interconnecting pathways for community education in Ireland. This section explores the second pathway namely the work undertaken by independent, non-profit community education organisations many of whom receive indirect funding from the state. Usually, these organisations are understood as part of the Irish Community Sector, a heterogeneous network of organisations historically connected through their bottom-up evolution from within communities affected by inequality and social injustice (Fitzsimons, 2017). As these organisations evolved, many successfully applied for state grant programmes. Sometimes this was through European grant schemes such as the Poverty 1 and Poverty 2 projects of the 1980s and the New Opportunities for Women (NOW) initiative of the 1990s; both of which were funded through the European Social Fund (ESF). Other national grant schemes were also influenced by European policy such as the *Community Development Programme* (est. 1991) – a domestic programme put in place to ensure continued funding for groups supported by the earlier EU poverty programmes (Lloyd 2010, p. 46). A network of Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) was also established as part of a European Union (EU) led re-negotiation of State–civil society relationships (Harvey 1994). Similar to VEC models, money granted through these schemes was based on community need. Dissimilarly, many decisions about expenditure were managed by local voluntary Boards of Management. Despite these initiatives, the community sector was never properly resourced. Much of its funding was unstable and its viability relied on significant unpaid volunteer work. The Irish government acknowledged these difficulties in

the 2000 *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary sector (Supporting Voluntary Activity)*. *Supporting Voluntary Activity*, dedicated a whole chapter to what it called “Funding Issues”, and committed to a more robust multi-annual funding arrangement. Increased funding did arrive, mostly through the aforementioned expansion of the Community Development Programme. Although the instability of funding was never lifted, a thriving community sector did emerge in the 2000s as many local groups came together and successfully applied for state funding. Commonly, these organisations built on core-funding (such as through the community development programme) and leveraged additional national and international revenue (Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 83). By 2008, a rich network of community education, activism and other services employed over 53,000 people nationwide (Harvey, 2012, p. 21).

3.3.1 Funding Independent community groups through the Department of Education and Skills

Throughout the lifetime of the Irish community sector, there has always been a VEC/ETB presence. In delivering on its objectives to enhance learning, foster empowerment and contribute to civic society, many of those working within DOES funded community education have built strong relationships with independent organisations. One particular point of connection in implementing the previously identified Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES) budget (see section 3.1). In the DOES guidelines for community education, this relationship is explained as follows:

Funding provided by the Department under ALCES for community education is primarily designed to promote and assist local not-for-profit community education groups address the needs of their community, in particular those with limited formal education. ALCES funded community education may also support action models where groups experience collective development for local or broader social actions. (DOES, 2012, p. 3)

In managing these relationships, each ETB is given autonomy in determining budgetary expenditure with community education budgets available for both pay and non-pay costs (DOES, 2012, p. 6). This allows each ETB to offer its own model for the delivery such as a hiring its own adult educators directly, entering into service level agreements with independent community education providers usually through tutor hours and small grants,

or both. Many independent non-profit community education providers depend on these locally negotiated service level agreements which often supplement other indirect state funding. This isn't the only way ETBs fund independent non-profit organisations as, in some instances, larger service level agreements are entered into where ETBs are the sole or principal funder of non-profit, independent community education providers.

3.4 Downsizing the Community Sector

Since 2008, there has been a substantial downsizing of the community sector. Some critics argue the seeds of change were sown as far back as 2003, when the government announced a review of the Community Development Support Programme. The rationale for this review was to measure the effectiveness of services and supports in local communities including the effectiveness of expenditure and ways in which a growing administrative burden could be streamlined (Combat Poverty Agency 2003, p. 2-7). At the same time, there was a change to how these projects were funded as previous three-year, needs-based funding cycles, were replaced with annual funding where projects had to justify their expenditure in terms of value for money and not the more immeasurable capacity to bring about social change (Bassett, 2007). Bissett (2015, p. 174) describes these changes as “strategic turn . . . which signalled a sharp authoritarian turn in the state’s position vis-à-vis the community sector”.

In 2009, the government report from the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes was published. Commonly referred to as *The McCarthy Report*, this document reported “little evidence of positive outcomes” from the work of the community sector (Government of Ireland 2009, p. 41). The McCarthy report paved the way for major restructuring of the community sector. Some Local Area Partnerships and some CDPs were closed with surviving projects merged to form the Local and Community Development Programme (LDCP). Budget cuts were not confined to the CDP/LCDP programme but were widespread across the community sector and community services provision. One report carried out by independent researcher Brian Harvey and commissioned by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions detailed budgetary losses as follows:

The LCDP down from €84.7m to €55.3m, down – 35%; the drugs initiative from €44.3m to €31.4m, down – 29%; the Community Services Programme (formerly the social economy programme) down – 18%; the Family Support Agency, which funds the Family Resource Centres, has fallen from €36m to €29.8m, down – 17%. Over 2008–2011, the RAPID programme in disadvantaged urban areas is down from €9.7m to €3.2m, – 67%, while the CLAR programme in disadvantaged rural areas, €24.1m at the start has been wound down. Funding for community and social inclusion has fallen from €10.2m to €2.9m (–72%) and within that, funding for community and voluntary fora has fallen from €1.4m to €587,000, down 58%. (Harvey 2012: 13)

Harvey (2012) measures an overall reduction in funding for community and voluntary activity of 59%.

3.4.1 The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

In 2015, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) was introduced. This programme is jointly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Irish Government and is administered by Pobail, an intermediary organisation between programmes funded by the Irish government and the European Union (EU).

SICAP sets out three goals:

- (1) To support and resource disadvantaged communities and groups addressing exclusion and inequality,
- (2) To address educational disadvantage through life-long learning that uses community development approaches.
- (3) To engage with those unemployed so they can be supported into the labour market by improving their “work-readiness” and by supporting entrepreneurialism.

In the lead up to SICAP, applications were through open, competitive tender and all SICAP contracts were awarded to organisations previously funded through the Local Community Development Programme. Not all LCDPs were successful meaning SICAP led to a further downsizing of the community sector.

SICAP has an operational budget of €25 million, €19 million of which is funded by the ESF through its Programme for Employability (Pobail; 2016, p. 8). The Programme for

Employability (PEIL) emphasises labour-market activation and has incorporated the nationally conceived *Pathways to work programme*. This programme has reformed social welfare provision by creating *Intreo* services; one stop-shops for a person's welfare, education and training needs. As will be discussed below, a key feature of employability discourse is this growing connections between a person's entitlement to social welfare, and their participation in education and training (Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 144-148).

3.4.2 Funding through conditionality of welfare

In line with EU wide austerity policies, Ireland toughened its position on social welfare from 2011 onwards. This included the creation of the National Employment and Entitlements Service (NEES) whose principal function was to advance Ireland's Labour Market Activation Policy. Through *Intreo*, compulsory, individualised progression plans were introduced for each welfare recipient. If a jobseeker (policy terminology) failed to comply with these personal plans their welfare benefits would be reduced or even stopped completely (DSP 2011, p. 4). Some community education providers became involved with welfare provision through contracts with the Labour Market Activation Fund (LMAF). This wasn't only independent community education providers, as ETBs were instructed through a Department of Education circulator (76/2011) to liaise with local and regional welfare offices to support referrals from those who are unemployed. In a review of labour market activation by the Department of Education and Skills, the involvement of the Community Sector has been applauded through an assertion,

The inclusion of providers outside the mainstream delivery agencies (e.g. from the private or community and voluntary sectors) was found to be a key attribute of the LMAF, despite concern among some stakeholders at involving providers who may not necessarily have delivered publicly funded programmes in the past. However, there were certainly notable successes arising from the inclusion of such providers as they often brought a new approach and way of thinking to the table. There is, therefore, a rationale for continuing to allow such open competition for activation funding on the basis of outcomes. (DOES, 2011, p. iv)

3.3.4. Summary of funding avenues for independent, community education providers.

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, much funding for community education in Ireland has been sporadic and ad hoc. Table 3 below gives a synopsis of some common funding streams accessed by independent, non-profit, community education providers.

Poverty 1 and Poverty 2 programmes	1980s
Community Development Fund	1991-2013
New Opportunities for Women	1994-
The EU Peace and Reconciliation programmes	1995 – present
Family Resource Agency	1996-present
National Drugs Strategy (Funding Drug and Alcohol Task Forces)	1996 -
Women’s Education Initiative/Education Equality Initiative	1998-2006
The Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) programme	2001-
European Integration Fund	2007-present
Dormant Accounts Fund	2001-present
Local and Community Development Programme	2009-2015
Labour Market Activation Fund	2010 - present
SICAP	2015 - 2018

Table 3 – Some funding schemes accessed by independent community education providers

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of policy and practice in relation to community education in Ireland. Its emergence as part of wider global social movements for change ensure parallels with other European countries. There are also differences, particularly characterised by its local emergence. It draws out two principal models of funding; direct state funding through ETBs (formally VECs), and indirect funding through a range of grant-schemes availed of by the Irish community sector.

This chapter evidences how, inadequate and insecure funding for community education has always been a feature of practice. It also demonstrates how 30 years of European funding has contributed to what has emerged despite the ongoing burden of precarious funding.

Since 2008, there has been a significant re-organisation and reduction of the community sector; host to much community education in Ireland. Some independent non-profit organisations have closed whilst others have been forcibly merged with larger organisations. These changes have weakened community ownership over local educational related initiatives. They have also bound providers into programmes that are more directly targeted at upskilling for employment. This employability discourse is strong within the current FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) a document which also paves the way for a revision of previously established needs-based approaches to determining funding requirements; to be replaced by outputs approaches. Given community education's historical emergence within collective social movements, these changes create incongruence with the ambitions of the Community Sector, and the ambitions of a state agenda that supports capitalist expansion over other forms of development.

The Irish community education is re-visited in chapter five, before this a wider synthesis of European survey findings is offered as chapter four.

Chapter Four – Quantitative findings across FinALE partners.

This chapter presents quantitative findings from an online embedded survey (see appendix I) which was circulated across each of six countries participating in research on Financing Adult Learning in Europe (FinALE). This survey has been designed to capture provider's opinion on the appropriateness of their funding model, the ease at which they apply for funding, sustainability, ease of administration, effectiveness in reaching their target group, the balance of responsibility across stakeholders; such as employers and learners, and learner perceptions on how community education is funded. One hundred and two (n102) providers completed the survey between May and July of 2017.

As has been detailed within chapter one, this research does not offer a comparative analysis across countries. This is because of discrepancies in participation rates as revealed below.

4.1 Profile of participating providers

As is demonstrated in figure 1, research participation was across six adult education associations each of which are partner organisations in the wider FinALE project (see section 1.2). The breakdown of participating nations is presented below.

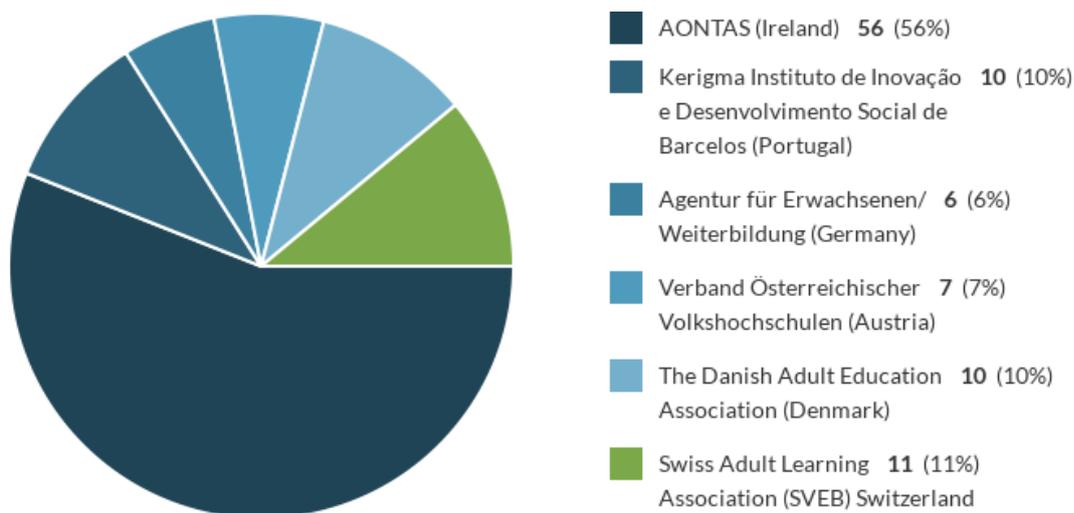


Figure 1 - Breakdown of survey participants across FinALE partners

Figure 1 reveals a majority 56% of all survey respondents are based in Ireland. Findings from this sub-set are presented in more detail in chapter five.

As well as identifying the adult education association that circulated the survey to them, participants were offered a list of options that best describe their organisation. These are public, private or independent community education provider as presented in figure 2.

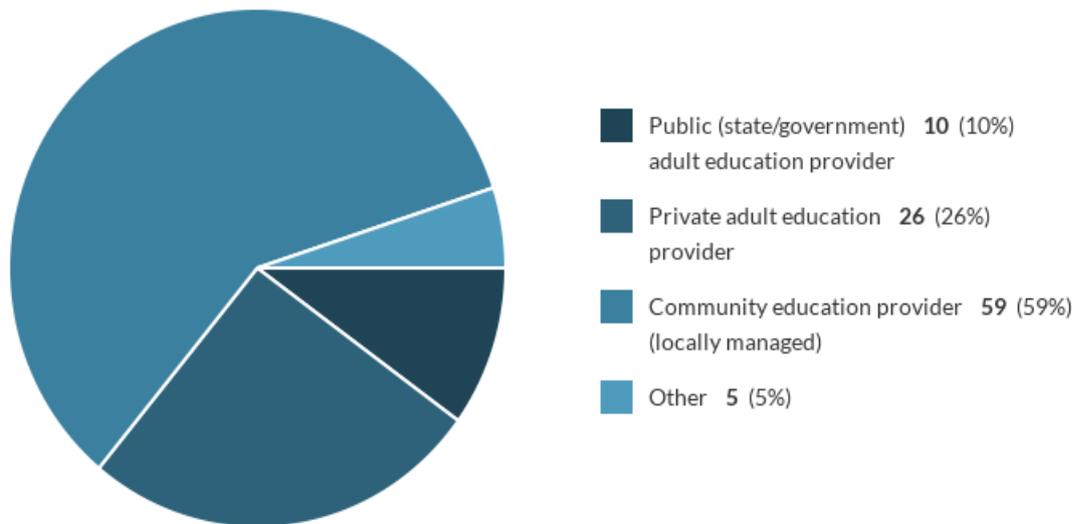


Figure 2 - Provider types across all EU survey participants

These findings reveal differences in provider types across different nations. To give an example, *the Danish Adult Education Association* lists n9 of its n10 research participants as private providers. In Ireland, just n1 of n56 AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) members is a private provider. Table 4 gives the full breakdown across participating associations.

Which of these descriptions best describes your organisation?	Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.						No answer	Totals
	AONTAS (Ireland)	Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland		
Public (state/government) adult education provider	2	3	3	0	0	2	0	10
Private adult education provider	1	4	1	3	9	7	1	26
Community education provider (locally managed)	49	3	2	3	1	1	0	59
Other	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	5
No answer	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Totals	56	10	6	7	10	11	2	102

Table 4 – breakdown of participant types across Adult Education Associations

4.2 Models of Funding

Although one qualitative question (Appendix I, q4) invites research participants to describe their overall funding model through an open-ended question, FinALE sought quantification of funding models by asking providers to rank which model of funding best describes their organisation. These models are:

1. **PROGRAMME FUNDING:** a provider is contracted to provide a range of courses, based on estimated levels of student interest and potential uptake. - The provider proposes anticipated costs which are based on individual circumstances.
2. **PROJECT FUNDING:** a funder contracts providers for a service which, as well as delivering learning, may have several other strands outside the normal scope of a provider's activity. - This might include developing new courses or recruiting particular types of learners and will involve cooperation with other organisations or providers. - Projects are of a fixed duration and budget, meaning that once completed, there is no expectation that funding will continue. - Similarly, funding may not be given if project objectives are not met.

3. **FORMULA FUNDING:** a standard amount paid to achieve a specified outcome - Outcomes/performance may be measured through teaching hours, student enrolment levels, or programme completion rates. - Contracts awarded based on statistical criteria e.g. infrastructure, no. of people reached etc. - Funding aims to cover full costs of a programme, but provider has flexibility regarding how income is spent on different cost elements. - It might also include partial funding of programmes or organisational issues such as staffing salaries etc. - The formula can also include expected income from learner fees.
4. **TAX INCENTIVE:** a taxation rule which allocates financial benefits to taxpayers who participate in learning. - OECD distinctions as: tax allowances which allows deduction from the gross income to arrive at taxable income (i.e. tax base), for individuals and legal entities; tax credits allowing deduction from tax liability (i.e. tax due or tax payment), for individuals and legal entities.
5. **DIRECT GRANTS:** subsidies which support individual or company investment in education and training. -Financial support is often provided to learners rather than providers. Direct grants allow individuals, employers and organisations to partake in adult learning.
6. **VOUCHERS/INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS:** a subsidy (in the form of monetary coupon) which enables individuals and occasionally companies to access adult learning services. - Offer flexibility regarding course content, duration and the training provider.
7. **LOANS:** schemes that allow people to borrow against their future income to cover part of their training costs. - These can be a mortgage-type (traditional or conventional) loan, where repayment in fixed instalments is required - OR an income-contingent loan, where instalments depend on the borrower's income.
8. **TRAINING LEAVE:** a regulatory instrument that seeks equitable access to education by granting leave to employees for learning purposes. There are two models 1) paid training leave which entitles employees to maintain full or partial

salary. In some cases, income is compensated through grants from public or social partner funds; 2) unpaid training leave whereby an employee's salary is not paid during the training period, but they have the right to return to their employment.

9. **PAYBACK CLAUSES:** a legal or contractual regulation concerning the repayment of training costs, if the employee decides voluntarily to discontinue the employment relationship with the employer who invested in their training.
10. **PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING:** where a national or international Philanthropic agency provides a grant towards some or all of the work that you do.
11. **LEARNER FEES:** Where fees collected from learners are used partly or wholly in the running of your organisation.

Before engaging with the findings from this question, readers are reminded that, within chapter one (section 1.4), a research limitation is identified where differences in the use of terminology across European providers can inadvertently, and negatively, impact collaborative research (EAEA, 2016, p. 5). In this instance, research participants are asked to make comparisons by ranking funding models relative to their perception as the most accessed to least accessed funding model, with participants only asked to rank those models they were working within (see appendix 1 for the full wording of the survey question). A disadvantage is that, in reality, research participants sometimes give equal weighting to different categorisations in terms of their level of influence and importance. This latter point emerged in this study where some respondents gave equal ranking to different funding models. Despite these limitations, findings for each model will now be presented.

PROGRAMME FUNDING:

FinALE describes this as where **“a provider is contracted to provide a range of courses, based on estimated levels of student interest and potential uptake. - The provider proposes anticipated costs which are based on individual circumstances.”** Figure 3 details the emergent survey rankings.

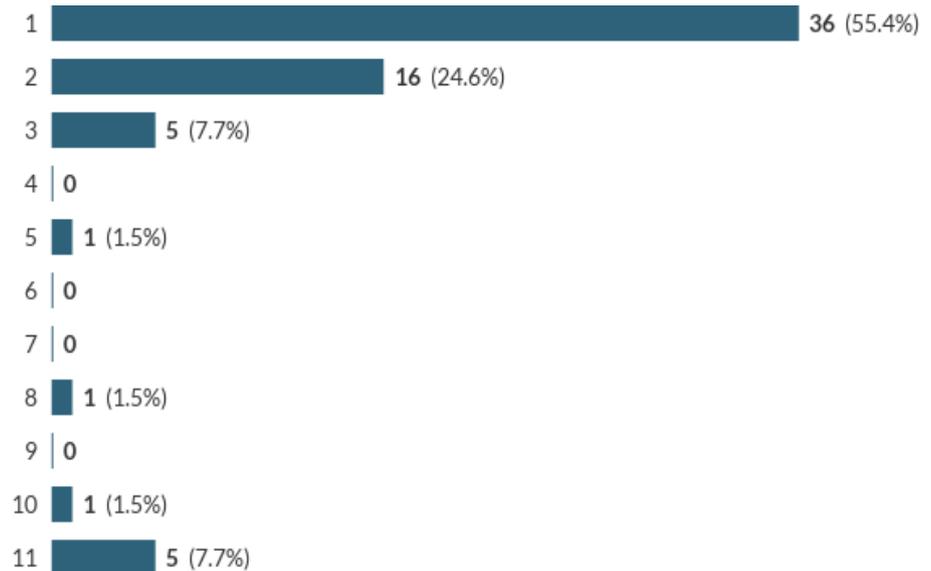


Figure 3 - EU survey participants ranking for Programme Funding.

As demonstrated, n65 respondents are in receipt of programme funding with n36 participating organisations citing it as their principal source of funding. This represents 35% of all participation organisations. A breakdown of recipients in accordance with participating country is captured in table 5 below.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	PROGRAMME FUNDING: a provider is contracted to provide a range of courses, based on estimated levels of student interest and potential uptake. - The provider proposes anticipated costs which are based on individual circumstances.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	26	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	1	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	36	16	5	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	5	37	102

Table 5 – 'Programme funding' across participating adult education associations

As demonstrated, n26 of n56, almost half of all Irish providers, are in receipt of programme funding as their principal source of funding. Another n11 draw from programme funding as a secondary model. Table 5 also reveals programme funding is a principal source of funding within each participating country.

PROJECT FUNDING

FinALE describes this as where **“a funder contracts providers for a service which, as well as delivering learning, may have several other strands outside the normal scope of a provider's activity. This might include developing new courses or recruiting particular types of learners and will involve cooperation with other organisations or providers. Projects are of a fixed duration and budget, meaning that once completed, there is no expectation that funding will continue. Similarly, funding may not be given if project objectives are not met”**.

Figure 4 give the ranking breakdown for n50 research participants.

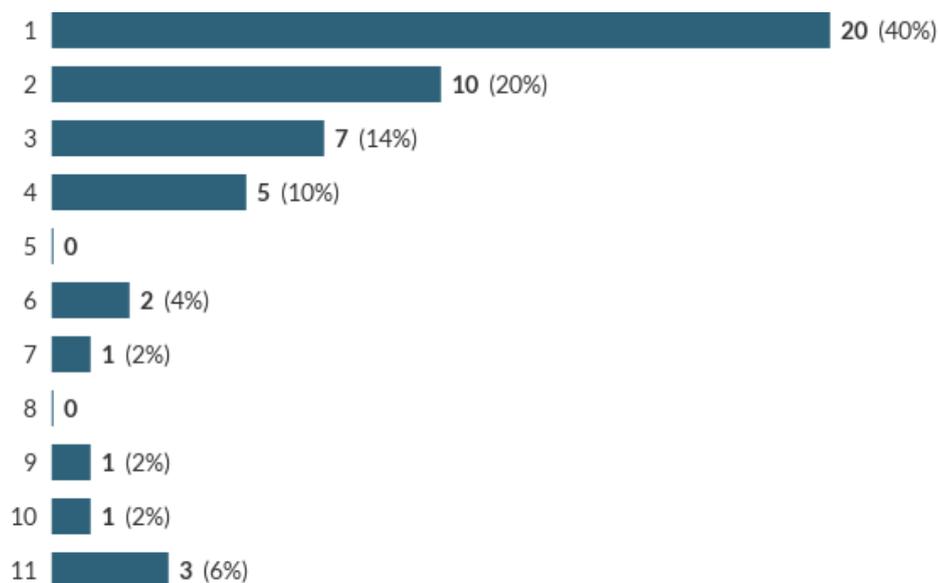


Figure 4 - EU survey participants ranking for 'Project Funding'

Project funding is the second most common model of funding for those participating in this study. Table 6 gives a breakdown across each participating country.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	PROJECT FUNDING: a funder contracts providers for a service which, as well as delivering learning, may have several other strands outside the normal scope of a provider's activity. - This might include developing new courses or recruiting particular types of learners and will involve cooperation with other organisations or providers. - Projects are of a fixed duration and budget, meaning that once completed, there is no expectation that funding will continue. - Similarly, funding may not be given if project objectives are not met.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	14	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	2	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	0	1	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	4	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	20	10	7	5	0	2	1	0	1	1	3	52	102

Table 6 - Project funding breakdown across participating countries

FORMULA FUNDING:

FinALE describe formula funding as **“a standard amount paid to achieve a specified outcome - Outcomes/performance may be measured through teaching hours, student enrolment levels, or programme completion rates. - Contracts awarded based on statistical criteria e.g. infrastructure, no. of people reached etc. - Funding aims to cover full costs of a programme, but provider has flexibility regarding how income is spent on different cost elements. - It might also include partial funding of programmes or organisational issues such as staffing salaries etc. - The formula can also include expected income from learner fees”**.

Figure 5 offers ranked responses from n40 responses.

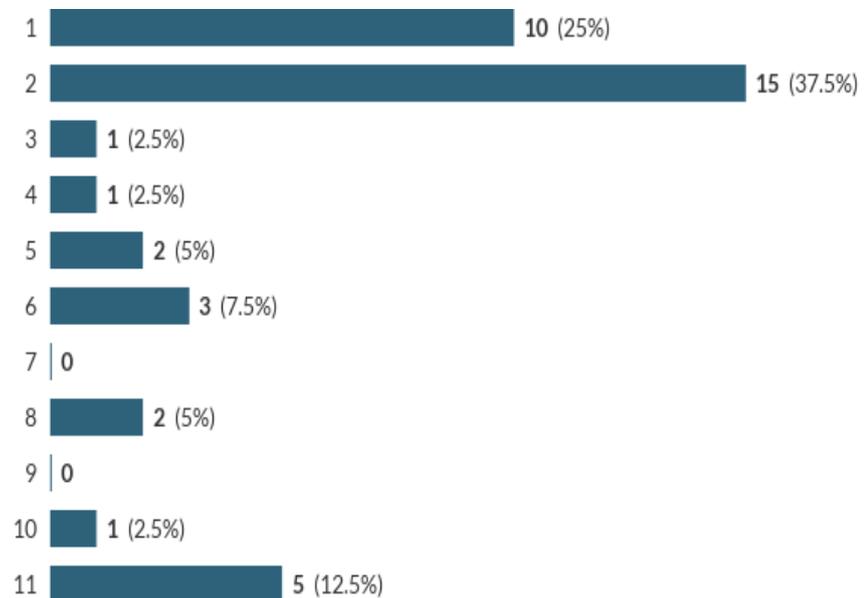


Figure 5 - EU survey participants ranking for 'Formula Funding'.

As figure 5 reveals, n5 research participants rank project funding lowest of the n11 options offered. Table 7 provides a country by country breakdown of how this this model of funding is ranked.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	FORMULA FUNDING: a standard amount paid to achieve a specified outcome - Outcomes/performance may be measured through teaching hours, student enrollment levels, or programme completion rates. - Contracts awarded based on statistical criteria e.g. infrastructure, no. of people reached etc. - Funding aims to cover full costs of a programme, but provider has flexibility regarding how income is spent on different cost elements. - It might also include partial funding of programmes or organisational issues such as staffing salaries etc. - The formula can also include expected income from learner fees.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	51	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	3	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	10	15	1	1	2	3	0	2	0	1	5	62	102

Table 7 Formula Funding across participating countries

TAX INCENTIVE

FinALE describe this as **“a taxation rule which allocates financial benefits to taxpayers who participate in learning. - OECD distinctions as: tax allowances which allows deduction from the gross income to arrive at taxable income (i.e. tax base), for individuals and legal entities; tax credits allowing deduction from tax liability (i.e. tax due or tax payment), for individuals and legal entities”**.

As per, figure, 6, n17 survey participants identify being in receipt of this type of funding.

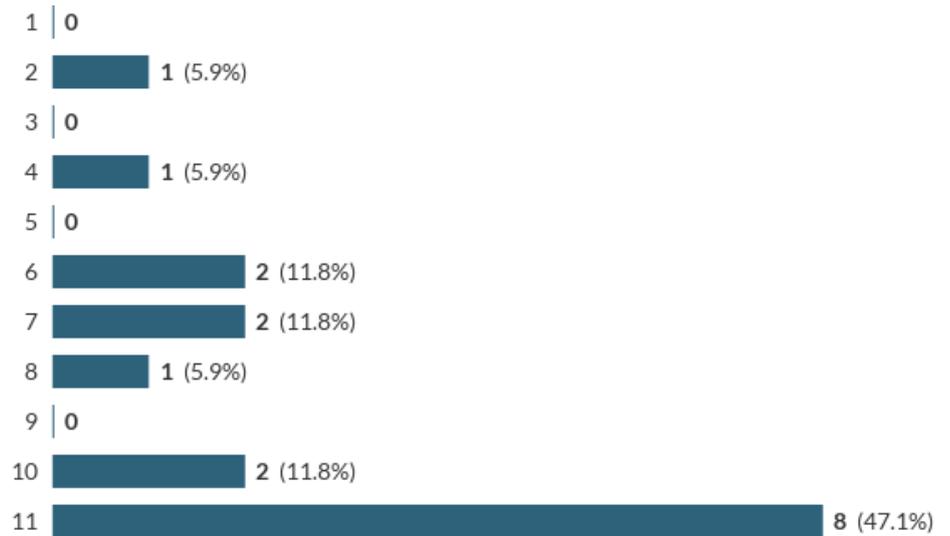


Figure 6 - EU survey participants ranking for 'Tax incentives'.

When these n17 responses are broken down across participating nations, providers in Germany, Portugal, Austria, Denmark and Switzerland, evidence this model of funding. No Irish respondents cite tax incentives as a model of funding they draw from. This breakdown is presented as table 8 overleaf.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	TAX INCENTIVE: a taxation rule which allocates financial benefits to taxpayers who participate in learning. - OECD distinctions as: tax allowances which allows deduction from the gross income to arrive at taxable income (i.e. tax base), for individuals and legal entities; tax credits allowing deduction from tax liability (i.e. tax due or tax payment), for individuals and legal entities.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	2	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	0	1	0	1	0	2	2	1	0	2	8	85	102

Table 8 - Tax incentives across participating countries

Eight out of n17 responses rank tax incentive as their least utilised funding model. This finding may reveal participant misinterpretation of the question asked. To demonstrate, from n4 Swiss participants to rank tax incentives as their lowest ranking, n2 also ranked other funding models as their least employed funding model with n1 respondent ranking all but one funding option as the least utilised. This discrepancy reminds the reader that a key recommendation from this research is localised in-depth research within each participating country.

DIRECT GRANTS

FinALE describe direct grants as **“subsidies which support individual or company investment in education and training. -Financial support is often provided to learners**

rather than providers. Direct grants allow individuals, employers and organisations to partake in adult learning”. Forty-six providers are recorded as in receipt of direct grants with n12 citing this as their principal source of funding and a further n12 citing direct grants as there second model of funding (see figure 7)

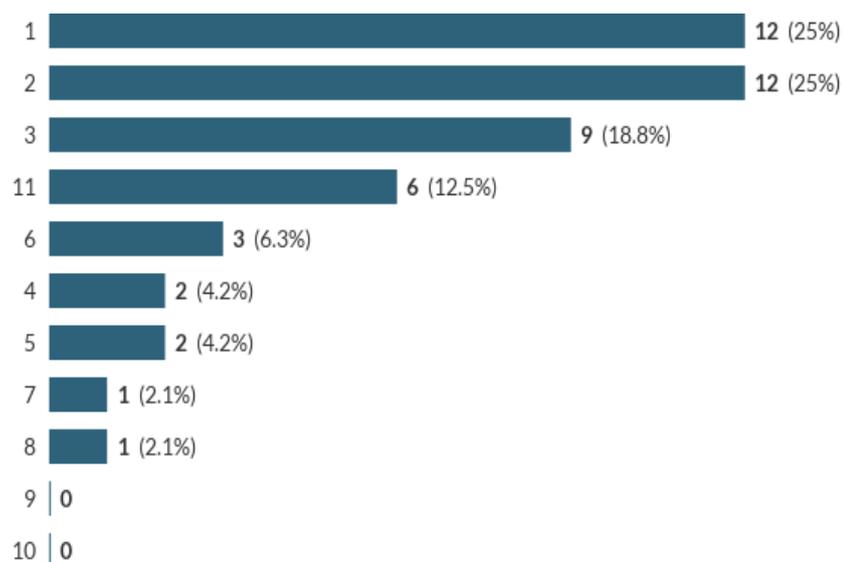


Figure 7 – EU survey participants ranking for ‘Direct grants’.

Table 9 offers the breakdown of these responses across countries. This reveals how direct funding is a model of funding found in each of the six participating countries with n4 out of n10 Swiss organisations being in receipt of some form of direct grant.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	DIRECT GRANTS: subsidies which support individual or company investment in education and training. -Financial support is often provided to learners rather than providers. Direct grants allow individuals, employers and organisations to partake in adult learning.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	9	9	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	4	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	4	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	12	12	9	2	2	3	1	1	0	0	6	54	102

Table 9 - Direct funding across participating associations

VOUCHERS/INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS

Finale describe this model of funding as **“a subsidy (in the form of monetary coupon) which enables individuals and occasionally companies to access adult learning services. - Offer flexibility regarding course content, duration and the training provider”**.

From n27 responses, no provider identifies this as their principle source of funding. However, n5 cite vouchers/individual learning accounts as their second most common model of funding and n8 as their third most common model of funding. Just n1 of n56 Irish respondents rank this type of funding. This means that when the Irish sub-set of n56 are discounted, 57% (n26) of all other respondents are utilising this model.

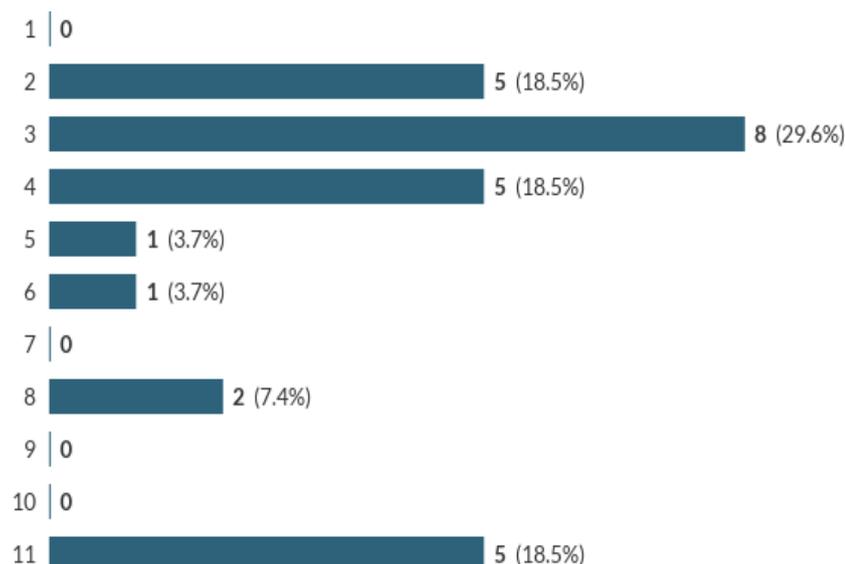


Figure 8 - EU survey participants ranking for 'voucher/individual learning accounts'.

As revealed within table 10, vouchers/individual learning accounts are most present in Austria (n6 out of n7) and Portugal (n8 out of n10). Six out of n11 Swiss respondents also rank this model of funding.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	VOUCHERS/INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS: a subsidy (in the form of monetary coupon) which enables individuals and occasionally companies to access adult learning services. - Offer flexibility regarding course content, duration and the training provider.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	5	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	0	5	8	5	1	1	0	2	0	0	5	75	102

Table 10 – vouchers/individual accounts across participating associations

LOANS

FinALE describes this model as **“schemes that allow people to borrow against their future income to cover part of their training costs. - These can be a mortgage-type (traditional or conventional) loan, where repayment in fixed instalments is required - OR an income-contingent loan, where instalments depend on the borrower’s income”**.

Seventeen research participants rank this response. However, 10 of these respondents rank this model as eleventh from eleven options. A full breakdown of ranking is presented as figure 9.

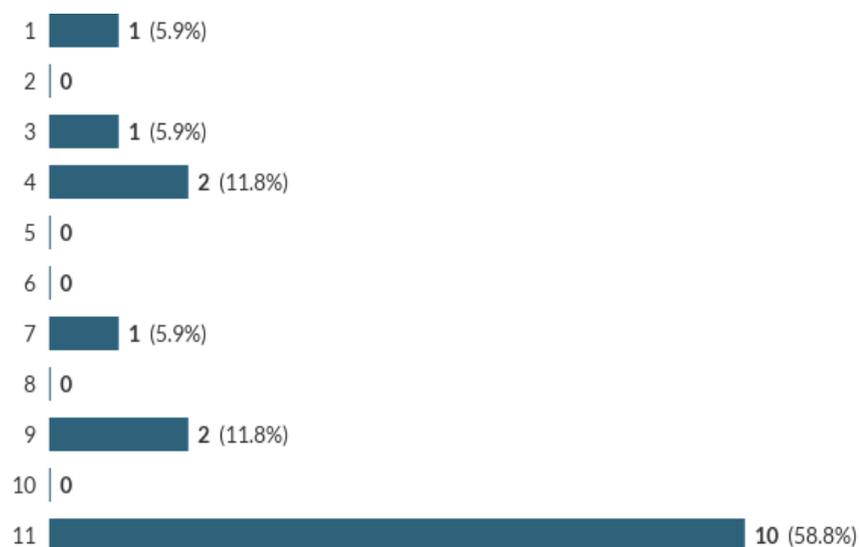


Figure 9 - EU survey participants ranking for 'loans'.

One Irish based respondent ranks 'loans' as the model of funding they draw from most frequently. As table 11 reveals, accessing loans to support community education is present in each of the six participating countries.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	LOANS: schemes that allow people to borrow against their future income to cover part of their training costs. - These can be a mortgage-type (traditional or conventional) loan, where repayment in fixed installments is required - OR an income-contingent loan, where installments depend on the borrower's income.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	6	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	10	85	102

Table 11 - Loans accounts across participating associations

TRAINING LEAVE

FinALE describe this as **“a regulatory instrument that seeks equitable access to education by granting leave to employees for learning purposes. There are two models 1) paid training leave which entitles employees to maintain full or partial salary. In some cases, income is compensated through grants from public or social partner funds; 2) unpaid training leave whereby an employee's salary is not paid during the training period, but they have the right to return to their employment”**.

Figure 10 reveals that n6 out of n16 respondents rank this as their lowest form of funding with no provider listing this as their principle source of funding.

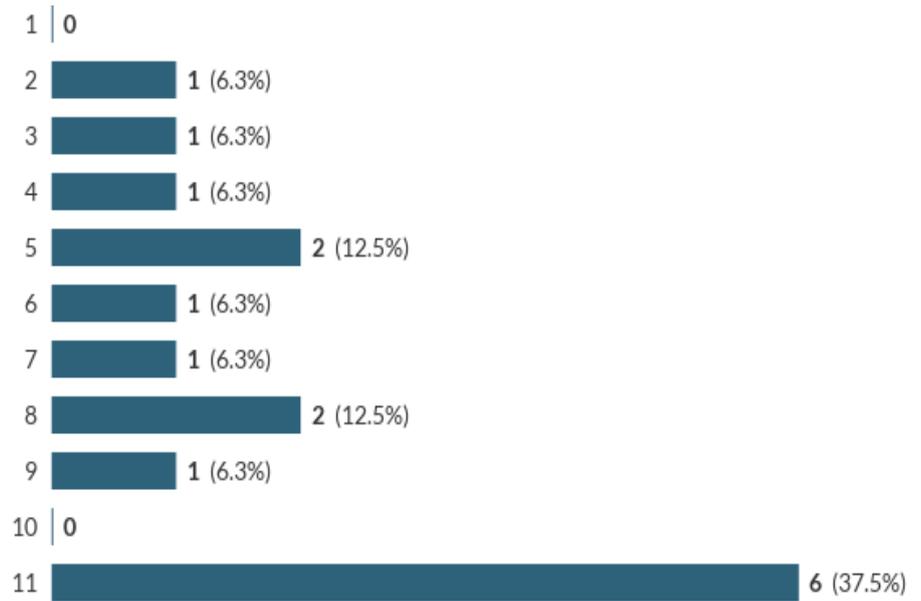


Figure 10 - EU survey participants ranking for Training Leave

Table 12 offers the breakdown of these responses across countries. This reveals how this model of funding is not reported by Irish providers.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	TRAINING LEAVE: a regulatory instrument that seeks equitable access to education by granting leave to employees for learning purposes. There are two models 1) paid training leave which entitles employees to maintain full or partial salary. In some cases, income is compensated through grants from public or social partner funds; 2) unpaid training leave whereby an employee's salary is not paid during the training period, but they have the right to return to their employment.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	6	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	6	86	102

Table 12 - EU survey participants ranking for 'training leave'.

PAYBACK CLAUSES:

FinALE describe this as ***“a legal or contractual regulation concerning the repayment of training costs, if the employee decides voluntarily to discontinue the employment relationship with the employer who invested in their training”***.

Sixteen responses are recorded. Eight (n8) of whom give payback clauses the lowest ranking.

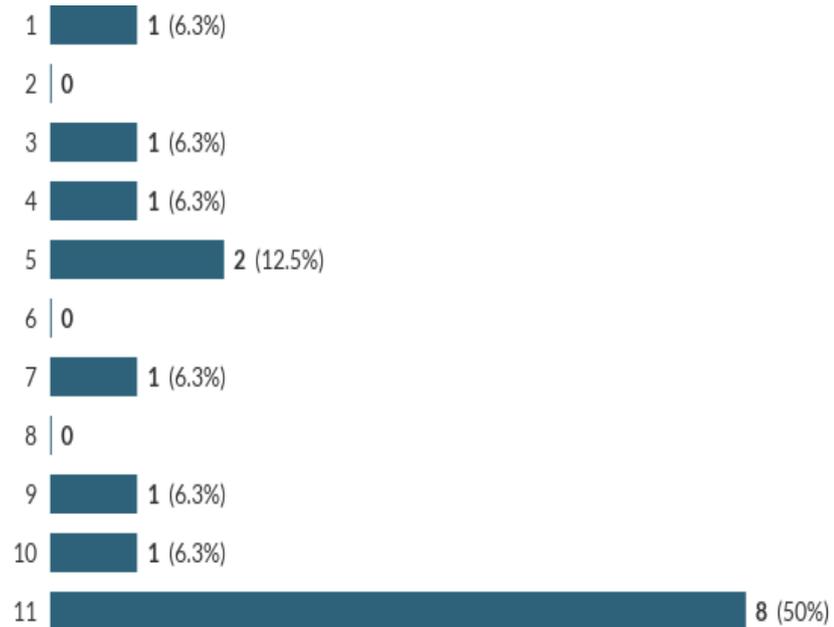


Figure 11 - EU survey participants ranking for payback clauses

Again, this model of funding is not reported in an Irish context but is prevalent in each of the other five participating nations. See table 13 below for the full breakdown of provider location.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	PAYBACK CLAUSES: a legal or contractual regulation concerning the repayment of training costs, if the employee decides voluntarily to discontinue the employment relationship with the employer who invested in their training.											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	6	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	1	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	8	86	102

Table 13 - Payback clauses across participating providers

PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING:

FinALE identify this as “**Where a national or international Philanthropic agency provides a grant towards some or all of the work that you do**”.

The breakdown of n31 responses is revealed in figure 15 below.

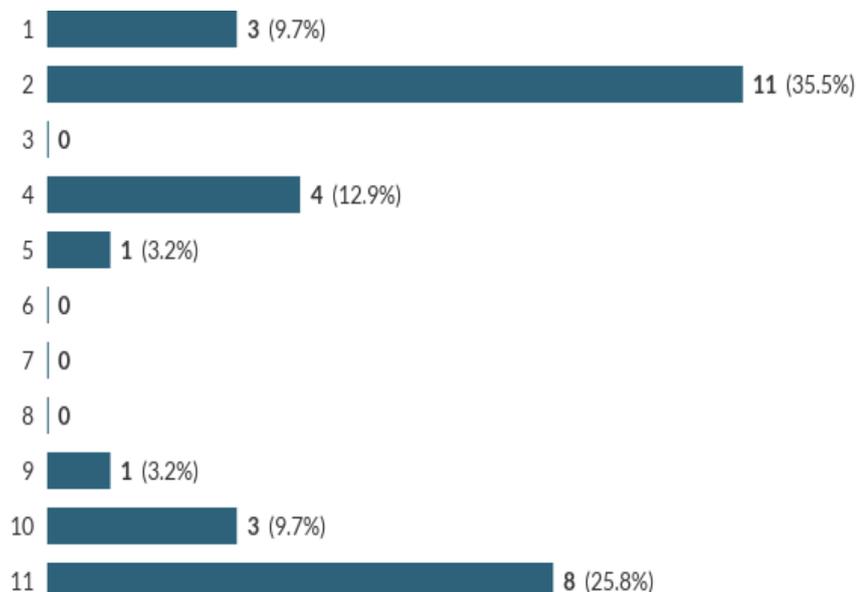


Figure 12 - EU survey participants ranking for Philanthropic funding

Two Swiss respondents and one Irish respondent identify philanthropic funding as their principal source of funding. Just n2 out of n10 Portuguese providers rank philanthropic funding with one of these respondents ranking this model of funding as eleventh of eleven options. Table 14 overleaf gives the country-by-country breakdown of responses.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING: where a national or international Philanthropic agency provides a grant towards some or all of the work that you do											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	11
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Totals	3	11	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	3	8	71	102

Table 14 – Philanthropic funding across participating providers

LEARNER FEES:

FinALE describe this as **“Where fees collected from learners are used partly or wholly in the running of your organisation”**.

Fifty-nine survey participants rank this option meaning 58% of all survey respondents are charging fees to the participants of community education. Thirty-six percent (n21) of those to charge fees rank this as their principal source of funding. This represents 21% of all survey respondents.

A further 27% (n16) of those to charge fees ranking this as the second model of funding they draw from. Another 12% rank learner fees as a third model of funding they avail of.

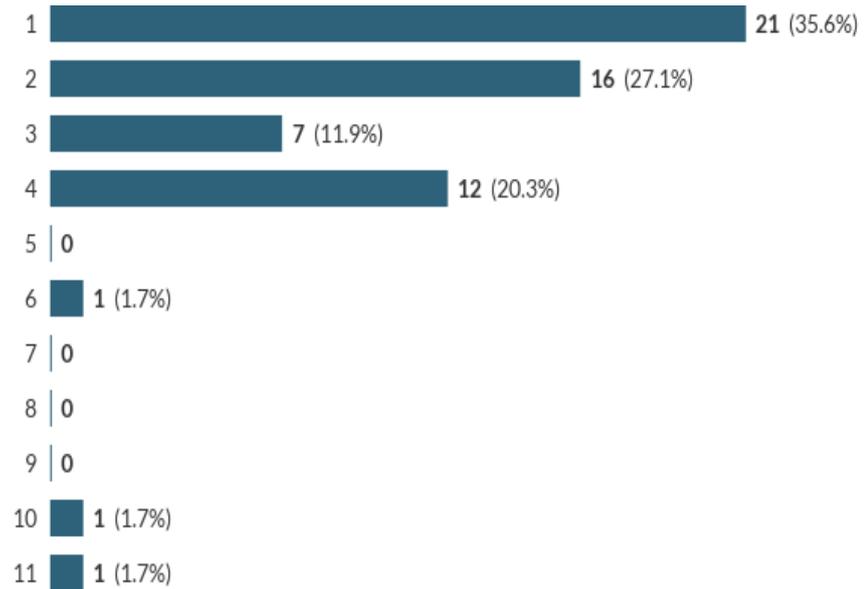


Figure 13 - EU survey participants ranking for learner fees

Each participating country includes providers who cite learner fees as their principal source of funding. This ranges from n5 out of n7 German based responses, to n4 out of n56 Irish responses. A full breakdown across participating countries is presented as table 15.

Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.	LEARNER FEES: Where fees collected from learners are used partly or wholly in the running of your organisation											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
AONTAS (Ireland)	4	12	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	56
Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)	1	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10
Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10
Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland	3	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	11
No answer	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Totals	21	16	7	12	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	43	102

Table 15 – Learner fees across participating providers

When learner fees are compared with provider type, half of all private providers cite learner fees as their main source of funding with just n3 out of n26 private providers not ranking learner fees as a model of income. This compares to 7% of all locally managed community education providers and 20% of all public adult education providers citing learner fees as their main source of funding. See table 16 for a full comparison of learner fees to organisational type.

Which of these descriptions best describes your organisation?	LEARNER FEES: Where fees collected from learners are used partly or wholly in the running of your organisation											No answer	Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
Public (state/government) adult education provider	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	10
Private adult education provider	13	1	3	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	26
Community education provider (locally managed)	4	13	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	59
Other	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
No answer	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Totals	21	16	7	12	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	43	102

Table 16 – Cross-tabulation of learner fees as a source of income and organisational type.

4.3 Provider perceptions on the suitability of funding

As well as ranking the models of funding that participating countries draw from, each survey participant is asked to respond to directional hypotheses designed to measure their experiences of the funding models they work to. Responses were measured using a 7-point Likert scale. Given the disproportion of responses across each participating nation (see section 4.1) this section simply reports on the findings as captured through BOS analysis. Comparatives across provider type and supplementary contextualising commentary is provided in chapter five.

The first such statement asks for responses to the statement “*the funding model I currently use is useful and appropriate to my institution/organisation*”.

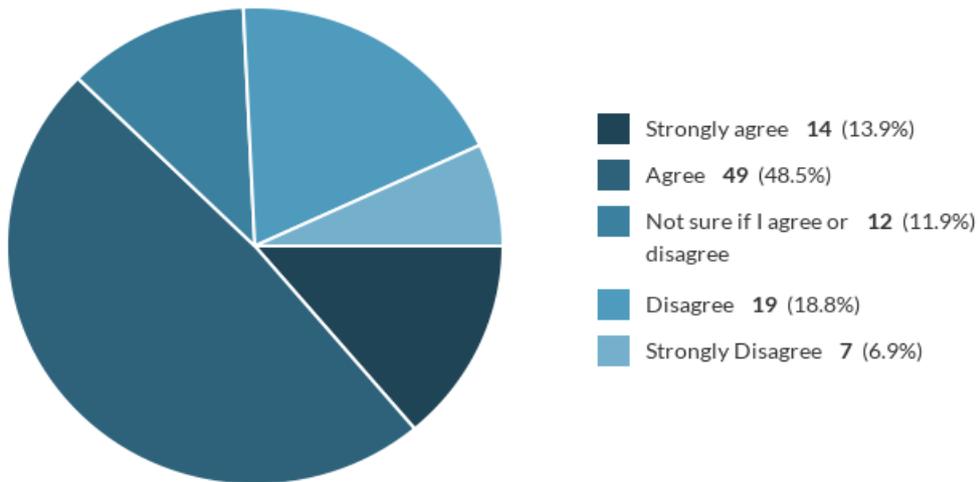


Figure 14 –FinALE survey participants responses regarding the usefulness and appropriateness of their funding model.

Figure 14 reveals a majority 62% of participants agree with this statement. Twelve percent are not sure if they agree or disagree and the remaining 26% disagree.

The survey asks respondents to respond to the statement “The funding model my organisation/institution currently uses, makes the process of applying for funding, simple and uncomplicated”. As figure 15 reveals, 43% of respondents agree with this statement with 38% disagreeing. This leaves a sizable 20% not sure if they agree or disagree.

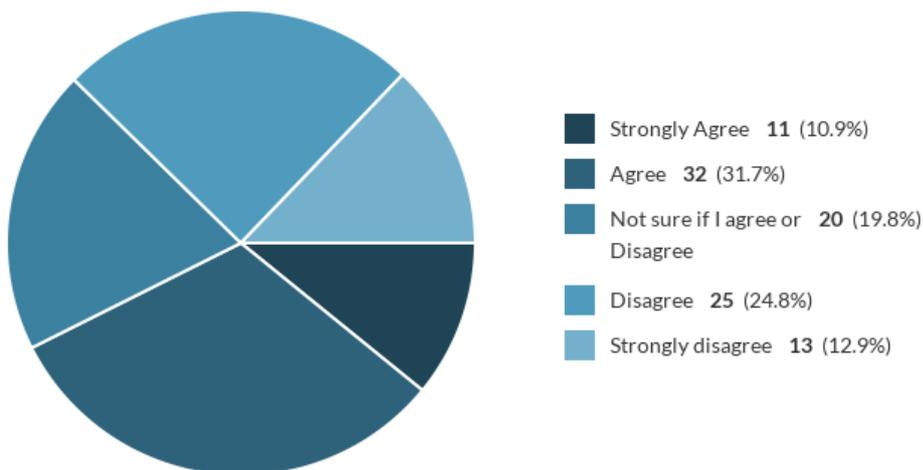


Figure 15 - European response when asked if the funding model in use makes the process of applying for funding, simple and uncomplicated.

Question seven (appendix I) asks providers if “*The funding model my organisation/institution uses ensures we are sustainable and guarantees our future as providers of adult education*”.

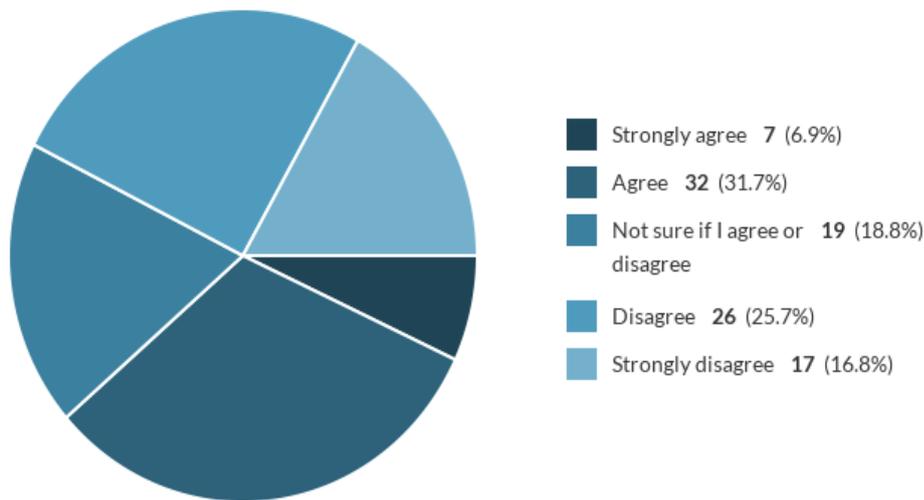


Figure 16 - Survey opinion on the sustainability of funding

As figure 16 illustrates, a sizable 42% disagree with this statement with just over one third (37%) in agreement. Nineteen percent of survey respondents are not sure if they agree or disagree.

Community education providers were surveyed on the practicalities of their funding model, specifically the ease of administration. This is by posing the hypothesis “*the funding model my organisation/institution uses is easy to administer*”

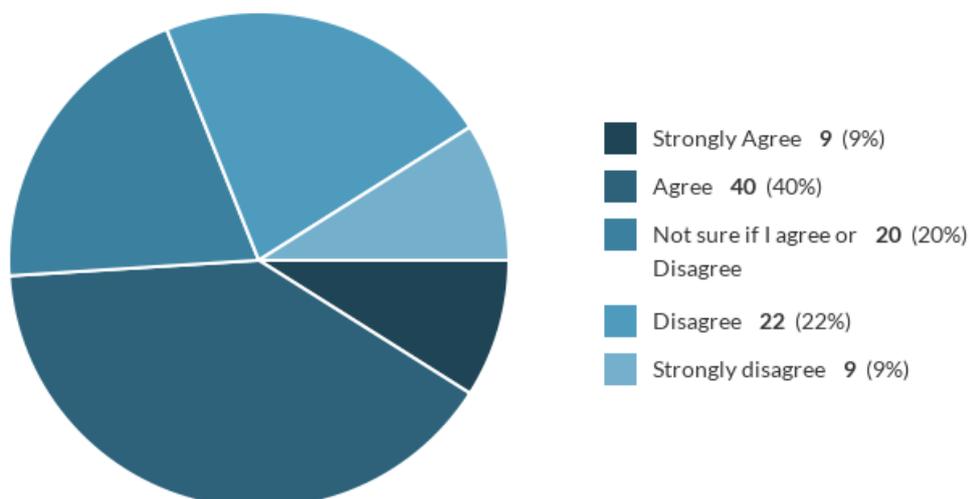


Figure 17 - "The funding model my organisation/institution currently uses, is easy to administer".

A varied response again emerges where 49% agree, 31% disagree and 20% are not sure.

Chapters 1-3 emphasise how community education traditionally targets particular population groups such as those who have exited the school system before completion, those who live in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, those parenting alone, and those who are long-term unemployed. Given the recent policy changes outlined in this report, one survey question sought clarity on whether providers were still able to work with these population groups. This was through the directional hypothesis "The funding model I currently use is effective in reaching the target group my organisation/institution would ideally like to work with". As per figure 18, a majority of 56% agree with this statement thus suggesting that, for many providers, the target groups for community education remain unchanged. Twenty-five percent (25%) are however not sure if they agree or disagree with this statement. Nineteen percent (19%) disagree meaning one fifth of all surveyed providers do not believe the funding model they are currently using enables them to reach those they believe are most in need of community education.

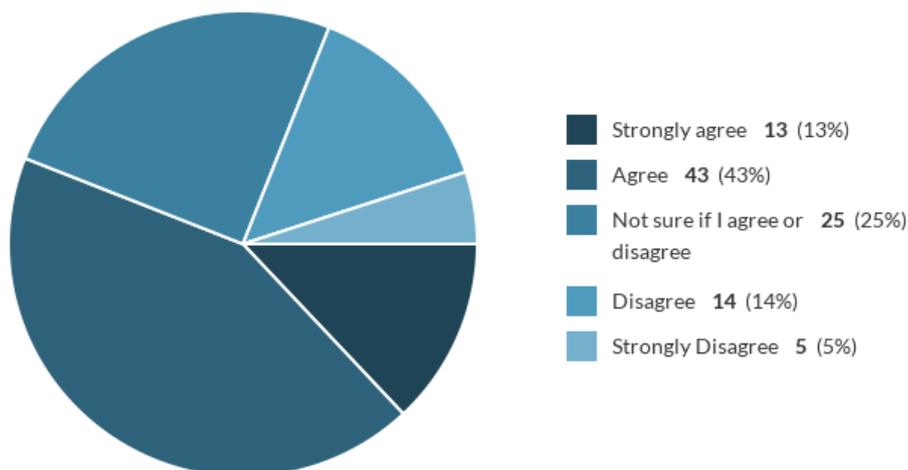


Figure 18 - The funding model I currently use is effective in reaching the target group my organisation/institution would ideally like to work with.

In the context of a strong Europe wide employability discourse presented within this report, research participants were asked to quantify the balance of responsibility in providing community education. Government, employers and learners were each specifically named although scope was also provided to incorporate other stakeholders.

The most common response to the statement “*the funding model my institution/organisation uses reflects a balanced responsibility between government, employers, individuals (learners) and other stakeholders*” is for providers to agree (37%) with 5% strongly agreeing (see figure 19 overleaf). A sizable 38% disagree with this statement from which 11% strongly disagree. As with other survey responses there is also considerable uncertainty with 20% not sure if they agree or disagree.

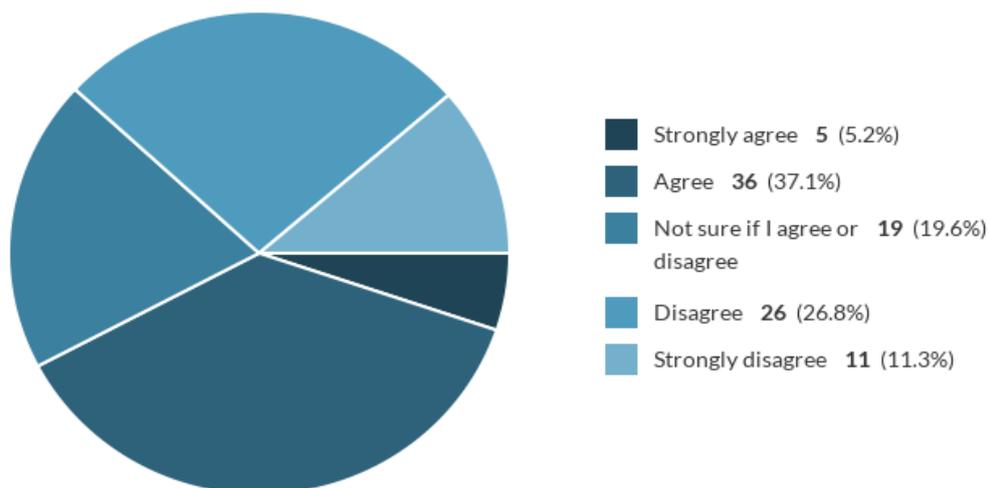


Figure 19 -The funding model my institution/organisation uses reflects a balanced responsibility between government, employers, individuals (learners) and other relevant stakeholder

The final survey question put to the providers who participated in this research was to inquire into their sense of learner opinion with regards the funding models in situ. Given the subjectivity associated with this question it is unsurprising that the highest single response is for 39% to reveal that they are not sure if they agree or disagree. When combining those who strongly agree and those who agree, a higher overall percentage (47%) agree whilst a minority of 13% disagree that learners who attend community education seem satisfied with the funding models being used.

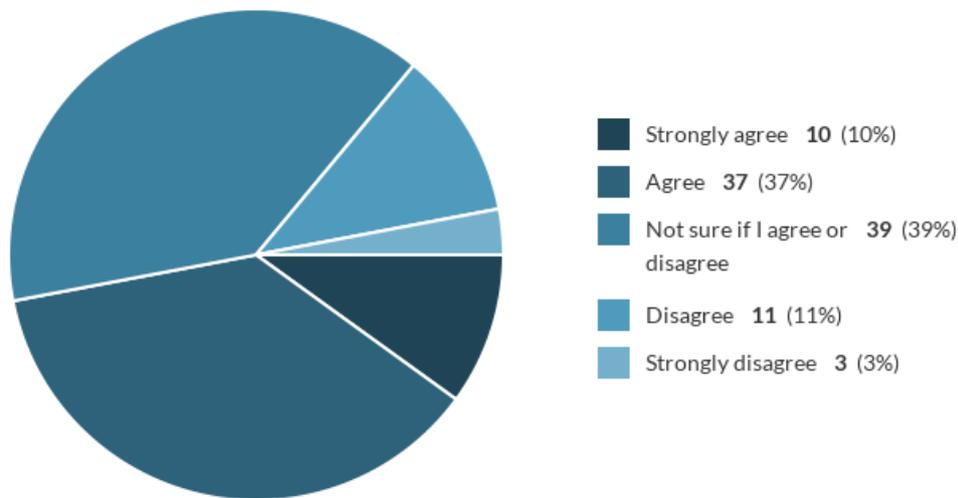


Figure 20 - The adult learners who attend our centres seem satisfied with the funding model(s) used.

4.3 Summary of findings

This chapter presented findings from an embedded survey which was completed by community education providers associated with AONTAS (Ireland), Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal), Niedersächsischer Bund für freie Erwachsenenbildung e.V (Germany), Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria), The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark), and the Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland. As response rates across these participating associations are not comparative, a synthesis rather than comparison has been presented.

Each of 11 models of funding proposed by FinALE are prevalent across participating nations however each are not present in each country. **Programme funding** is the most popular model of funding with **project funding** and **direct grants** also popular amongst respondents. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents charge some sort of fee to the participants of community education.

The majority of 62% of participants are happy with the funding model they current work within however many are not convinced these models provide a sustainable future for community education. Just 37% agreed that “The funding model my organisation/institution uses ensures we are sustainable and guarantees our future as providers of adult education”.

When considering the target populations for community education, 56% believe their funding model is effective in reaching those they ideally like to work with, with 25% not sure. This means that 19% of all participating providers disagree that their current funding model is effective in reaching the target populations traditionally served by community education. Thirty-nine percent of all respondents are unsure about what learners think about how community education is funded.

There is some dissatisfaction about the balance of responsibility to provide community education with 38% disagreeing that this is proportionately shared between employers, government, individuals and other stakeholders. This compares with EC criticism of the level of engagement by the private sector (EC, 2010, p. 1).

Chapter Five – the Irish experience: Findings from an embedded survey

5.1 Introduction

Within chapter four, readers were offered a synthesis of all quantitative findings from an online embedded survey completed by n102 community education providers across 6 participating adult education associations (see section 4.1). This chapter specifically focuses on the qualitative and quantitative experiences of n56 of these n102 participants all of whom are members of the Irish based AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN). Each of the questions posed to Irish participants mirror those posed to each European research participant. Where this chapter is different is that it also draws from textual commentary provided by research participants. This gives a more holistic view of how community education is funded, how effective practitioners view these models to be, and what suggestions for change they might have. It also allows the research to identify the specific funders as have been outlined in chapter three.

As stated above, all n56 survey respondents were recruited through their membership of the AONTAS CEN. This network describes itself as “a political platform of independent community education groups” (AONTAS CEN, 2008). Since inception, it has lobbied to secure distinct funding streams for community education.

5.2 Research methodology and design

As well as the overall research objectives presented within chapter one (section 1.3), this section of the report focuses more deliberately on the following three questions:

1. How is community education in Ireland currently funded?
2. From a provider perspective, how suitable is this model of funding?
3. Considering our socio-political context regarding resource allocation, what model of funding would be acceptable to the providers of community education?

5.2.1 Research design

There were three phases to the research; an online embedded survey, one-to-one interviews with self-selecting research participants, and follow up e-interviewing, again with self-selecting participants.



Figure 21 - Research design for Irish qualitative and quantitative study.

All members of the AONTAS CEN were invited to complete an on-line survey (appendix 1) and survey design was concurrent with design of the wider European survey (section 1.3). Survey circulation was through email to registered CEN members and participation was encouraged through follow up phone-calls. The survey was open during May-July 2017. In total there were n59 respondents however n3 were discounted where participants identified they were not from the research population or where the responses were insufficient to gather findings.

All CEN members were also invited to opt-into phases 2 and 3 of the research. This was by providing their contact details as part of survey completion. Findings from phases 2 and 3 are presented as chapter six.

5.2.2 Survey limitations

When survey responses were reviewed by the researchers, a significant difficulty emerged when participants were asked to identify with specific funding models (see question 3, appendix I). Considerable subjectivity emerged. To explain, a sizable number of research participants ranked the same funder differently. This was apparent to researchers on review of qualitative data where providers gave more details about the funding they received. As well as identifying this shortfall when analysing findings, the researchers were directly contacted by a number of participants who were unsure how to interpret the models of funding offered by FinALE in an Irish context.

To rectify this research design flaw, a process of quantification was employed where qualitative contributions were converted into numeric form. A pitfall with this approach is the introduction of researcher subjectivity thus introducing the possibility of misclassification (Sandelowski *et al*, 2009). The software package SPSS was introduced to aid quantification thereby enable more accurate comparatives.

5.2 Profile of participants

Fifty-six (n56) valid survey response were received. When respondents were asked to identify their organisational type, the following emerges.

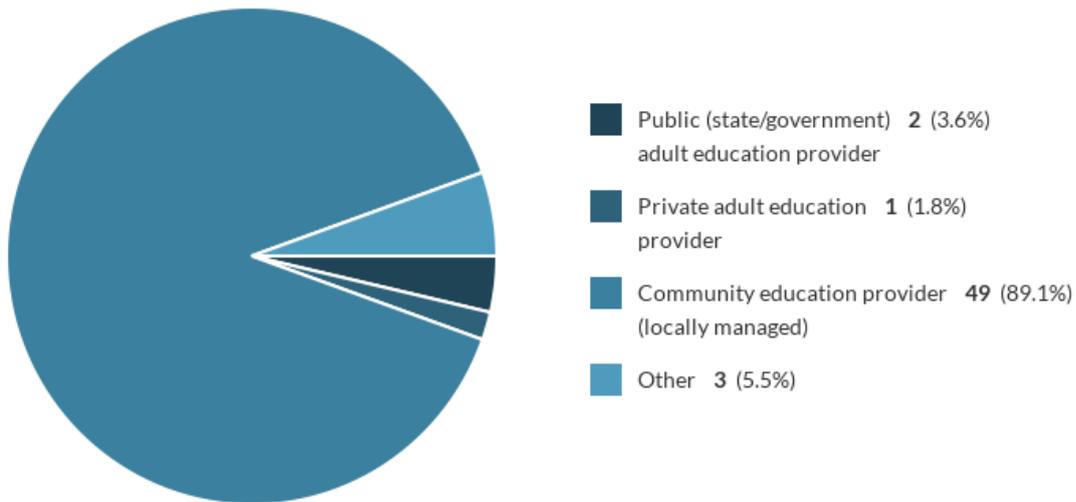


Figure 22 – Community Education provider type, Ireland

5.3 Sources of funding

Eleven different funding models that are applicable across FinALE jurisdictions were suggested to research participants. These are available to the reader within section 4.2 and also as appendix 2. Respondents were asked to rank each model as each applied to their situation. Figure 23 provides quantification of the principal and secondary model most applicable to Irish providers of Community Education.

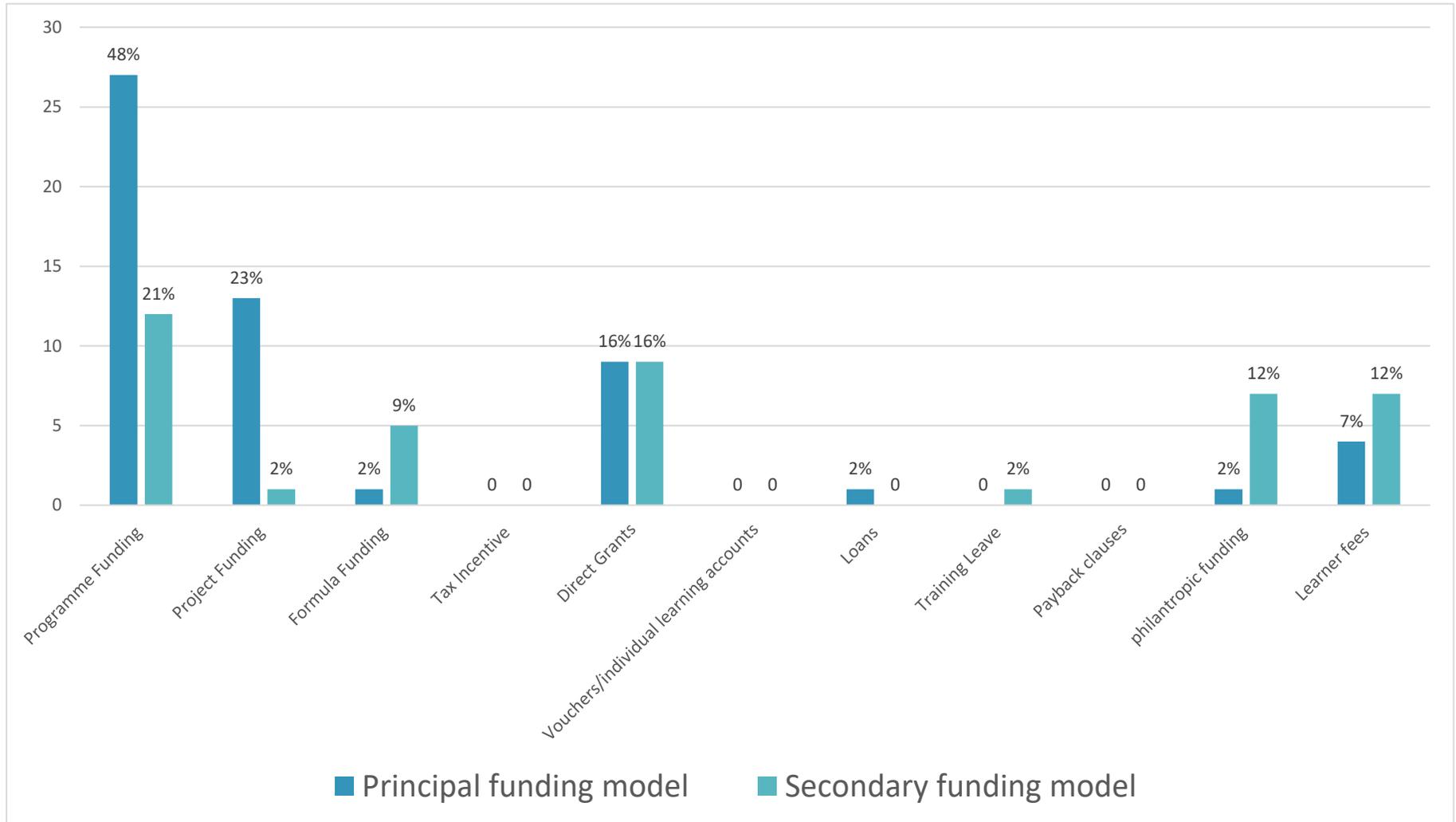


Figure 23 - Principal and secondary funding models – Irish survey findings

As figure 23 reveals, programme funding is the most frequently cited model of funding. The section below gives a more informative breakdown of who provides this programme funding and how providers experience this type of funding. This information is then replicated for each of the funding models relevant to the Irish context.

5.3.1 Programme Funding

Programme funding is described as where **“a provider is contracted to provide a range of courses, based on estimated levels of student interest and potential uptake. - The provider proposes anticipated costs which are based on individual circumstances”**.

Twenty-seven organisations draw from programme funding as their principal model of funding with these responses broken down as follows.

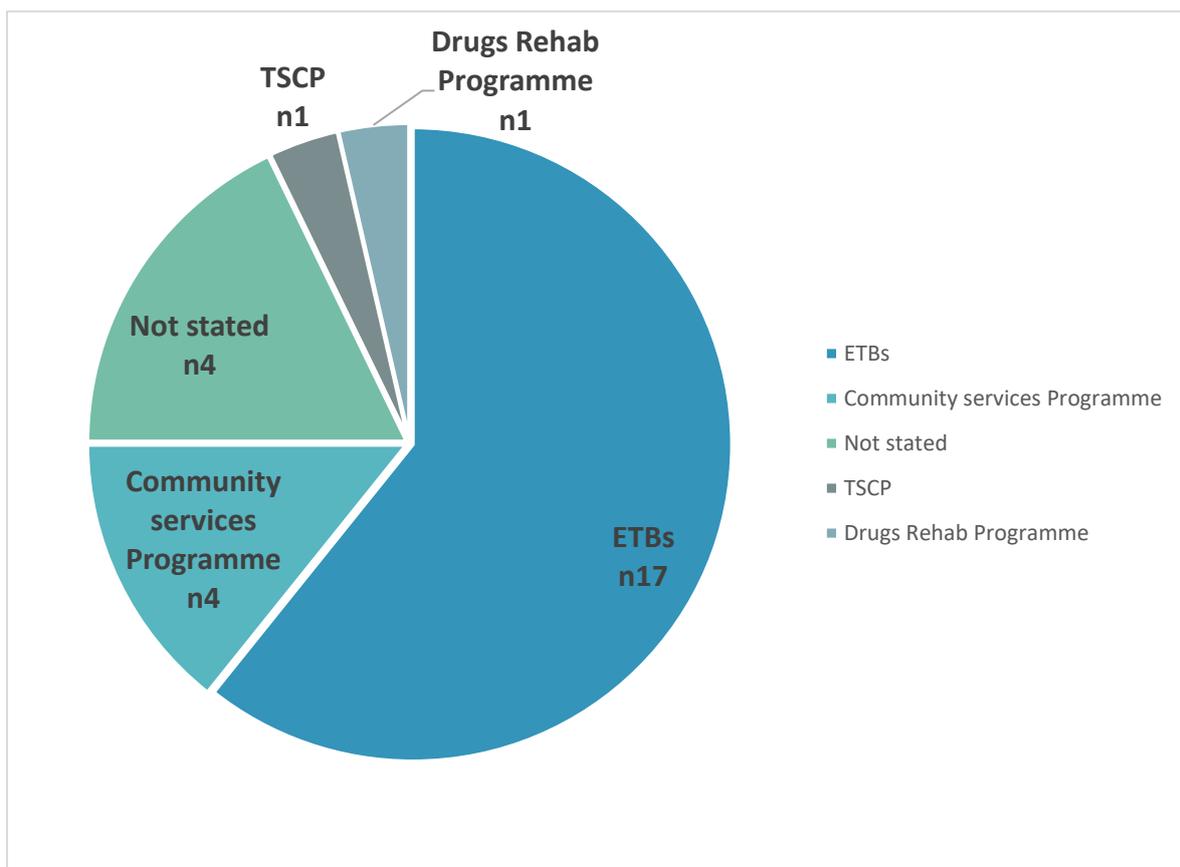


Figure 24 - Breakdown of Programme Funding as Principal source

ETBs as a funder of Community Education

Seventeen organisations that list programme funding first cite an Education and Training Board (ETBs) as their principal funder (see section 3.2 for further information on ETBs). Two of these organisations are solely funded through ETB programme funding. Eleven organisations cite a second source of funding as vital for the organisation's survival. These are named as the Department of Social Protection (n5), community grants (n2) and a religious congregation (n1) as described below:

We receive a core grant from [names ETB]. This covers staff and tutor costs. The maintenance and ongoing costs associated with the facilities are covered by the [names religious congregation]. They also provide us with occasional funding for IT systems etc.

Two organisations whose principal funder is an ETB cite learner fees as a secondary source of funding. This isn't to say that they are the only community education providers to charge fees in fact n26 (54%) of those surveyed charge fees to participants. This phenomenon is discussed further in section 5.3.4.

The text box to your right gives a typical example of how organisations scaffold funding to include primary and secondary funding as well as fees.

We are not provided funding directly but apply for courses based on needs and ETB provides tutors. We then access further funding for materials from DSP. Learner fees, which are nominal, contribute to our rental and tea and coffee.

Survey participant

ETBs as secondary funders.

Twelve participating organisations identify an Education and Training Board (ETB) as their secondary source of funding, representing 12% of all respondents across each categorisation. Four (n4) of these organisations are funded through the Social Inclusion and Activation Programme (SICAP) programme (see sections 2.4.1). Two (n2) are Family Resource Centres (see section 2.4), Two (n2) are funded through the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks, one is a Non-

Governmental Organisation (NGO) with a national presence, one (nI) receives a direct grant to work with people recovering from drug addiction and one is not clear about its primary funding source.

The Community Services Programme

Four community education providers identified The Community Services Programme (CSP) as their principal source of funding. This initiative supports local enterprise through the provision of local services that create employment opportunities in communities considered 'disadvantaged'. The CSP is funded by the Department of Social Protection and is administered by Pobail.

Drugs Rehabilitation Programme

One (nI) organisation cites the Drugs Rehabilitation Programme as their principal source of funding. This programme is designed to support recovering drug users in developing their personal, social and employability skills.

Training and Support Childcare programme

This programme is administered by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on behalf of SOLAS and the Department of Social Protection.

5.3.2 Project Funding

Project funding is described as where “*a funder contracts providers for a service which, as well as delivering learning, may have several other strands outside the normal scope of a provider's activity. - This might include developing new courses or recruiting particular types of learners and will involve cooperation with other organisations or providers. - Projects are of a fixed duration and budget, meaning that once completed, there is no expectation that funding will continue. - Similarly, funding may not be given if project objectives are not met*”.

Thirteen organisations draw from project funding as their principal source of funding. Eight of these are funded through the SICAP programme, which is described in detail in section 3.4.1 of this report (p. 36). One of these eight organisations fall under the categorisation of *National Traveller Partnership*. This project receives support from the HSE and ETBs also.

Two (n2) are Family Resource centres thereby funding through TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency. A further n2 draw from Community Grants, one cites a Department of Justice grant administered through the National Collective of Community Based Women’s Networks (NCCWN). One research participant (n1) does not specify the source of project funding.

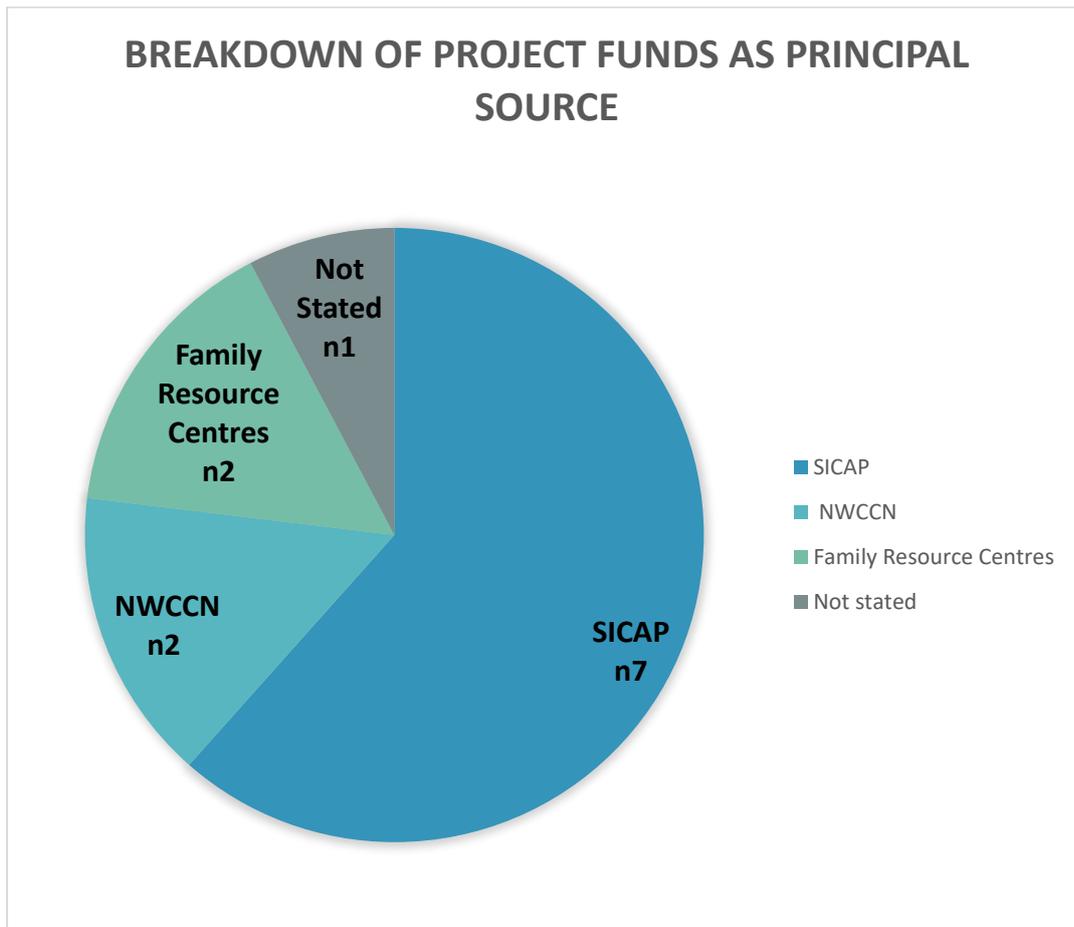


Figure 25 - Breakdown of project funding as a principal source of funding

As with those drawing principally from ETB funding, SICAP funding is not always sufficient to cover all costs. Four projects funded by SICAP draw from ETB funding and n1 relies on philanthropic subsidy for their community education activities.

Funding allocated through involvement with the National Collective of Community Based Women’s networks

Two participating organisations are principally funded through their involvement with the National Collective of Community Based women’s networks. These two organisations are part of a collective of 17 projects funded through the Department of Justice and equality who were previously funded through the Local and Community Development Programme. Each of these projects also rely on Education and Training Boards for additional funding to subsidise their core grant in the delivery of community education.

Family Resource Centres

Two participating organisations are Family Resource Centres (FRCs). These are part of a national network of 108 such centres which are each financially supported through the Child and Family Agency Tusla. As detailed in chapter two, FRCs have been a consistent feature in the provision of community education in Ireland. However, as with SICAP and LCDP funded projects, those surveyed are unable to do with without additional support from Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

5.3.3 Direct Grants

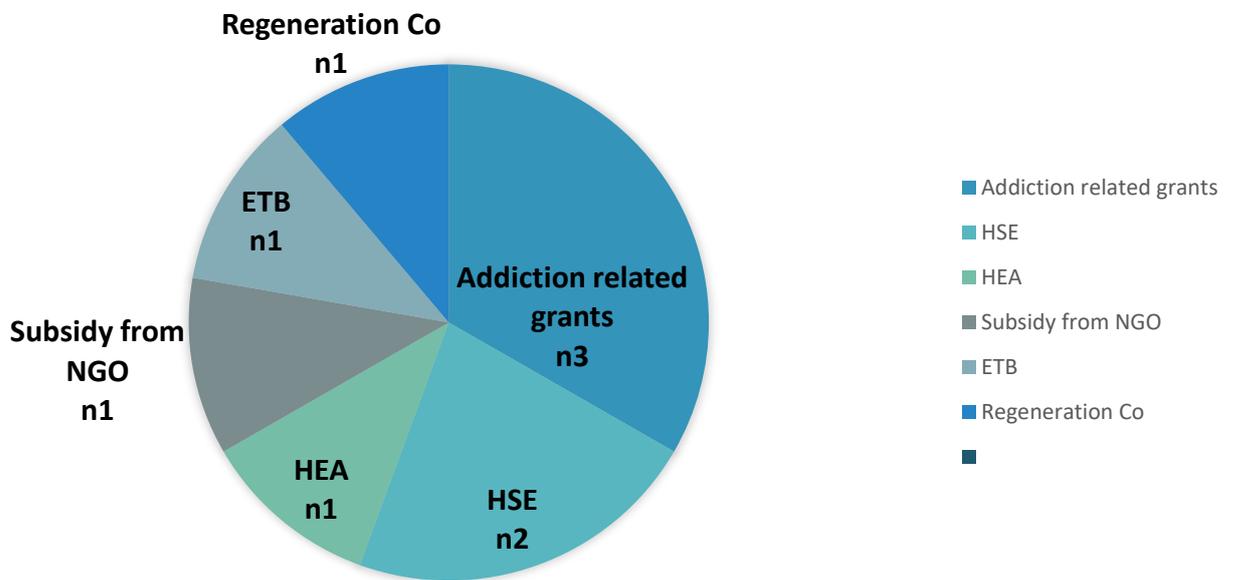
Direct Grants are described as “subsidies which support individual or company investment in education and training. -Financial support is often provided to learners rather than providers. Direct grants allow individuals, employers and organisations to partake in adult learning”.

We are a community development project funded under the SICAP program. SICAP does not allow for project costs so we use tutors provided by [names two ETBs] and apply to [names regeneration company] for funding for materials

Survey respondent.

In this survey, seven (n7) organisations receive direct grants broken down as follows:

BREAKDOWN OF DIRECT GRANTS AS PRINCIPAL SOURCE



Addiction related grants

In 1996, the policy document *First Report of the Ministerial Task Force to Reduce the Demand for Drugs* was financially supported through an influx of funding to certain communities identified as being at risk of the impacts of problematic drug use. Often this funding went to community organisations already engaging with the communities in question (Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 87). Many of the services developed from this initial injection of funding were subsequently mainstreamed into Health Service Executive (HSE) funding; the state established intermediary between health care providers and the government department of health. Three participating organisations receive grant aid from the HSE.

Health Service Executive (HSE)

Addiction related grants are not the only ones provided by the HSE as some organisations are also in receipt of funding specifically focused on positive mental health and wellbeing.

Higher Education Authority

Certain universities in Ireland have a long-established history of both support for and delivery of community education in Ireland. This involvement emerges in this research with n1 participant organisation funded through the university system through the Higher Education Authority.

Regeneration Company

Another source of direct grant aid is where large regeneration projects are undertaken in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Usually, the companies established by the state are given a budget for community engagement. In this study, one organisation is benefitting from this funding as its principal source of funding.

Education and Training Boards (ETB)

One participating organisation identifies an ETB as the source of direct grant aid received by the organisation. This arrangement somewhat differs from annual service level agreements and is discussed in more detail in section 3.3.1

Subsidy from Non-Governmental Organisations

Sometimes, NGOs established with a specific non-educational remit; such as the provision of housing or the alleviation of poverty, attend to their vision and purpose through the inclusion of community education. One participating organisation identify with this model of funding.

5.3.4 Learner Fees

Learner fees refer to “where fees collected from learners are used partly or wholly in the running of your organisation”. Four organisations cite learner fees as their principal source of funding. Each indicate heavy reliance on other supports including people working without pay. One respondent talks of “substantial voluntary effort enables our organisation to survive”. This same contributor comments:

In our experience funders require and design their application forms based on some derivative of the Logic Model. For an organisation like ours that values bespoke interventions often prescribed and ‘one size fits all’ solution is greatly disadvantaged [...] We try to obtain money while maintaining our integrity. Sometimes a balance has

to be found between ‘follow the money at all costs’ and ‘purity with poverty’ [...] Most of our work is presently being done on a voluntary basis.

As shared within section 3.2.1, 54% of all survey respondents charge a fee to the participants of community education. Table 17 cross-tabulates an organisation’s principal funder with whether or not they charge learner fees.

	Learner Fees		Total
	Yes	No	
ETB	8	10	18
not clear	3	3	6
subsidy from NGO	1	0	1
SICAP	3	5	8
Addiction related services	0	3	3
Urban Regeneration project	0	1	1
Learner fees	4	0	4
NWCCN	0	2	2
Drugs Rehabilitation Programme	0	1	1
HSE	1	0	1
Philanthropy	1	0	1
HEA	1	0	1
CSP	3	1	4
Training and Support Childcare programme	1	0	1
Family Resource Centre	2	0	2
Self-financing/loans	1	0	1
HSE Grant support	1	0	1
Total	30	26	56

Table 17 –Breakdown of Irish organisations who charge learner fees

Some debate emerges about the practice of charging fees to learners. A representative from one organisation states “charging learners for basic accredited programmes below level 7 is against our principles of open access to education as a fundamental right” (survey respondent).

This isn’t the only such statement as another shares the following:

Our target group is primarily marginalised people who were failed by the public education system. Asking them to pay fees to access basic education is an additional barrier and discrimination (survey respondent)

5.3.5 Philanthropic Funding

Philanthropic funding is described as “*were a national or international Philanthropic agency provides a grant towards some or all of the work that you do*”. The Ireland Funds is an example of a philanthropic funding source; a non-profit organisation that have awarded many grants to community development initiatives in its 40 year history (see (<https://irelandfunds.org/grants/>)). Some Irish community based activities have also drawn from International grants such as *Atlantic Philanthropies* (see <http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/>) or the UK-based *Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust* (<https://www.jrct.org.uk/>).

In this study, just n1 organisation cites philanthropic donations as their principal source of funding. However, n6 organisations cite philanthropic donations as their second source of funding.

5.3.6 Formula Funding

One organisation is funded through the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI). As explained within chapter 3, this is administered as part of Education and Training Boards but separate to the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme.

5.3.7 Loans

One organisation who describes itself as a ‘community sector organisation (locally managed), cite loans at their principal source of funding. Three other organisations also cite

accessing loans; each of which again identify as ‘community sector organisations that are locally managed.

One of these organisations rank loans as their fifth model of funding and describe their overall funding model as follows:

Target group: residents on social housing estates. Non-accredited community education funded by mixture of ETB and company intervention...accredited community education courses part funded by ETB, Local partnership companies, DSP in the form of individual learner grants, learner fees and company subvention. (survey respondent)

This excerpt, gives an example of the convoluted nature of the funding behind community education.

Another organisation, this time principally funded through the Community Services Programme (see

section 5.3.1), rank loans joint fourth, along with learner fees and philanthropic funding.

The final organisation to draw from loans are principally in receipt of project funding. This organisation rank ‘loans’ ninth from the eleven models of funding offered to survey participants.

5.3.8. Training Leave

One organisation identifies training leave as a secondary source of funding. This is described as where an employer both pays fees, and provides leave-of-absence, so learners can attend education and training programmes.

We resource our educational work with a mix of funding sources – that has developed over the 44 years of operation – a core grant which subsidises every participant availing of courses (essentially the core grant carries the overheads – staff premises, admin etc.) – Participant fees area raised to cover the remaining cost of courses – Grants from various sources (ETB, philanthropic, individual donations, volunteering, unrestricted...)are drawn to lessen the participant costs through offering courses at no charge, or with sliding rate or with concessions or with full fees – where courses are organised in collaboration with other groups, partner organisations can contribute from their various funding streams

Survey participant

5.3.9 Combined funding for Community Education Network Members

To this point, funding has been categorised as either programme funding, project funding, direct grants, learner fees or philanthropic. From n56 valid answers, n27 organisations (48%) describe how they also draw from other sources of funding as these become available. A typical model is thus for community education providers to draw from one or two principal funders, with additional subsidy through small grants, learner fees, voluntary effort and, for four surveyed organisations, by accessing loans. The weight of this precarity is evident through other qualitative contributions. One survey respondents, whose organisation relies on learner fees, philanthropic grants and other small grants as available notes,

Usually we depend on some local contribution to enable us to do our work. We try, often with difficulty, to ensure that money is not the determinant of whether a worthy piece of work is taken forward. (survey respondent)

Another voice also highlights the instability of this approach sharing,

Our funding sources can vary from year to year which involves different levels of administration depending on the funding stream - it is not a streamlined model due to the inconsistency of funding. (survey respondent)

The variety of funding that emerges also reveals the involvement of a range of government departments which has been quantified as follows:

	Frequency	Percent
Department of Education and Skills	n19	34%
Department of Social Protection	n7	12%
Department of Justice and Equality	n2	4%
Irish Govt. and European Social Fund	n8	14%
Dept. of health	n5	9%
Not stated	n6	11%
N/A	n5	9%
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	n2	4%
Department of Communications, Climate action and Environment	n1	2%
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	n1	2%
Total	n56	100.0

Figure 26 – Irish funding per government department (principal and secondary funders)

Figure 27 on the next page offers the reader a breakdown of principal and secondary funding sources across different sources.

Sources of funding.

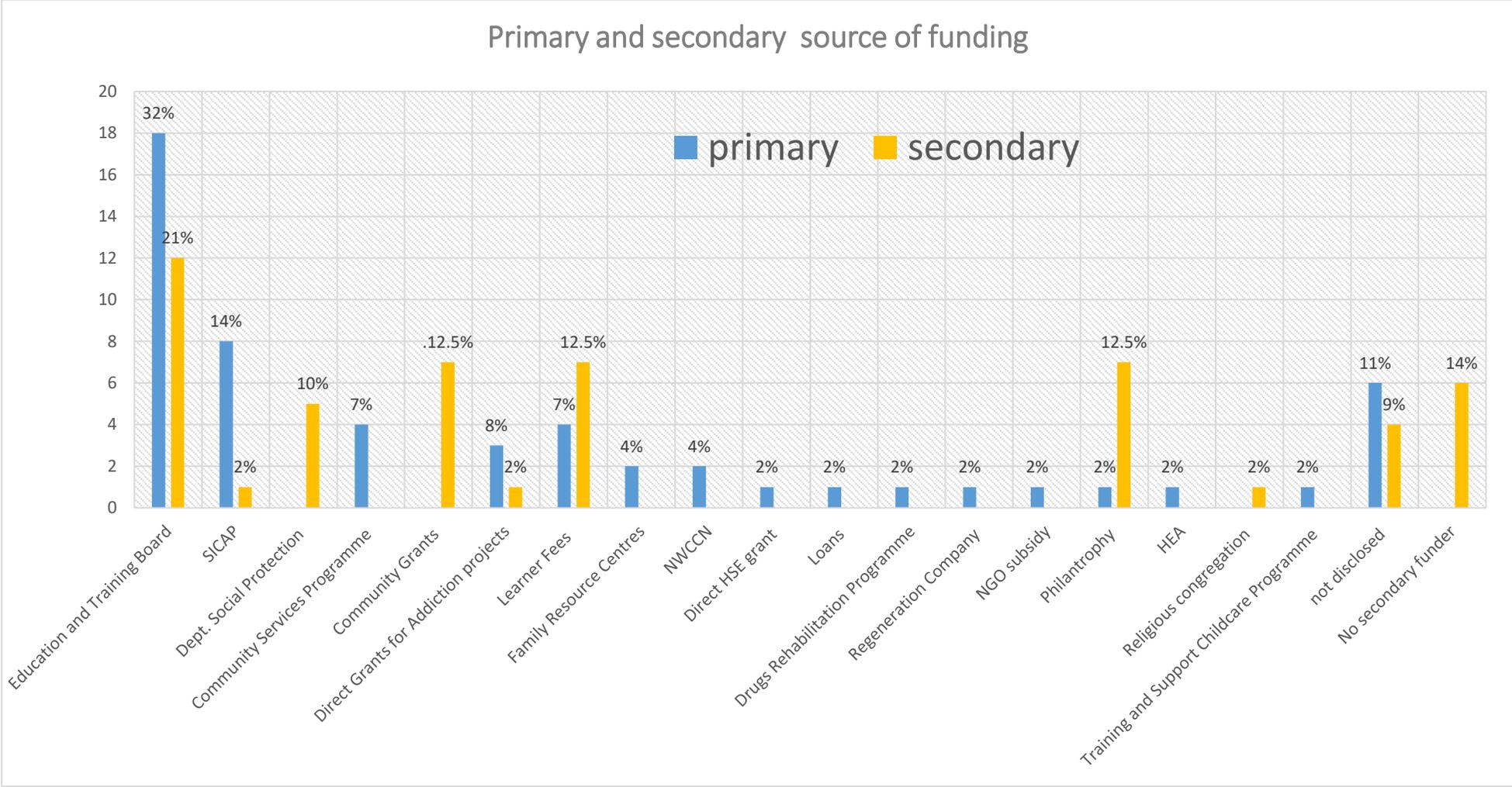


Figure 27 – Breakdown of Irish principal and secondary funding sources

5.4 Experiences of managing funding.

As well as the quantification that uncovers how participating organisations are funded. The research sought both qualitative and quantitative accounts of the experience of these funding models.

5.4.1 The suitability of current models

Research participants were asked to respond to hypothesis “*the funding model I currently use is useful and appropriate to my institution/organisation*” the results of which appear as figure 28 below.

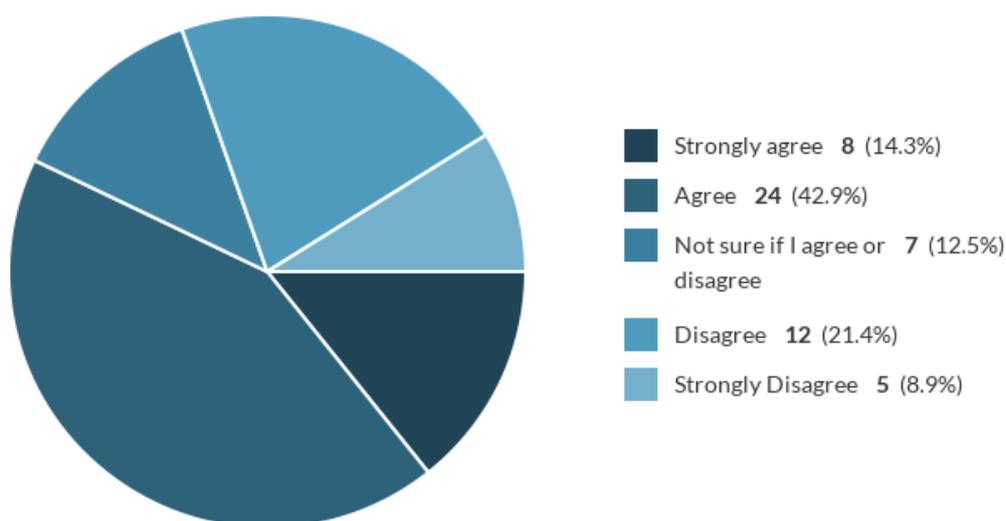


Figure 28 -The funding model I currently use is useful and appropriate to my institution/organisation

A majority of 57% agree with this statement with 14% (n7 strongly agreeing).

Table 17 demonstrates how those in receipt of Programme Funding are most likely to agree with this statement (68%). Just over half of those funded through project funding and half of those funded through direct grants also agree.

		<i>The funding model I currently use is useful and appropriate to my institution/organisation</i>			Total
		agree	disagree	don't know	
	Programme Funding	18	7	1	26
	Project Funding	6	4	2	12
	Direct grants	5	2	2	9
	Loans	1	0	0	1
	Philanthropy	0	1	0	1
	Formula Funding	0	0	1	1
	Learner Fees	2	2	0	4
Total		32	18	6	56

Table 18 - Cross tabulation funding model and practitioner opinion on suitability.

Twenty-nine (n29) survey participants comment further on this question the majority of whom take the opportunity to qualify their response. One theme to emerge is the limitations placed on funding received. One contributor captures wider sentiment on this issue by sharing “It is only useful in so far as it also provides staffing costs and as one method of funding works. To date we have stopped providing training which needed (e.g. pre-development), because there is no staffing costs to manage and organise this training” (SICAP funded project). Another contributor who is also funded through SICAP shares “We are funded under a national programme that is one-size fits all approach. Although there is limited flexibility around delivery”.

There is support from those funded through Education and Training boards, with the statement below equally capturing the experience of supplementary DSP funding:

The funding from the Department of Education works well. The administration around funding from the Department of Social is Welfare more cumbersome, in particular the red tape around the audits and the burden put on a voluntary board to authorise cheques when they are not working here. Also non-accredited training is not funded although the level of many participants is such that they are too weak for accredited training, or a non-accredited course is what they need. (Survey respondent)

There are also concerns about a lack of security. Funding is described as “very precarious” (Community Services Programme) and, from an organisation administering a Training and Support Childcare Programme “our funding is not secure, nor is it

consistent, we (and other community providers) are in dire need of core funding for our community education provision". The excerpt below brings to life the reality of such uncertainty for community education providers:

We receive year to year funding. This year (as of mid-April 2017) we have not received confirmation of our 2017 funding. This is despite having submitted via a new system the planned courses for 2017 as well as a detailed submission in November 2016. We work on the assumption that it will be the same as the year before. It would be useful at the very least if we knew going into the New Year what the budget is. It would be even more useful if we had an indication that it would be in place for more than one year (subject to provision being made). It would also be useful if we had a percentage increase to cover cost of appropriate cost of living increases. (Organisation principally funded through an ETB).

Respondents raise concerns about an administrative burden (a theme returned to in section 6.2.3), of the need for more funding overall, and of the need for the participants of community education to have access to individualised grants (such as those available to attendees of higher education).

A final theme to emerge is strong dissatisfaction with the funding models in use. To give some examples,

Model is inflexible, and is also inequitable. Providers are not treated fairly within the allocation system. There needs to be greater transparency and accountability in how funding is granted (organisation funded by an ETB),

For another,

Always scrimping and scraping. Underpaid staff for the work they do. Very cost effective model however, not valued for the multifaceted benefits to individuals, families and communities and society" (LCDP, NWCCN).

And another,

It is a contradiction asking an organisation to work with the most vulnerable in society yet have high targets set against this. Quality and depth of work is compromised for breadth" (SICAP funded project).

5.4.2 The process of applying for funding.

Two survey questions ask participants about the process and administrative demands of making funding applications. Firstly, participants are asked to rate their opinion in relation to "the process of applying for funding" with the following revealed:

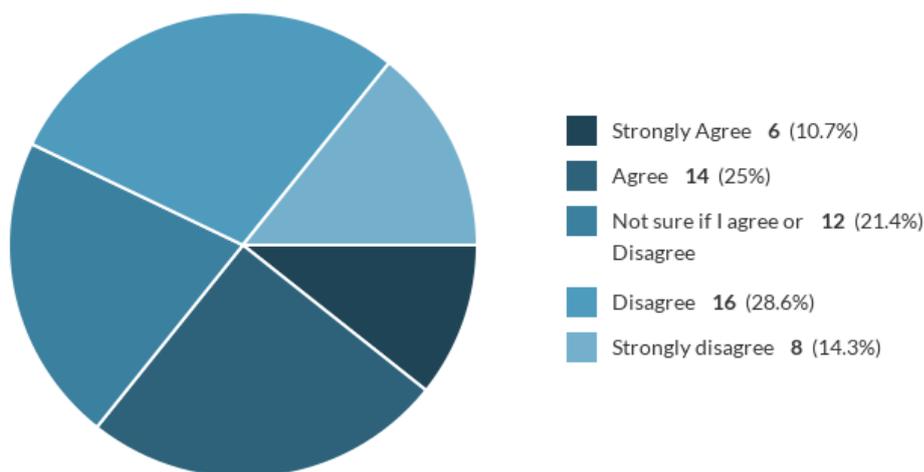


Figure 29 – the funding model my organisation/institution currently uses, makes the process of applying for funding simple and uncomplicated

As figure 29 reveals, 36% agree with the statement “the funding model my organisation/institution currently uses makes the process of applying for funding simple and uncomplicated” and 43% disagree. Twenty-one percent are not sure if they agree or disagree. Space is provided for research participants to provide context and n24 participants comment further. The strongest theme to emerge are descriptions of burdensome application processes that take up considerable staff time. To give an example,

The demands on NGOs are becoming greater, more and more bureaucratic. It will come to a stage where all time will be spent on reporting to funders and not on people that are accessing programmes. (Survey respondent)

This isn't always the case. Others report the application processes fairly straightforward. This is however coupled with dissatisfaction at both a lack of consistency, and the short-notice often given by ETBs.

Another organisation which is principally funded through an ETB but who also cite philanthropic grants and other small grants, share,

Apart from some guaranteed annual income we need to apply for a range of grants. This isn't an ideal model but we manage ok, because we have become good at this over the years. We accept that there needs to be some level of competition for funds.

Piecemeal funding is more difficult to monitor as funding applications are advertised at different times and unless one is very alert they can be missed. Sometimes the criteria is complicated. For example, we have to demonstrate that our classes reach socially excluded learners even before we can advertise the course!

Survey respondent

Administrative demands are addressed head-on through the hypothesis “the funding model my organisation/institution currently uses is easy to administer”. Figure 30 reveals a majority in agreement with this statement (51%) with one third (33%) disagreeing.

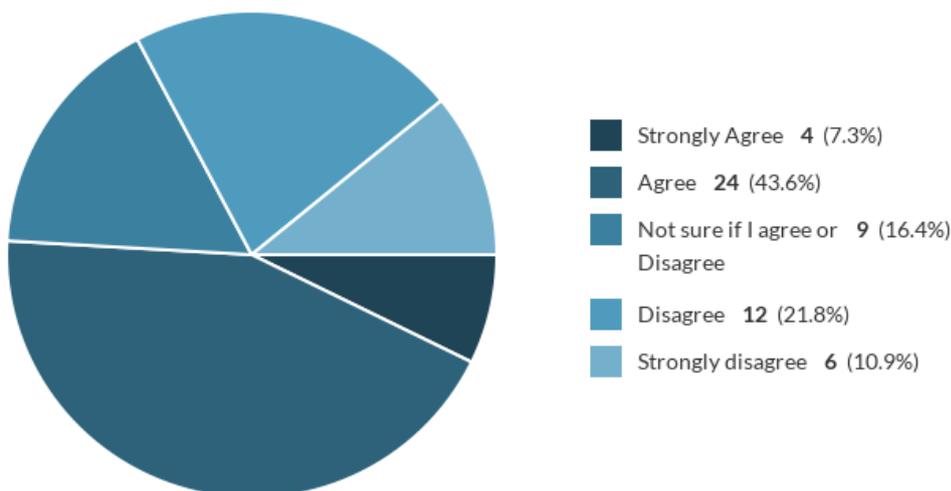


Figure 30 – the funding model my organisation/institution currently uses is easy to administer

Sixteen additional comments are provided. Again, a dominant theme is how the multiplicity of funders results in multiple funding applications. Comments range from “A bit

bureaucratic but generally it is fine” (ETB funded) to “The insecurity, inadequacy and delays associated with the provision of funding increase workload. Furthermore, the level of operational oversight, reporting is not proportionate” (also ETB funded). Also says “incredible amount of duplication data collection on paper and through IT” (SICAP funded). Direct funded through HSE “As discussed above - yes for core part but the rest is a challenge”.

5.4.3 The sustainability of community education as currently funded

A consistent feature of recent campaigns for more funding for community education maintain a position that the way the work is currently funded is unsustainable. The AONTAS community Education Network (CEN) position paper on creating an effective funding mechanism for community education states “The sector cannot move forward to gain greater independence for growth and development if it is not funded appropriately” (AONTAS CEN, 2011, p. 7). This survey sought practitioner opinion on the current sustainability asking people to respond to the statement “The funding models my organisation/institution uses ensures we are sustainable and guarantees our future as providers as adult education”.

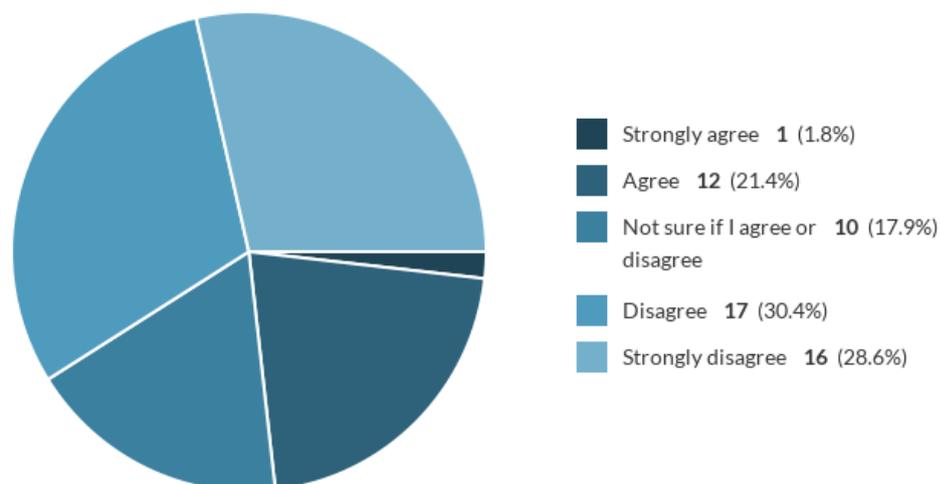


Figure 31 – The funding models my organisation/institution uses ensures we are sustainable and guarantees our future as providers as adult education

Fifty-nine survey respondents disagree with this statement. This rises to 64% of those in receipt of ‘programme funding’ with just n3 organisations whose principal funder is an ETB

in agreement that this model ensures a sustainable future. Four (n4) out of n8 providers funded through SICAP also disagree with the statement with just n1 project funded by SICAP in agreement. A full breakdown of findings across organisation type is available in footnote six below⁸

Twenty-five survey respondents comment further. Fourteen of these comments echo participant concerns about the need to repeatedly apply for funding for the

same work. For some organisations this is year-to-year and even course-to-course. This process is described as demoralising and also as not only threatening future sustainability due to the potential for funding not to be renewed, but as threatening sustainability due to the demoralising impact it can have. For others (such as those receiving project funding) the current funding cycle is three years. One survey respondent comments, “*the three year funding model is extremely useful and positive. It allows for better strategic work and planning*”. Another theme to emerge is the need to adapt the work of a project/organisation, to match whatever funding is available. This finding is captured in the following comment “*we try to obtain money while maintaining our integrity. Sometimes a balance has to be found between 'follow the money at all costs' and 'purity with poverty*”.

A Final theme to emerge is of the limiting nature of funding applications with an emphasis on ancillary services. Some participants talk about the challenges they face in ensuring additional learning supports; an aspect of their work not typically funded by current models.

It is year to year. The assumption is that they will tell us if they think it will not continue. It also makes it difficult to employ staff as we are not sure year to year what funding we will receive. Also, there is no provision for future increases in staff or salaries etc.

Survey respondent

⁸ The eleven organisations in agreement are ETB funded (n3), SICAP (n1), organisations receiving a direct grant via the HSE for addiction supports (n1), regeneration project (n1), learner fees (n2), the HEA (n1), Community services programme (CSP) (n1) and loans (n1). Those to disagree are ETB funded (n7), SICAP (n4), learner fees (n2) LDPC (n2), drugs rehabilitation programme (n1), philanthropy (n1), CSP (n2), Training and support Childcare programme (n1), FRCs (n2) and those who do not state their specific funding type (n5).

5.5 Impacts on the work of Community Education

This section focuses on research participant’s perceptions of their capacity to work with their chosen target group, the balance of responsibility in the provision of community education, and adult learner’s perception of funding models.

5.5.1 Capacity to work with target group

Survey participants are asked to respond to the statement “the funding model I currently use is effective in reaching the target group my organisation/institution would ideally like to work with”.

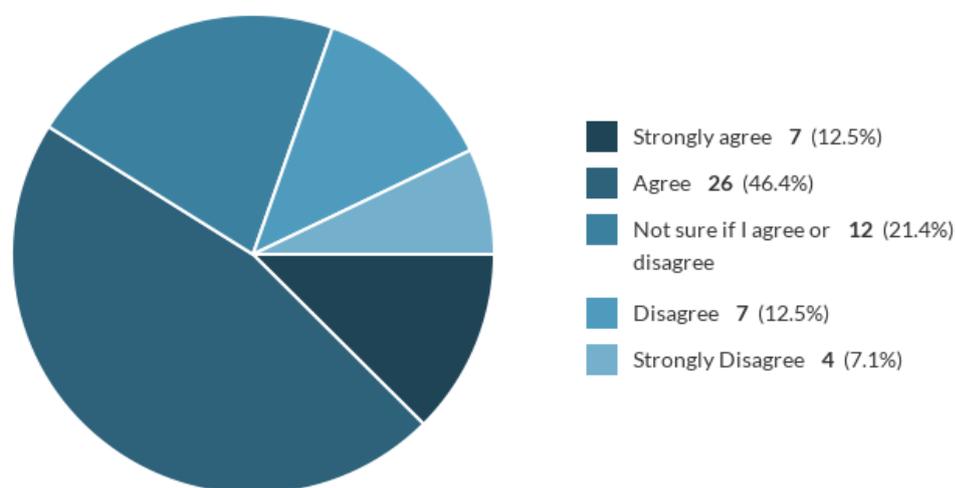


Figure 32 – The Funding model I currently use is effective in reaching the target group my organisation would ideally like to work with

As figure 32 reveals, 59% agree with this statement with 20% disagreeing. A sizable 21% are not sure if they agree or disagree.

Sixteen respondents’ comment further from which three themes emerge. The first is support for some existing flexibility with how community education is funded. For one respondent this is through the granting of 3 year cycles. For another participant benefits are drawn from the flexibility that comes with multiple funders. The strongest theme to emerge is how, although community educators are reaching their target group, they are restricted from giving them the level of support they require. One reason for this is an absence of funding for outreach, a concern raised by a number of contributors. One shares,

“We have little or no resources to put into outreach work which is critically important. (SICAP funded). Another participant, this time in receipt of funding from an ETB claims the model they use “does not suit the delivery of outreach”.

Another limitation to an organisation’s capacity to work effectively with their target population relates to concerns that the confines of funding make it difficult to offer the level of support some of the most vulnerable require. There is criticism of a “one size-fits all approach” (SICAP funded), and a concern that learners are sometimes placed on the wrong course due to limited options. The text box below captures some wider sentiment concerned about the capacity of organisations to provide the level of support they believe some people require; what one respondent whose work is funded by an ETB describes as a situation where “[the] model fails to reflect the true cost of provision for targeting non-traditional learners”.

Although the model is effective in reaching the target group it is not always effective in retaining members of that group. There are many restrictions on how the money can be spent and as such can lead to not being able to support a learner through a particular difficulty resulting in the loss of that learner from the programme

Survey respondent working for a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)

5.5.2 Adult Learner’s perception of funding for community education

Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement “the adult learners who attend our centre seem satisfied with the funding model(s) used”. Almost half of all survey respondents (49%) are not sure, whilst 36% are in agreement. A minority of 15% disagree. Full findings are contained within figure 33.

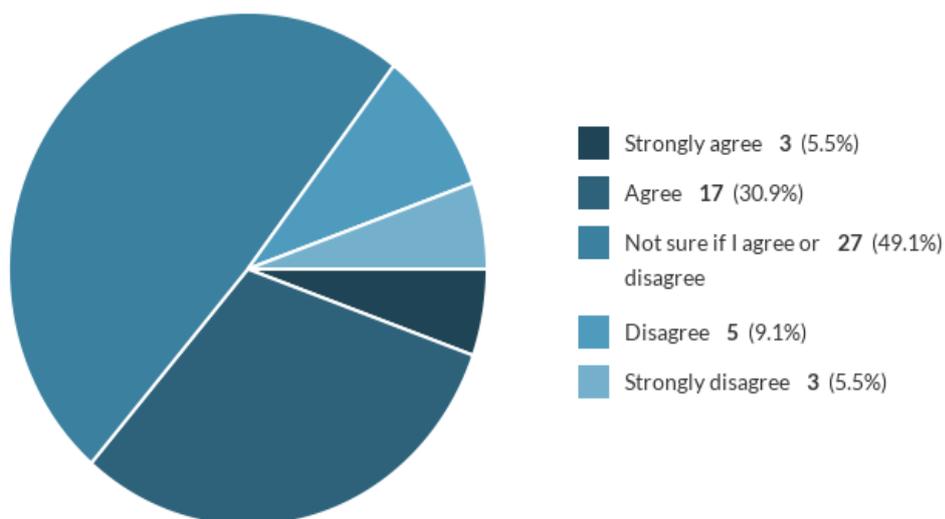


Figure 33 – The adult learners who attend our centre seem satisfied with the funding model(s) used.

From n25 qualitative responses, the dominant theme to emerge is a sense that the participants of community education are not aware of how the programmes they attend are funded. One speaks of learners being “blissfully unaware”, another of learners “no idea or interest in the funding model we use”. This repeated sentiment is further captured in two contributions below:

*The learners are generally not aware of the funding issues that we encounter and while we do engage with our learners in terms of reflecting the difficulties re. Accessing opportunities and encouraging our learners to explore all avenues open to them, we don't believe in burdening them with any issues we may face as an organisation.
(Training and support childcare programme)*

And echoed below,

*Many adult learners probably don't know all the details and bureaucracy that underpins the provision, work that's quite often carried out by partnerships and agencies. However, those who do pay student fees are aware and are not satisfied, obviously, when the majority of adult learners avail of free fees in Higher and Further Education
(Higher Education Authority funded)*

5.5.3 Balancing the responsibility for the provision of community education

When survey participants are asked to respond to the hypothesis “the funding model my institution/organisation uses reflects a balanced responsibility between government, employers, individuals (learners) and other relevant stakeholders”, mixed opinion emerges. Twenty-nine percent agree whilst 48% disagree. Twenty-three percent are not sure if they agree or disagree (see figure 34).

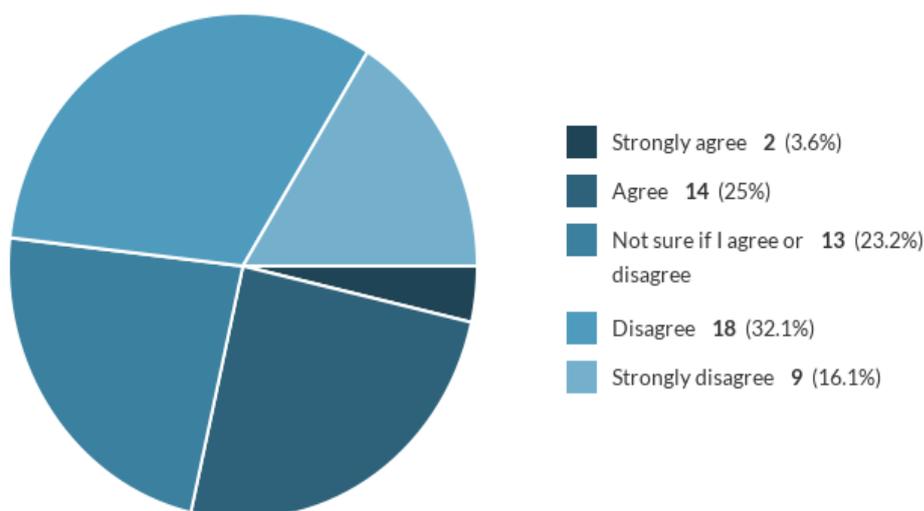


Figure 34 – Irish responses on the balance of responsibility in providing community education.

Nine out of n14 further comments relate to an over-emphasis on labour-market activation. To give some examples,

The current situation tends to favour labour activation which is not always in the interest of individual students or communities (Direct grant from HEA)

And,

Organisation tries to negotiate a path between competing objectives of various stakeholders, becoming increasingly difficult to honour commitment to be learner-centred when outcomes are only viewed through a labour market lens (ETB funded)

And,

As a community provider, we are dependent on the statutory sector for resources, there is not parity of position or valuing of role of the community sector within the current arrangement. There are competing priorities, but the employability objective dominates (ETB funded)

Some are dissatisfied with what they see as unsatisfactory involvement by both employers and the state. This is captured by the following comment,

Little or no contribution is made by employers or government for training in vocational skills supplied by community education providers outside of mainstream full-time education providers (learner fees with philanthropy as secondary funder)

This is echoed elsewhere as follows,

It is not a balanced responsibility at all. The Community Education sector is not funded adequately by the government and rarely by employers (ETB)

A final excerpt captures a sense of mistrust in both government and employer involvement,
a

Not sure if government have any genuine interest in combatting exclusion. It seems to be tokenistic minimalism. Employers are disinterested. Stigma is still widespread. Learners are grateful for any intervention and assistance. Community is under attack whilst particularly the voluntary (NGO) sector are deliberately encouraging and benefitting from outsourcing often operating of business models. Private companies do not do community education! (Direct grant for addiction)

5.6 Further comments from research participants

In a final open-question invites respondents to “provide any further information/comments that you think might help our research”. Twenty-two responses are received from which three dominant themes emerge. These are: that community education is under-funded, that current funding is un-suitable and that the future of community education is in jeopardy. Although often interconnected, each of these themes will be discussed isolation.

5.6.1 Community education is under-funded

When invited to respond further, some community educators emphasised their belief that community education is under-funded. Sometimes this is presented through a rights based model. This provider, whose organisation survives on learner fees and philanthropic grants comments “Education and training for accredited programmes below level 8 on the NFQ should be funded publicly as a right to everyone regardless of age or method of provision or delivery”.

Another contributor, this time someone working for an organisation in receipt of a direct grant to support addiction recovery shares:

Adult learning in Ireland is hugely underfunded. It needs guaranteed state ring-fenced funding. Our literacy is amongst the worst in Europe and needs resourced as do learning difficulties. Learning supports need resourced. Community education needs resourced. Childcare for parents who are learners must be resourced. Funding supports for adult learners need supplied. A rights based approach to providing education for adults must be enacted. Careers guidance needs to be part of the ongoing learning progression, not episodic at school leaving times. Schools and learning environments must meet health and safety standards and be stimulating aesthetic learning environments. All this should be part of a basic governance contract between learners, providers and the state. (Survey respondent)

At many stages throughout the survey, some respondents share concerns that the funding they receive has not corresponded with increases in the cost of living.

5.6.2 Re-asserting the unsuitability of current funding models

Some respondents take the opportunity to re-assert opinions about the unsuitability of funding models for community education with one respondent arguing this is due to ‘the invisible nature of community education’. These chosen excerpts further emphasise this perspective:

The changes taking place with regard to funding arrangements make it more difficult to protect existing provision not to mention being able to plan for the strategic development of community education programmes. This research is timely is highlighting these critical issues. (Survey respondent)

Another identifies a pressure from funders to deliver accredited education even when these are not what the provider deems the best fit for some learners.

We run lots of non-accredited funding and some accredited. There needs to be better recognition that not all training needs to be or is suited to accreditation. Some accreditation is pushed on us (and similar) organisations and it isn't for the benefit of the learner, but more so for the benefit of the funding agency.

This move towards more traditional educational practices is also named by other voices as follows:

More emphasis is being placed on Community Education Facilitators to comply with the Mainstream Education System. The amount of accountability, policies and procedures demands that the front line services are being affected and work like outreach door to door, one to one support, providing non accredited courses are slowly being diminished. (Survey respondent)

One final comment captures wider sentiment expressed by others:

More and more our effective work is aimed at learners that have an array of complex needs. The levels of work required to foster engagement with programmes and the support required during the programmes is not reflected in the funding models or amounts. In order for the work to be transformational for these groups funding must reflect this reality when working with "harder to engage groups" (Survey respondent)

5.6.3 Provider fears for the future of Community education

As second theme to emerge relates to a fear some providers express about the future of community education as providers grapple with a revised policy landscape. One survey respondent references ongoing campaign work by AONTAS in trying to address some provider concerns and claims a lack of understanding by the state of the work of community education

AONTAS have campaigned for core funding for community education providers for a number of years and without this being realised, it is difficult to see how a sustainable community education sector can exist. There appears to be a lack of understanding from a government perspective in relation to the benefits and value of community education in providing meaningful opportunities for learners, especially those who are disadvantaged whether economically, socially or geographically. (Survey respondent)

For some respondents, the future of community education is starkly put as demonstrated below:

[The] sector is fighting for its survival as the cutbacks of recent years have hit hard. Despite the turnaround in the economy, there is a total lack of government investment in the sector and it is unclear how it can survive into the future if the sector is not adequately resourced (Survey respondent)

5.6.4 Other findings

Two survey respondents express gratitude to the funders of community education. One describes being “indebted to ETB” claiming they would not be able to offer both accredited and non-accredited courses if it wasn’t for the tutor hours they are allocated. Another respondent also expresses gratitude to staff within ETBs who are described as “very helpful”. One survey respondent takes the opportunity to express concern about national literacy levels, another voice comments on rural isolation and the need to better support early-school leavers in rural communities through apprenticeships and not through the current drive towards Further Education. Finally, one provider reasserts the experience of shoehorning practice into often similar funding models rather than having the freedom to be led by the needs of a community commenting “I fear 'the Master's tools will not dismantle the Master's house”.

5.7 summary of findings

Within chapter four, readers were offered a synthesis of all quantitative findings from an online embedded survey completed by n102 community education providers across 6 participating adult education associations (see section 4.1). This chapter specifically focuses on the qualitative and quantitative experiences of n56 of these n102 participants all of whom are members of the Irish based AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN). Eighty-nine percent (89%) describe themselves as community education providers who are locally managed, 4% as public providers, 2% as private providers and 5% as ‘other’.

Each of the questions posed to Irish participants mirror those posed to each European research participant. Where this chapter is different is that it also draws from textual commentary provided by research participants. This gives a more holistic view of how community education is funded, how effective practitioners view these models to be, and what suggestions for change they might have. It also allows the research to identify the specific funders as have been outlined in chapter three.

As stated above, all n56 survey respondents were recruited through their membership of the AONTAS CEN. Since inception, it has lobbied to secure distinct funding streams for community education.

Specifically, this chapter sought to answer the following questions:

1. *How is community education in Ireland currently funded?*
2. *From a provider perspective, how suitable is the model of funding?*

From the 11 models of funding proposed by FinALE, the most common in Ireland is programme funding (48%) Project funding is also popular (23%) as is direct grants (16%). Other funding models found are learner fees (7%), philanthropy (2%), formula funding (2%) by availing of loans (2%), and, for one (2%), by charging organisations who release staff to attend training.

Thirty-four percent (34%) of projects surveyed in this research are principally funded by the Department of Education and skills, with a further 14% funded through a community engagement initiative (SICAP) that is jointly funded by the European Social Fund. Twelve percent (12%) are funded through the Department of Social Protection (DSP). Given SICAP's weighty employability agenda and the involvement of the Department of Social Protection, an employability agenda emerges. This isn't always the case however. Other organisations are funded through health initiatives such as direct support from the Department of Health (1%), the Child and Family Agency (4%) and the department of Justice and Equality (4%). Other government departments identified are the Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment (2%) and as part of an Urban Regeneration initiative.

A majority of 57% believe the funding models in situ are useful and appropriate however a sizable number disagree with this assessment (30%) and 13% are unsure. Applying for funding does not emerge as particularly problematic although there are multiple reports of excessive paperwork and of short notice in hearing whether an application has been successful. Some survey participants identify inflexibility in using grant-aid as they believe would best benefit the participants of community education and the wider community. There is also evidence that providers adapt the work they are doing to fit funding models rather than being in the position to apply for funding in response to the needs of the communities they are located within. Not everyone (20%) believes they are currently able to reach the target group they would ideally like to work with. There is concern about the future of community education with 59% of survey respondents concerned about the future sustainability of their work. Just 23% did feel the funding model they currently access was sustainable and guarantees their future as providers. A three-year funding model emerges as advantageous, however caveats are offered that again link to the limitations often put on providers amidst a weighty employability agenda. By and large, the participants of community education are not in touch with how community education is funded. This means they are likely to be unaware of many of financial pressures providers are experiencing.

There is a sense for some that other stakeholders, specifically employers and the state, could do more. Forty-eight percent (48%) believe these stakeholders could share the balance of responsibility. Again, a lot of this criticism is linked employability and to labour market activation. Some identify how employers are a key beneficiary of community education yet do not financially invest to the extent they could.

Other issues emerge specifically an overall belief that community education is underfunded and a re-assertion, from some, of the unsuitability and unsustainable nature of current funding models. There are reports of positive, supportive relationships with Education and Training Boards (ETBs), and of broader societal concerns about literacy and numeracy.

Chapter Six: Qualitative Findings

This section offers an overview of the eight tele-interviews carried out between 2nd and 9th June 2017 and six follow up E-interviews, carried out between 25th and 27th of July 2017. These interviews relay the key themes and findings of this qualitative stage of the research. The interviews were conducted with key, self-selected, management figures (persons responsible for budgets) who kindly volunteered their expertise and are representative of a range of community education providers across Ireland. As a part of the initial online survey, respondents were informed about the intention to run focus groups and asked: “*If you would like to participate in these discussions, please give your name, organisation name and email address*” (see appendix 1, q.13).

6.1 Research Methodology

A total of n15 respondents volunteered to participate in focus groups by putting their names forward during the initial survey phase. The majority of these were from the Dublin area, with one from the North West, one from the midlands and two from the south of the country. In order to accommodate this geographical spread, it was initially decided to run three focus groups in three different locations – Maynooth, Carrick-on-Shannon and Limerick city – with each respondent invited to participate in the focus group closest to them. However, it soon became evident that many of providers were unable to attend the focus groups, due to various time constraints including prior commitments, meetings, annual leave and the fact that June is generally a very busy month for providers. The decision was subsequently made (in consultation with AONTAS) to offer alternative and more flexible one-to-one telephone interviews (tele-interviews). Participants welcomed this solution and n8 interviews (typically lasting 40 minutes) were carried out. For the purpose of anonymity, interviewees have been allocated randomly assigned numbers (1 – 8).

6.1.1 Objectives of Qualitative phase

The objective of the interviews was to enable providers to add further context to the quantitative data gathered in the survey. In keeping with the research objectives (outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.2), the semi-structured interview questioning focused on the key findings of the survey (see Appendix 1).

6.2 Key Findings

The initial findings indicate feelings of unfairness within the sector and a perceived lack of transparency and equity in the allocation of resources. With many organisations competing against one another for funding, a disconnect between funders and providers has been highlighted. The outcomes-based funding model appears to be particularly problematic, as it prioritises jobs activation over many other forms of social inclusion. Many providers feel it offers an inadequate and an unfair index for measuring their work, as it fails to identify or appreciate the true richness of community education.

“We are trying to find a fit that respects and honours those that we work for and at the same time continue to access the resources we need and there is a serious tension there.”

(Interview 3)

In general, the funding models available were viewed by respondents as unnecessarily restrictive, non-innovative and bringing increased levels of bureaucracy, uncertainty and a lack of transparency, which make it difficult or almost impossible for providers to plan future services. A need for sustainable, multi-annual funding has been identified, with providers looking for acknowledgment and recognition of the vital role and true value of community education in Irish society. The provider experience has been organised using a number of key themes as they arose during interviews.

6.2.1 Funding Model Restrictions

In many ways, providers' comments and experiences are indicative of the broad complexities of community education. There can be no 'one size fits all' approach. Some providers feel that they are being "shoehorned" into prescriptive funding models that they see as ranging from "wholly inadequate" to "unfit for purpose" (Interview 3). Where one provider is working with the most marginalised in society, addicts, ex-prisoners and so on, another is working with learners who are looking for access to third level education. There is a strong feeling in the sector that those in power don't really understand the function of community education.

For me, the whole thing stems from not understanding what community education is in the first place. I do think that people in certain positions think that all we do is basket making and flower arranging courses. (interview 5)

6.2.2 Sourcing Funding

The sourcing of funding has become a major issue for providers. Rather than a sustainable and renewable funding model, which would allow coordinators and managers to plan for the future development of their organisations, providers are reporting increased levels of competition for funding. This in turn increases the allocation of their time and resources – time which they argue could be used more efficiently on student-centred practices. As described by one interviewee, "sourcing funding in a hugely competitive market has completely taken over my job". (Interview 2)

"I do think that we need multi-annual, core funding, for those that have a good track record, have their QA, have been delivering successfully, and who are based in disadvantaged areas."

(Interview 5)

6.2.3 Bureaucracy

There was criticism directed at the levels of bureaucracy attached to funding, with providers telling us, “When we do have funding, there is an increased amount of paper work to be done and the amount of regulation seems to increase all the time, like the level of auditing and so on” (Interview 1). Providers also spoke about the increased levels of accountability within the sector, saying that while they wish to be “transparent” and “accountable”, the amount of associated “paper work just doesn't make any sense”. (Interview 6)

The sense of disconnect between service providers and funders is evidenced even in the types of forms and information required by funders. One interviewee stated that she often finds that “the people who design these forms are quite removed, and don't perhaps have the experience of working in complex community situations” (Interview 1). Furthermore, there have been serious questions raised about the intrusiveness of some of these forms, in particular, the data being sought on learners by some funders.

Another provider described their interactions with funders, in this case government bodies, as a “pretty horrific” experience, adding:

It's a case of people who have different terms of reference to what we are working with, and who have little or no appreciation of a community education approach to learning and education and are being informed, possibly, by their own limited experience of the world and the department they are in. (Interview 3)

6.2.4 Transparency

With providers frequently competing for the same funding, some feel that this is proving divisive. Rather than working together for the common good of the sector, they feel like they are being pitted against each other for survival, with some feeling that they are being forced out of existence and others stating that the challenge is simply “continuing to exist”. (Interview 1).

Community education is probably the bottom of the food chain. We are being squeezed out – it really does feel like that at the moment. Little organisations like ours are being culled. (Interview 2)

Speaking about the competitive nature of funding and the perceived lack of fairness, providers said that they often find themselves “competing with other providers, but not on

a level playing field” (Interview 1) and that “all of the information is not on the table”. (Interview 3)

In addition, there seems to be a lack of clear information about funding, with providers complaining that there is no central information resource available to them. It was suggested that some sort of database or online funding resource for community education providers would be helpful. One provider alluded to the notion that smaller organisations are being disproportionately treated, stating that “it seems to be that the bigger you are, the less you are audited”. (Interview 1)

6.2.5 Outcomes-based Model

The outcomes-based system appears to be problematic for providers. They believe there is little understanding of what outcomes really mean for the people that they work with. As stated by one provider, “if we are talking about a realistic model, there must be some basic understanding of what outputs actually mean in community education”. (Interview 5)

What providers are clearly saying is that outcomes-based funding does not value or recognise the diversity of the sector and “is not a fair way of measuring community education” (Interview 5). Furthermore, the outcomes themselves are viewed as overly rigid or prescriptive. There needs to be more flexibility that will “make space for outcomes to emerge – outcomes that are beneficial to the people we are working with and critical for them”. (Interview 1)

“I don't mind being outcomes-based, but it depends on who's outcomes. We are working with the most marginalised and the most disadvantaged; I wish everyone we took on stayed the course, but the reality is people are homeless, have addiction issues, health issues and it can take a long time of dipping in and out of services before they are successful.”

(Interview 6)

6.2.6 Labour Activation Model

During the course of interviews, providers were asked: “what do you have to do to secure funding?” In general, providers reported increased performance-related expectations and a growing emphasis on labour activation outcomes.

“What we are most worried about is that if the focus continues on labour market activation as the only valued outcome by funders, then it will further distance our programme and those that are vulnerable.” (Interview 3)

One provider, who receives most of their funding through the ETB, stated:

With our solid funding, we see the push for accreditation as being much higher on the agenda. The labour activation model has come to the fore, which is a bit unfortunate. I feel it's short-sighted. Social inclusion can lead to labour activation, but it's a valid option in its own right. (Interview 6)

In general, providers who work with the most marginalised are frustrated by the objectives of labour activation models they must adhere to in order to receive funding, with many complaining that it is over-simplistic,

Currently any effort to address or focus on social inclusion, is clearly seen only within the context of labour activation. We are not anti-jobs or employment; it's just there is a lot more needed for our clients, particularly men. There is a lot to be done to support them, to get things back on track in their own lives, before you can even entertain work. There is a raft of issues (social, health, housing etc.) ... that need to be addressed. The current measures do not appreciate the human implications of unemployment and, as a consequence, the funding strategies and the objectives that we are trying to fit in with are at odds – they do not fit. (Interview 3)

For providers who work with SOLAS, there was some frustration at the lack of clarity surrounding the definition of activation, stating that “they haven't made up their mind yet whether community employment is a job or if it's labour activation”. They went on to say

that community education supports people “*in a non-accredited way to become more active citizens*”, with an emphasis on “*societal change*” rather than simply “*churning out 20 people every six months at level 5*” – something they say is swiftly becoming the main approach.

(Interview 5) The criticism around jobs activation goes back to an earlier concern raised by providers that they don’t believe that the richness of their work is sufficiently valued by a frequently problematic and unrealistic outcomes-based model.

6.2.7 Progression

Providers tell us that progression is conceived in terms of “*learners going on to further education or employment*”, however, for those delivering services to the most marginalised communities, progression is not always a realistic and achievable outcome, “*particularly for those struggling with health issues or mental health issues*” (Interview 3). One provider highlighted the social benefits of attendance alone – something that is not valued as an outcome. For some learners, simply attending and being part of a programme, provides “*enormous benefit, in terms of keeping them connected, giving them a purpose, a focus*”.

(Interview 3)

In addition, many felt that it is important to recognise at policy level, that the needs of the hard-to-reach learners are not the same as traditional students, who will access second and third level and possibly don’t have the same issues around disadvantage and social exclusion.

6.2.8 ETBs & SOLAS

In 2013, the former VECs were restructured into 16 ETBs (see section 3.4). This structural reform agenda also saw the dissolution of FÁS and the creation of a new training authority, SOLAS. One of the issues that has arisen for some providers, is that they feel that there is lack of equality in the new structural changes, with one provider noting that “*where two (or three) counties merge... one county gets the lion’s share of everything*” (Interview 5). As highlighted earlier in this chapter, perceived inconsistencies across different ETBs, in terms of funding arrangements, is further evident in the relationships some funders have with their local ETBs. While some enjoy good working relations, others have not been so lucky:

When the old VECs were here, we had an excellent relationship with them – I can't highlight that enough. Since the merger, we had a fractious relationship initially. Now there is no relationship; it has completely broken down. (Interview 5)

Conversely, another provider, who is part-funded by an ETB, had a very different experience, commenting that they found their local ETB to be “very flexible” with a “good understanding of community education” and an awareness that “education means more than just jobs”. (Interview 4)

The conflicting reports regarding how ETBs allocate funding and the varying levels of support they give to community education, highlights not only a lack of consistency, but a distinct lack of clear policy.

One provider highlighted what they feel are significant changes in strategy:

The move seems to be that community education funding should be going under the ETBs. In theory that's fine, if there is a community education ethos within those ETBs and the experience and willingness to link in with the independent providers, and look at the best outcomes for learners, but I don't see that now, and that's a big problem for us. I do feel that community education is being squeezed out from an independent service and the policy direction seems to be pushing it towards another arm of the ETBs”. (Interview 5)

“We used to get BTEI funding that used to come directly from further ed training unit, then with the mergers of VECs into ETBs, that started coming through the ETBs. We no longer get it, we have had significant difficulty with our local ETB to the extent we don't have any relationship with them now or receive any funding.”

(Interview 5)

One provider we spoke to who works with SOLAS was keen to highlight the unfair treatment of their staff as training coordinators under SOLAS, pointing out that “they are not paid the equivalent of an ETB tutor”, despite the fact that they “go above and beyond”, and yet are “completely and utterly undervalued and underpaid”. (Interview 7)

6.2.9 QQI

In relation to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), a significant issue was raised in relation to the re-engagement fees, introduced as part of the 2012 act, which ‘sets out a range of services that QQI can charge fees for’ (QQI, 2013: 2). Providers rely on QQI validation in order to run courses for the DSP and other state bodies. In many cases, their funding is dependent on them having QQI validation. Some providers we spoke to said that they simply could not afford the €5000 re-engagement fee. Others questioned the logic of paying for QQI, saying “it does not make any kind of sense; it’s the tax payers’ money just going around in a circle. The ETB give us the money to pay another state body. Why”?

On the issue of fees, another provider highlighted the fact that there is the provision within the 2012 act to waive the fee for community education providers, but that this has never been enacted and that “we’ve been through two education ministers that haven’t addressed it”. (Interview 5)

“Having QQI approval means a huge amount to our business. We can tender for funding to run courses for the Department of Social Protection or similar organisations. But because we now have to pay for that, it actually knocks us out of the water. It’s looking likely that we are going to have to opt out of QQI, which will be a huge blow to our organisation. It also side-lines us in applying for certain types of funding, because we will no longer have the accreditation. With that gone, we are now grappling around with the crumbs that are left.”

(Interview 2)

6.2.10 Policy

As outlined in the adjacent box comment, providers no longer feel that the 2000 White Paper on Adult Education is informing the funding priorities for community education. They go on to say that “there needs to be a policy” because without one, there is no way to “*guarantee that the adequate resources for the sector will be provided*”. They also recommend that any policy needs to be “*proofed across departments so that they in turn are aligned to it*”. (Interview 3)

It was felt that there seems to be a “two-tiered system of policy and agendas” which needs to be resolved if the sector is to be properly and fairly represented at policy level.

However, some providers seemed to be cynical about policy development, saying, “*I spend an awful lot of time on submissions and consultations and I really wonder if it’s actually being listened to. My fear about any new policy is that, the likes of ourselves would not be listened to*”. (Interview 5)

“Our centre has been hit really, really hard in the last few years, in terms of funding. One of the things that has emerged is that there is no real guiding policy for the community education sector. The White Paper is no longer the reference point that would inform funding priorities, so, in the absence of an overarching policy, which really dictates where money goes, then you are at the mercy of whatever is going.”

(Interview 3)

6.2.11 Measurement

Providers spoke openly about the importance of measuring the benefits and outcomes of community education. It was suggested that existing evaluation methods, with its emphasis on quantitative data such as learner attendance and exam results, do not sufficiently reflect the diversity and richness of the sector. One provider noted that “*what can be measured counts, but maybe what counts can’t be measured*”, adding that;

We need to make more of an effort to try and measure in a robust, tangible way that shows money has been spent well. The community sector, nationally, need to be profiling the value and merits of people participating, otherwise we can't really blame people outside of the sector for not understanding what it is we do. (Interview 6)

Similarly, it was suggested that providers' reports on projects "need to be more honest" in challenging the sometimes, restrictive frameworks set out by funders. (Interview 1)

6.2.12 Innovation

Providers were keen to make the point that the prescriptive outcomes-based approach to community education is thwarting innovation and development. As one provider put it, "in order to be able to respond to needs as they emerge, you need flexibility within the resources" (Interview 3) however, according to this provider, the current format doesn't allow for any development. In the past, providers worked alongside staff of community development programmes, local authorities and VECs, but this personal approach has been replaced with a greater emphasis on form-filling, reporting, monitoring and evaluation. One provider outlined how flexible funding previously resulted in successful and innovative education practices:

A number of years ago, we got great support from the Department of Social Protection, but that changed around 2011. They gave us a grant that was basically up to us to apply to our particular programme needs and it was a dream! As a consequence of that funding, we were able to develop two significant programmes, which have been nationally acclaimed as a really good model of practice for engaging men, particularly men at risk. We had the freedom to experiment and try things out. There isn't a hope in hell of being able to do that now. (Interview 3)

Another provider further explained the importance of this flexible funding approach, in maintaining the core principals of community development. When working in an engaged way, "you are constantly trying something to see if it works, building something up", but with the new "outcomes-based model, that level of flexibility just doesn't exist now". They went on to say: "getting people engaged – that's when real development happens". (Interview 1) This provider went on to optimistically suggest: "Wouldn't it be great if every funding stream had to keep back 25% for projects that think outside the box? Those that are trying to be innovative and have interesting possibilities" (Interview 1).

6.2.13 Ideal Funding Models

As already articulated by the providers who contributed to this research, the ideal funding model for community education is one that allows organisations to plan ahead, cover their overheads and run successful programmes, while also allowing them to be flexible enough to “meet the needs of whoever comes through the doors”. (Interview 2) Above all, the need for greater autonomy was stressed.

The issue of regional-specific needs was highlighted by one provider who stated that an ideal funding model would “*recognise the differences in different areas*”, adding that “*what’s working in rural Ireland is not necessarily what works in inner-city Dublin, Cork or Limerick*”. (Interview 5)

Furthermore, it was suggested that there is “*not enough sharing of models between departments and providers*”. (Interview 6) This provider also feels that there is “*merit in local area models*” and thinks that a platform for sharing and disseminating details of successful programmes would be beneficial for the sector. It was suggested that there needs to be “*some sort of national dialogue*” that would allow funders, administrators and providers to reflect on their experiences working in the sector or imagine alternatives. Such a discursive platform would function as “*the scaffolding, rather than the building itself*”. In simplistic form, it would identify “*how can we work with people, rather than just working for them*”. (Interview 1)

The suggestion of more wide-spread ring-fencing, in order to secure local government funding under certain community programmes, was made by one provider:

The SICAP funding under Goal 2 (social inclusion community activation programme) looks at learning in education. If you have project implementers (who are by and large the local development companies, partnerships and so on) they have control over Goal 2. I don’t see why some of that cannot be ring-fenced for community education. And SOLAS funding going to ETB’s – again, some of this need to be ring-fenced, or community education is going to disappear over the next couple of years and I don’t know if the political will is there to save it – that’s a big worry for me. (Interview 5)

6.3 Summary of Provider Recommendations

- **Multi-annual Core Funding**

It was broadly felt that there is a need for multi-annual, core funding, which would allow coordinators and managers to plan more effectively for the long-term future development of their organisations.

- **Policy Development**

New policy needs to be developed that will recognise the true value and diversity of community education. This policy should be proofed across departments, in collaboration with providers, advocates, researchers and funders.

- **Research & Advocacy**

It was generally felt that providers have been working hard, but collectively, their voices are not being heard. The sector needs stronger representation and it was suggested that universities could be more pro-active in getting this message out.

- **National Dialogue**

Several providers highlighted a need for greater national dialogue or discursive platform that would allow funders, administrators and providers alike to reflect on their experiences working in the sector.

- **Collaboration**

It was felt that competition for funding within the sector has had a negative impact on levels of collaboration. In the past, community groups worked well with each other, and certain providers suggested that these links need to be strengthened again.

- **Online Funding Resource**

A central online funding resource needs to be developed, to assist those looking for funding.

- **Innovation Fund**

It was suggested that a proportion of funding streams be set aside for innovative projects.

- **Measuring Tools**

Providers stated a need for new measuring tools that should be developed in consultation with the Department of Education. These would be accepted by funders and providers as a more appropriate qualitative index for measuring the true value of community education.

- **Reporting**

It was suggested that providers' reports on projects need to be more honest, to challenge the restrictive boundaries of the frameworks set out by funders.

- **QQI**

Providers feel that the re-engagement fee is an unnecessary burden on community education providers and would like to see the current provision within the 2012 Act, to waive fees, enacted.

6.4 E-interviewing - The need to retain independence.

Through-out the survey findings and also within one-to-one tele-interviews, a foundational presumption was that the independent status of non-profit community education providers is paramount. This theme was explicitly explored with research participants through e-interview. Two specific questions were posed:

1. *Why is it important for community education providers to remain independent (their own voluntary board of management, their own policies, their own QA etc.)*
2. *If you were asked to merge with your local ETB, would you resist this? If not why not, if yes why so?*

All respondents who participated in tele-interviews were invited to respond to this question. Six responses were received, some of which answer questions sequentially, some of which merge their response across questions.

6.4.1 The importance of independence

When asked why it is important for community education providers to retain their independence, the strongest themes to emerge relates to perceived benefits for the participants of community education. This responder comments:

In general, it is important that we are seen as not part of the establishment, but as a community owned service. This makes the relationship with the community very different, and usually community organisations can reach people that ETB can't get to. Usually the ETB recognise this, and are happy to avail of this to their advantage. (E-interviewee)

The importance of an independent board of directors is also named more than once, the benefits of which are presented as the ability to more readily adapt to the needs of communities. This responder shares:

Independence is very important for our autonomy. Voluntary boards are often made up of members of target groups and are more able to identify local needs. Independence affords the opportunity to be more in control of our actions. It's also important that there is an infrastructure owned and managed by the local community. (E-interviewee)

Another provider agrees sharing “Independent providers are better equipped to respond to a reality which is local, complex, diverse, dynamic and unpredictable”. The same interviewee offers a philosophical perspective also sharing:

In other spheres of life, and for good reason, there are laws against monopolies and cartels. These are put in place as experience shows:

- *They tend to develop too much power;*
- *Over time, the agenda responds more and more to their own needs.*

This final contributor brings much opinion on independence together into one response as follows:

As community educators are located in the heart of the communities that they are serving, they are best placed to identify and respond to the needs of individual communities. ETBs are

influenced by Government and Department policies and often emphasize outcomes based on academic and activation achievements. These broad based policies do not take into account barriers to said achievements. For example, there are often addiction problems in marginalized communities. An independent provider operating out of the community will have links to drug outreach programmes and can include an informal (i.e. uncertified) course within an ETB funded programme, at low or no cost. There are many more available examples of response based education. Frequently community educators are sponsored by a community development organisation and are required to report to a BoM, this keeps a focus on the needs of the community. (E-interviewee).

6.4.2 Comments on merging with ETBs

Research participants were asked “*If you were asked to merge with your local ETB, would you resist this? If not why not, if yes why so?*”

One respondent identified that, although, providers of community education, this is not the mainstay of their activity. This, they share, makes any suggestion of merger unlikely. A different respondent states “*Yes we would be resistant to merging with the ETB*” continuing “*It is too rigid a structure and also we would lose our independence and autonomy*”.

Two community education providers identify benefits for ETBs in maintaining relationships with independent organisations. This e-interviewee shares:

I believe that it is to our benefit and to the ETBs that we are independent of the ETB. We can deliver many services as an outside agency that we simply couldn't do if we were part of the ETB. It is a partnership, and this arrangement is symbiotic. There are many areas that the ETB simply could not want to get involved in, copyright, libel, licencing that we deal with. (E-interviewee)

Such opinion is echoed by another who references discussions on QQI Quality Assurance (QA) with their local ETB. This, the respondent shares, has resulted in the local ETB accepting and supporting the organisation's decision to remain autonomous. However, a caveat is offered that reveals concern such decisions will be removed from individual

However, the challenge remains the funding of independent providers as the ETB/SOLAS hold the purse strings. The Spending Review 2017 of Further Education and Training by the Dept of Public Expenditure & Reform, published this month is questioning the level of investment in FE

sector in light of declining levels of unemployment. This... is the battle that has to be fought as the dominance of the economic argument puts at risk investment in education that serves a social agenda. (E-interviewee)

6.4.3 Other comments about independence for Community Education providers.

Where e-interviewees choose to comment further, they take the opportunity to re-emphasise their beliefs about the importance of the flexibility independence brings, the importance of local connections, and the importance of the participants of community education having a voice through their involvement in local provider groups. These points are evidenced in the comments below:

If the ETB can provide a base funding (but not all funding) it allows us to get the best of both worlds. (E-interviewee)

Larger providers, being more distant from local realities, tend towards 'one size fits all' solutions which are national, simple, linear, stable and predictable. (E-interviewee)

It is very clear to organisations like ours that the work we do with in communities and for marginalised groups is not really valued at policy level. (E-interviewee)

It is difficult to overstate the importance of community-based networking and feedback based on this networking. (E-interviewee)

It is very important for the community to have their own voice and the flexibility to move at their own pace and identify and understand their own needs. Less emphasis on targets and outputs and more on outcomes. (E-interviewee)

6.6 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has outlined key findings of the qualitative phase of this research, offering an overview of information relating to funding, as identified by providers. An open-ended approach to questioning enabled providers to express their levels of satisfaction as well as the positive and negative aspects of various funding strands and models. In general,

providers felt that there is a lack of clear understanding by funders, about the complexities and true function of community education in Ireland. Providers noted that this is reflected in the restrictive funding models offered. When given the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction, providers spoke negatively about the precarity of funding, the burden of time allocation in seeking funding, high levels of bureaucracy and a perceived lack of fairness and transparency.

A significant finding of this chapter is the largely negative response to structural reform within funding strategies, whereby ETBs have become more and more responsible for community education funding. While structurally this may offer one solution, there are many red flags being raised. The main concern is that this restructuring signifies a move away from the bottom-up, community-led endeavors of traditional independent providers, who many argue have always been best-placed to understand the particular needs of a given community. In addition, the alignment of ETBs with SOLAS and the apparent prioritisation of the labour-activation model, is of significant concern, because these are viewed as being at odds with the wider function of community education.

The second part of this chapter presents provider feedback about the importance of retaining their independence and whether or not they would resist or welcome any move to merge with ETBs. While echoing the concerns of autonomy and bottom-up principals outlined above, providers pointed out that the ETBs are not equipped or suitably placed to carry out much of the work done by community education providers. The local connections, the local voice and the involvement in their own services and provider groups is what makes community education work and is what providers argue would make any amalgamation with ETBs problematic. The disparity in the current relationships between ETBs and providers highlights a lack of coherent and clear policy. In light of this, providers would like to see new policy developed that would take into account their opinions and experience, while framing flexible independence as fundamental to the principals of community education.

Chapter Seven – Towards sustainable funding

The European Union has committed to ensuring access to community education and its unique role has been acknowledged in supporting often vulnerable population groups. Community education is about empowerment, participation, a second chance at educational progression and equality. It addresses a complexity of needs such as literacy and numeracy needs, language supports, personal development, social and political awareness and activism, all of which are local to its participants. Historically, community education has successfully eliminated some barriers to education such as cost, transport, child-care, and flexible delivery models.

This research has presented quantitative, synthesised funding from 102 participants participating in an embedded survey and recruited through their connections to AONTAS (Ireland), Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal), Niedersächsischer Bund für freie Erwachsenenbildung e.V (Germany), Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria), The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark), or the Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland. It also offers a more in-depth analysis of findings from a sub-set of these same participants; this was by focusing on Irish findings and incorporating qualitative, contextualising comments also.

This chapter collates findings and offers an analysis that draws from the literature and policy reviews that form part of this research. It seeks to address what model of funding might be acceptable to the providers of community education; models that exist within the limitations of a socio-political context shaped by austerity therefore often restrictive in its resource allocation. Part of this socio-political contest is a strategic turn in the funding of community education. Since the 1990s, less emphasis is placed on the needs of individuals and communities, and more emphasis is placed on the needs of industry and national economic progress. This research adopts an outlook that believes the implementation of this employability model is through managerialist processes where principles more typically associated with private-sector, for-profit organisations are applied to state funded services which were traditionally non-profit, needs-based models of practice.

Education for employability is important and many people have benefitted from high quality, participatory, adult education that offers them a second-chance to achieve qualifications that can improve their financial as well as personal wellbeing. What is problematic is where this becomes the sole focus of community-based education with little space for leisure-based, personal development and/or politicising programmes. Connecting education for employment with conditionality of welfare also creates difficulties, not only for the participants of community education but for educators themselves who must work to create democratic, collegial spaces when some of those in the room are not there by choice (Fitzsimons, 2017).

Across each cohort, the majority opinion (62%) is satisfaction with the funding models in situ. However, through research interviews and contextualising survey findings, a more cautious picture emerges with concerns about the suitability and sustainability of funding repeatedly named. Just 37% believe current funding models offer a sustainable future. This is not new, rather has been a feature of community education since its inception in the 1970s and 1980s. What has likely changed is that one in five (19%) are not currently working with who they believe should be the beneficiaries of community education and one quarter (25%) not sure if they are working with the target group they would ideally like to work with.

Whilst this research identifies this and other risks association with such precarity, there is also an important benefit in that most organisations have retained managerial control over their projects. Strong, supportive relationships between state providers and smaller, independent providers are also revealed. This too has been a feature of community education for many years and is unsurprising given that those working within state provision share the equality-based, participatory methodologies that are central to community education (McGlynn, 2014).

There is certainly evidence of co-option. This is where the hands of community education providers are tied by the non-negotiable restraints of increasingly restrictive, employability related funding models. There is also evidence of malleability when seeking and adapting funding avenues for different pieces of work. When research participants are asked about their independence from state providers, the overwhelming response is to emphasise how this gives confidence to local people in their capacities to access community education. For

as long as the education system unfairly disadvantages certain strata of society (Baker et al, 2004), community educators have an important role to play in creating locally-managed spaces where the participants of community education are also amongst the decision makers.

When participants of this research are asked about their suggestions for change, none of those who participated suggested any erosion of this independence. Instead the emphasis is on the development of robust policies that would guarantee multi-annual core funding which recognises the values, diversity and principles of community education. This is a difficult ask given the current global political climate where the market is interpreted as sacrosanct. Working with the cracks has however always been a feature of community education and there are cracks, or more accurately opportunities to stretch aspects of policy discourse that seek to promote democratic citizenship. Where community education providers are sceptical about top-down employability, they should take heart in the spaces within European policy where locally conceived, community focused initiatives can seek validation.

Community educators powerfully advocate strong representation and suggest more research is done to promote the work of community educators, this study hopes to contribute to this action.

Although the researchers note suggestions for more accurate and robust measurability tools for capturing both the wider benefits of education and the importance of non-accredited work, it is also important to challenge this perspective. Measurability signifies compliance with outcomes approaches to education therefore support in the notion that learning can be numerically measured. But what about the many aspect of knowing that are simply immeasurable? Learning is complex, non-linear, delayed, often accidental and frequently unanticipated.

Rather than endorse outcomes models, an alternative, needs-based model could be promoted where financial requirements are determined by social responsibility and public need. Section 7.1 below offers a model for how such an approach could be implemented.

7.1 Community-based assessment of educational needs

The purpose of a community-based needs assessment is to identify key educational issues; both individual and collective. This deduction should not be conceived of independent to local communities rather emerges through systematic, comprehensive data collection. In short, a needs-based model is premised on three core principles:

1. Inclusionary philosophies and approaches

This principle incorporates a commitment to equality, whilst at the same time recognizing the diversity of educational needs and approaches.

2. A commitment to self-assessment

Committing to self-assessment means ensuring local people are central to the identification of local needs, both collective and individual. Rather than collaboration, self-assessment asserts the importance of shared decision-making with local voices and perspectives at the heart of decision-making.

3. Assuring a range of outcomes.

This principle recognises the importance of vocational, personal-development and political education and appreciates the value of non-accredited learning. It also incorporates the belief that education can look and feel very different to the school experience.

As figure 35 demonstrates, each of these component parts can be further divided;

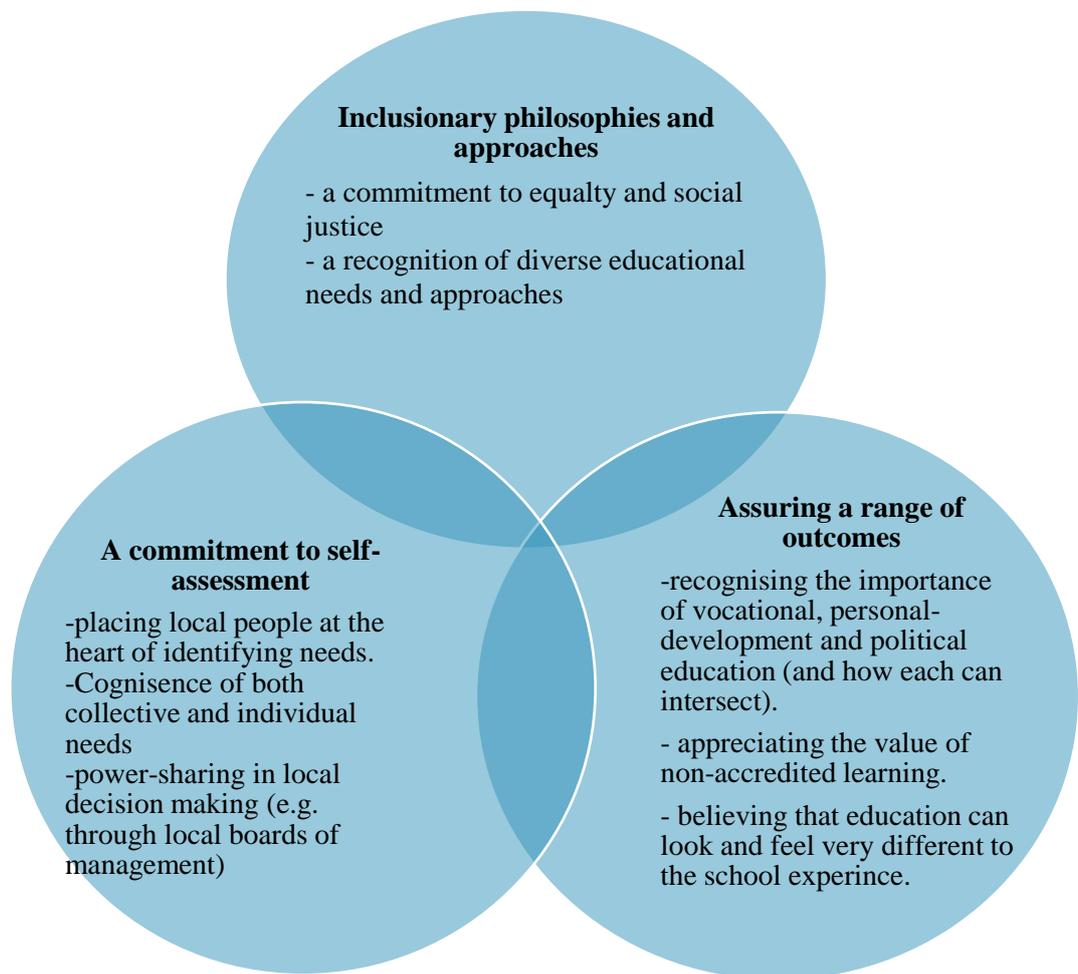


Figure 35 - The principles of a needs-based model of funding

Table 19 below draws out some differences between this approach and an outcomes approach to education.

Common features of a needs-based approach	Common features of an outcomes-based approach
Appreciates that the impacts of community education are often long-term and difficult to measure	Measures direct, pre-determined outputs from specific programmes delivered within set timeframes.
Relies on insider information therefore appreciating the knowledge, resources and expertise within communities that are often the key to addressing local issues.	Draws from top-down policies in determining the specific outcomes to be measured.
Emphasises the strengths and assets of a community and the individuals within it.	Emphasises the perceived deficits within individuals and population groups
Makes collective provision for the supports required to remove barriers to participation	Offers some supports which are determined through individualised assessments
Promotes strategic collaboration across a multiplicity of providers and supports	Principally focuses measurements on publically funded provision.

Table 19 – Comparisons between a needs-based model and an outcome based model

7.1.1 Carrying out a needs-assessment

Some specific actions can help to guide a community based needs analysis. These are:

1. Appoint a working group to guide and manage the process. This group should be weighted in favour of local community members but should also have educational expertise.
2. Undertake broad based research with the residents of target communities; be this geographical, identity or issue-based. One way to do this is through surveys or door-to-door outreach. Focus-groups can also be organised where community members can express their needs.
3. Carry out a documentary analysis of the socio-political context.

4. A review of pathways from education should be identified and, where possible actively supported. These pathways should be towards further education such as access to Higher education but also access to sustainable employment.
5. Design and cost a three-year work-plan that draws from the previous stages of the process.

7.2 Further Recommendations.

As well as promoting a needs-based model of practice, this final section offers some further recommendations.

7.2 | Recommendations for all FinALE partners

- Each partner organisation should carry out in-depth country specific research that more holistically uncovers ways in which community education is funded.
- FinALE should create a position paper that outlines its support for European policy that emphasises community engagement and active citizenship.

One example of this is through active engagement with Education and Training 2020 (ET2020). Although principally led by lifelong learning that enhances employability, ET2020 also commits to equality, social cohesion and active citizenship and have re-asserted that commitment as recently as 2016. The EC, ET2020 working group on *promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education* includes representation from civil society as well as other social partners. Working groups such as this offer potential spaces where those in the front-line of service provision can help to shape policy.

Participation in the policy arena can be demoralising as those involved can be unsure if their actions are having any impact at all (O'Reilly, 2014). Crowther and Shaw (2014) offer a helpful framework for policy engagement that can help those involved to both reflect on, and strategise, the effectiveness of their efforts. The authors suggest a model of “strategic participation” - getting involved when to do so enhances democratic efficacy and expands the pool of those involved beyond the few, and “strategic non-participation” disengaging from ineffective spaces and using the time this frees up to create bottom-up, community

based spaces where political capacities can be strengthened. This latter action in many ways mirrors some early models of community education in Ireland.

- Community educators should have open, discursive conversations with the participants of community education about the precarity of funding.

Previous research suggests that community educators are sometimes reluctant to share behind the scenes difficulties with participants as to do so is perceived as in some way unprofessional (Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 238). Given community education's commitment to democracy, this should equally extend to educators feeling confident in opening conversations that reveal the impacts of policy change and trusting in adult learner's capacity to analysis changes and self-determine their own actions in response to the policy landscape.

7.2.2 Additional recommendations for Irish community education providers

As well as the recommendations cited above, some directional recommendations for the Irish context are:

- Further research to draw out the nuances of funding being accessed. This specifically relates to ETB funding and should include a quantification of independent organisations funded through the ALCES budget.
- The membership of the AONTAS CEN should build on the need-based model offered as section 7.1) and promote it amongst its membership.
- AONTAS CEN should prepare a summary report that can be circulated as a lobbying tool. This should be made available to members and non-members thus creating a united perspective in seeking a more sustainable financial future.

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Appendix I – Survey

Thank you for participating in this study, which explores funding tools for Adult and Community Education. Your participation forms part of a EC funded ERASMUS+ project called **Financing Adult Learning and Education (FinALE)**. The research has eight partners across Belgium, Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Switzerland and Portugal. The institutions involved are listed at the end of this page. One of the goals of the research is to find out how adult and community education is funded. When we know this, FinALE hopes to make recommendations to policy-makers about good practice and about innovative funding possibilities.

This survey asks questions about how your organisation is funded and about the day-to-day realities of managing this funding, including how it influences decisions about the work you would ideally like to do.

The survey takes around 20-30 minutes, and it should be completed by someone who understands the funding models you use. If you choose to participate, your answers will be used as part of the FinALE project and may appear in reports, presentations and academic articles. Unless separate consent is sought and obtained, your identity will at no stage be revealed as a participant in this study.

This survey is being carried out on behalf of FinALE by academic and research staff at the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

FinALE partners are: The European Association for the Education of Adults (Belgium), Niedersächsischer Bund für freie Erwachsenenbildung e.V (Germany), Individual Learning Company (United Kingdom), The European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (Belgium), AONTAS (Ireland), The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark), Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal), Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria), Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland

Page 2: Participant profile

1. Please indicate which of the following Adult Education Associations circulated this survey to you.
Optional

- AONTAS (Ireland)
- Kerigma Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos (Portugal)
- Agentur für Erwachsenen/ Weiterbildung (Germany)
- Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Austria)
- The Danish Adult Education Association (Denmark)
- Swiss Adult Learning Association (SVEB) Switzerland

2. Which of these descriptions best describes your organisation?

- Public (state/government) adult education provider
- Private adult education provider
- Community education provider (locally managed)
- Other

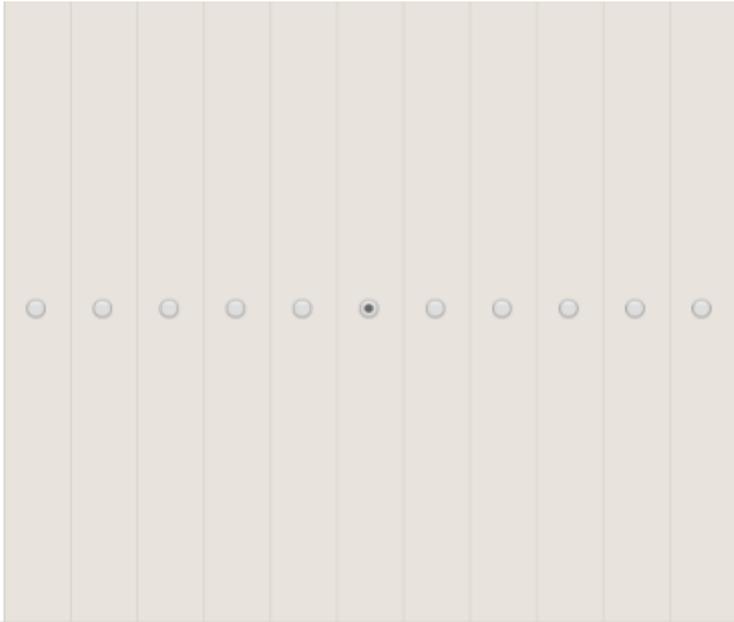
If you selected other please specify

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, [view as separate questions instead?](#)

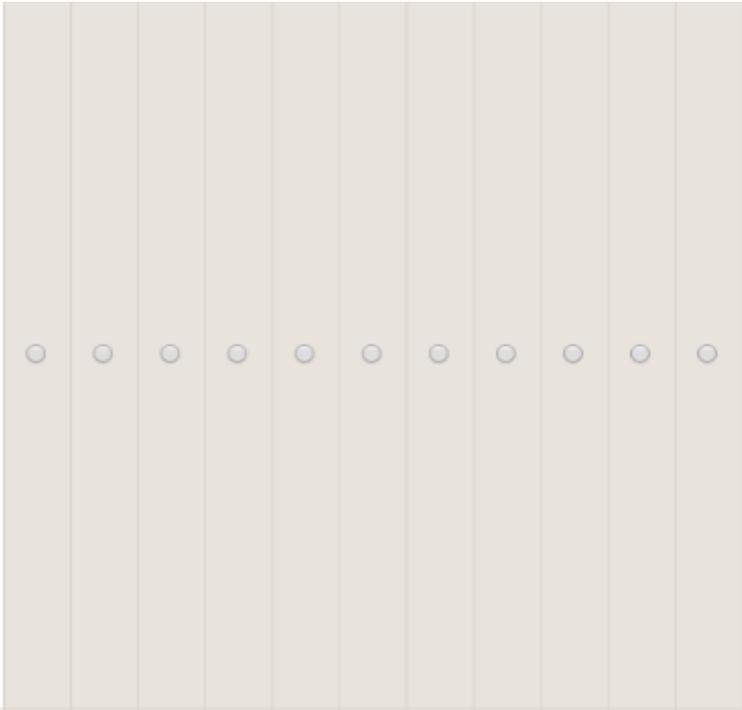
3. FinALE have identified 11 different funding models across member states. Please read through each model carefully and rank from 1-11 (where 1 is the most relevant). PLEASE START WITH NO. 1, ONLY USE EACH NUMBER ONCE AND ONLY USE THE NUMBER OF OPTIONS THAT APPLY TO YOU (e.g. if you only have two funding models only use the numbers 1 and 2).

	<i>Optional</i>										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
PROGRAMME FUNDING: a provider is contracted to provide a range of courses, based on estimated levels of student interest and potential uptake. - The provider proposes anticipated costs which are based on individual circumstances.	<input type="radio"/>										

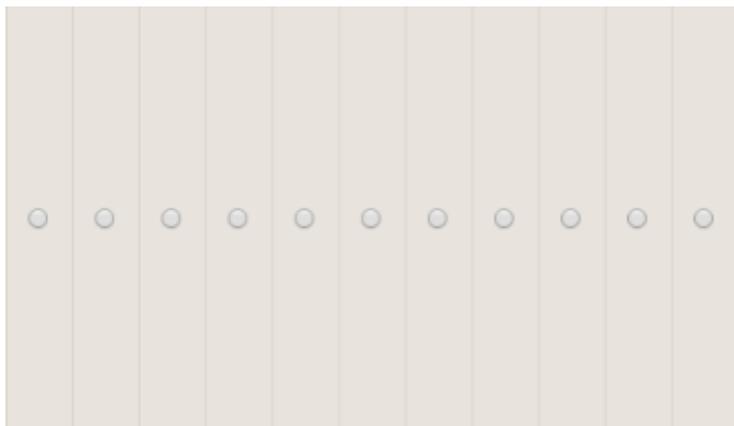
PROJECT FUNDING: a funder contracts providers for a service which, as well as delivering learning, may have several other strands outside the normal scope of a provider's activity. - This might include developing new courses or recruiting particular types of learners and will involve cooperation with other organisations or providers. - Projects are of a fixed duration and budget, meaning that once completed, there is no expectation that funding will continue. - Similarly, funding may not be given if project objectives are not met.



FORMULA FUNDING: a standard amount paid to achieve a specified outcome - Outcomes/performance may be measured through teaching hours, student enrollment levels, or programme completion rates. - Contracts awarded based on statistical criteria e.g. infrastructure, no. of people reached etc. - Funding aims to cover full costs of a programme, but provider has flexibility regarding how income is spent on different cost elements. - It might also include partial funding of programmes or organisational issues such as staffing salaries etc. - The formula can also include expected income from learner fees.



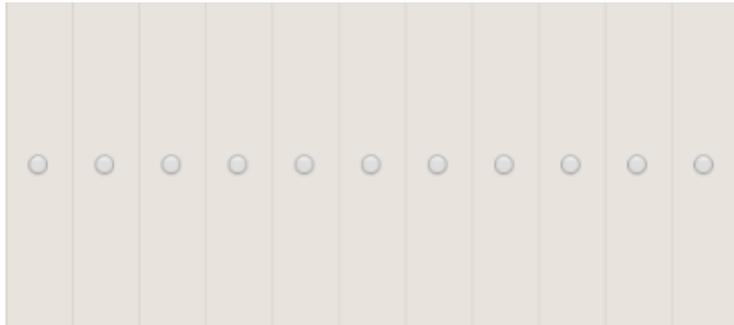
TAX INCENTIVE: a taxation rule which allocates financial benefits to taxpayers who participate in learning. - OECD distinctions as: tax allowances which allows deduction from the gross income to arrive at taxable income (i.e. tax base), for individuals and legal entities; tax credits allowing deduction from tax liability (i.e. tax due or tax payment), for individuals and legal entities.



DIRECT GRANTS: subsidies which support individual or company investment in education and training. -Financial support is often provided to learners rather than providers. Direct grants allow individuals, employers and organisations to partake in adult learning.



VOUCHERS/INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS: a subsidy (in the form of monetary coupon) which enables individuals and occasionally companies to access adult learning services. - Offer flexibility regarding course content, duration and the training provider.



LOANS: schemes that allow people to borrow against their future income to cover part of their training costs. - These can be a mortgage-type (traditional or conventional) loan, where repayment in fixed installments is required - OR an income-contingent loan, where installments depend on the borrower's income.



TRAINING LEAVE: a regulatory instrument that seeks equitable access to education by granting leave to employees for learning purposes. There are two models 1) paid training leave which entitles employees to maintain full or partial salary. In some cases, income is compensated through grants from public or social partner funds; 2) unpaid training leave whereby an employee's salary is not paid during the training period, but they have the right to return to their employment.

<input type="radio"/>										
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PAYBACK CLAUSES: a legal or contractual regulation concerning the repayment of training costs, if the employee decides voluntarily to discontinue the employment relationship with the employer who invested in their training.

<input type="radio"/>										
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PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING: where a national or international Philanthropic agency provides a grant towards some or all of the work that you do

<input type="radio"/>										
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LEARNER FEES: Where fees collected from learners are used partly or wholly in the running of your organisation

<input type="radio"/>										
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a. If none of the above funding models applied to you, please tell us how you are funded?

Page 3: Management/Administration of funding

4. Please provide at least one example of your organisation's OVERALL funding model. This may include elements of one or more of the funding models described in question 3. Please give as much detail as you can- Tell us who your funder is (e.g. ETB, SICAP, FRC), your target group, accredited or non-accredited, duration, difficulties encountered etc.

5. The funding model I currently use is useful and appropriate to my institution/organisation

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure if I agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

- a. If you would like to say more about this question please use the space below.

6. The funding model my organisation/institution currently uses, makes the process of applying for funding, simple and uncomplicated.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure if I agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

- a. If you would like to say more about this question please use the space below.

7. The funding model my organisation/institution uses ensures we are sustainable and guarantees our future as providers of adult education.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure if I agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

a. If you would like to say more about this question please use the space below.

8. The funding model my organisation/institution currently uses, is easy to administer.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Not sure if I agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

a. If you would like to say more about this question please use the space below.

Page 4: Suitability of this funding model for adult participants

9. The funding model I currently use is effective in reaching the target group my organisation/institution would ideally like to work with

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure if I agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

a. If you would like to say more about this question please use the space below.

10. The funding model my institution/organisation uses reflects a balanced responsibility between government, employers, individuals (learners) and other relevant stakeholders

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure if I agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

a. If you would like to say more about this question please use the space below.

11. The adult learners who attend our centre seem satisfied with the funding model(s) used

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure if I agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

a. If you would like to say more about this question please use the space below.

Page 5: Final comments

12. Please use the space below to provide any further information/comments that you think might help our research

13. Thank you for participating in the FinALE survey. As part of the same research, some participating countries will be holding focus-group discussions. If you would like to participate in these discussions please leave your name, organisation name and an email contact.

Appendix 2 FinALE conceived models of funding.

PROGRAMME FUNDING: a provider is contracted to provide a range of courses, based on estimated levels of student interest and potential uptake. - The provider proposes anticipated costs which are based on individual circumstances.

PROJECT FUNDING: a funder contracts providers for a service which, as well as delivering learning, may have several other strands outside the normal scope of a provider's activity. - This might include developing new courses or recruiting particular types of learners and will involve cooperation with other organisations or providers. - Projects are of a fixed duration and budget, meaning that once completed, there is no expectation that funding will continue. - Similarly, funding may not be given if project objectives are not met

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PAYBACK CLAUSES: a legal or contractual regulation concerning the repayment of training costs, if the employee decides voluntarily to discontinue the employment relationship with the employer who invested in their training.

PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING: where a national or international Philanthropic agency provides a grant towards some or all of the work that you do.

LEARNER FEES: Where fees collected from learners are used partly or wholly in the running of your organisation.

Appendix 3 – Consent form and information for research participants

Information and Consent Form for Research Participants

Thank you considering our request to participate in this research. The research is part of the wider European Erasmus+ project called **Financing Adult Learning and Education (FinALE)**.

About the research:

One of the goals of the research is to find out how adult and community education is funded? When we know this, FinALE hopes to make recommendations to policy-makers about good practice and about innovative and sustainable funding

About the research team:

A team from the Department of Adult and Community Education (DACE) has been commissioned by AONTAS to conduct the research. The primary researchers are: Conor Magrath, Camilla Fitzsimmons and Brid Connolly.

About your involvement as a participant in the research:

If you choose to get involved in the research, please be aware that:

- Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary.
- Your involvement and identity will be held in strictest confidence by the research team and will not be shared with anyone outside the DACE team
- You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time up until the 22nd of June 2017, as well the right to access your data at your discretion. After this date, the report will be in its final stages, so it will not be possible to remove data.
- Interviews and Focus Groups will generally take place at a discrete location within Maynooth University. However, some research may take place off-campus at locations more convenient to participants.
- Interviews and Focus Groups will last between 60-90 mins. tea and coffee will be provided.
- Notes and audio-recordings will be used during the research process. Any documentation or recordings pertaining to your research contribution will be held securely on password protected computers and locked cabinets within the Adult Education Department. Only the researchers, Conor Magrath and Camilla Fitzsimmons, member of research team, will have access to it. All stored information will be destroyed in the standard time-frame of ten years after the completion of the project.

- It must be recognized that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances, the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.
- Participants who attend group discussions have a responsibility to respect and protect each other's confidentiality.
- Information gathered in the research process will be used to write a report which will be submitted to AONTAS, end of June 2017.
- Please use the tick box (below, right hand corner) to consent to audio recording

Although there will be no direct material benefit for your participation, your involvement will represent a central and important contribution to European Erasmus+ project, **Financing Adult Learning and Education (FinALE)**.

If you are willing to consent to partake in this study, please complete the following:

I, _____, hereby consent to partake in this study, under the conditions outlined above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please tick box to give your consent for the use of Audio recording

Contact details

<p>Researchers:</p> <p>Camilla Fitzsimmons Camilla.Fitzsimmons@nuim.ie</p> <p>Conor Magrath Conor.Magrath@nuim.ie</p> <p>Brid Connolly Brid.Connolly@nuim.ie</p>
<p>Researchers based at: Department of Adult and Community Education Education House</p>

North Campus
National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Maynooth, Co. Kildare
Phone: (01) 7083306

Appendix 4 – questions sent to participants in advance

These are the scope of the questions but you may pass on any of them, e.g. if you are uncomfortable with a question or if you feel you have already adequately answered it in the Survey.

1. Tell us what motivated you to participate in this research?
2. Tell us about your experiences of being a provider? What are your thoughts about how you are funded?
3. Would you say you are satisfied with the current funding models?
4. What do you feel are the challenges for providers?
5. What do you have to do to secure funding? E.g., labour activation measures, or, the use of a training allowance for specific students, or any other special measures?
6. What needs to be changed or developed further?
7. What can providers can do to take more control over their funding, for example, networking, work with a friendly ETB person, connecting with local politicians, etc.
8. Can we ask you;
 - In the light of current socio-political contexts, what is a **realistic** proposal you would make for funding community education?
 - To imagine what an **ideal** funding model would be for you as a provider? notwithstanding governance, accountability, etc
9. Are there any other recommendations that you have, or suggestions you would like to make?
10. Are there any important questions you feel have not been asked, or anything else you would like to add or feel should be included?

