



EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION
OF ADULTS

Country Report on Adult Education in SPAIN

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Introduction

This Report covers the situation of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Spain. It is divided into two sections. The section *Policy and Politics* gives an overview of the key policy currently in force, and also outlines the main legislation or political situation in the country. *Structure and Providers* gives a more detailed look at the organizational structures, and also outlines the main adult education providers, mainly looking at non-formal and informal learning.

We want to thank our members for their contributions to this reflection on the adult education situation in Spain as far as possible as of 2010/2011. Inevitably there will be new things emerging within the ever changing situation of adult education, but we believe the majority of the information provided will be relevant and useful for the foreseeable future. However, to keep the resource accurate and up to date we are open to suggestions to improve the texts. If you feel there is something you can add about your country please contact us via email at [eaea-info\[at\]eaea.org](mailto:eaea-info@eaea.org).



Overview

Crucial to the system of education in Spain is that educational powers have been **decentralised** and transferred to the governments of the different **Autonomous Communities** or **Regions**. Their duties include the development and the application of the respective regulations with regard to adult education. Therefore, Spanish general statutes on education are composed by framework laws, establishing general principles which each Autonomous Community has to develop, according to specific local needs.

After this decentralisation many other statutes came into force to provide Communities the necessary tools to enact the provisions of the central government.

Politics and Law

Adult education in Spain is regulated by the Education Acts (LOGSE, LOCE and LOE). These Acts aim to recognise the increasing importance of lifelong learning as a means towards social cohesion and social development.

The General Educational Act (LOE - Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2006) established the current legal basis for adult education. The Act outlined the following aims for adult education:

- to enable adults to acquire basic education;
- to improve professional qualifications or to acquire skills needed to start new professions;
- to develop personal capacities in communicative, expressive, and interpersonal relations;
- to develop the right of democratic citizenship;
- to reduce social exclusion by developing specific programmes; and
- to promote effective equality of rights and opportunities between men and women.

The LOGSE (Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo) (1990), established three main fields of action, firstly an instrumental or **basic field** of action, with the aim of acquiring and updating basic training and enabling access to the different levels of the educational system. Secondly, the **work field** of action, with the aim of improving personal qualifications or acquiring training in order to be able to work in other professional fields. And finally a **participatory**



field of action, with the aim of developing the ability of participation in social, cultural, political and economic life.

With the aim of **regulating and broadening** adult training, the legislation allows the establishment of collaboration agreements with universities, local bodies and other public or private organisations. The LOE also encourages **autonomous learning** in adult education and training. The legal framework for adult education and training is structured towards people over 18 years old (rarely, students over 16 may also be allowed to have access to adult training).

Adult training can be provided in public **educational institutions** or in private organisations/companies, but a specific licence and guidance from the Ministry of Education is required. Two models of learning delivery have been introduced, attendance-based and distance-learning. **Distance-learning** is particularly encouraged because it provides some advantages for those in rural and isolated areas. [1].

Spain has made various efforts during the last few years to improve the adult education system. Firstly, The "**Organic Law on Qualifications and Vocational Training**" ("Ley Orgánica de las Cualificaciones y la Formación Profesional" 5/2002) for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training (LO 5/2002), which affects vocational education and training involves the labour, as well as educational administrations. It structures the three large branches of vocational training in Spain; for youth in their initial training period, for the unemployed, and for working people.

Secondly, Act 56/2002 (December 16), on **Employment** (L 56/2003), deals with improving ongoing and occupational training as an active employment policy.

Lastly, **The Organic Act 2/2006 on Education** (May 3, 2006), regulates the entire non-university education system and The Organic Act 4/2007 (April 12), which amends The Organic Act 6/2001 (December 21), on Universities (LO 6/2001), and regulates university education [2].

Future trends/key concerns/directions

Due to the **decentralisation**, adult education policies are completely managed by each autonomous community independently, which can decide the orientation and the development for their own future. To have a more specific overview of Spanish legislation concerning adult education, it would therefore be necessary to refer to the adult education department of every single Autonomous Community.



Structure overview

Spain has a **special framework for adult training**, according to the educational legislation. However, other programmes are also significant, such as the **Programmes of Initial Vocational Training** (Programas de Cualificación Profesional Inicial), oriented towards young adults who have failed their compulsory education. This then aims to enable them to gain a basic professional degree, or other qualifications within programmes developed on the framework of **Occupational and Ongoing Training** (Formación Ocupacional y Continua) managed by the Labour Administration.

Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education

‘Non-Formal’ Learning

Non-formal learning is often firstly prioritised for learning Spanish as a foreign language, mainly due to the large majority of immigrants and Roma communities. "**Spanish for immigrants**" are free Spanish courses carried out in the **Training Centres** for Adult People, in order to support the integration of immigrants living in Spain. These courses are provided by specialised teachers using specific material designed and published by the Ministry of Education. **Basque, Catalan** and **Galician** courses are also offered in the Autonomous Communities in which there is a co-official language [3].

Furthermore, there are many other courses, mostly oriented to the field of personal development and social participation, carried out in several educational institutions such as **Popular Universities (Universidades Populares)**, associations, and centres for social initiative. Some of them are focused on groups of disadvantaged people, such as the elderly, women, immigrants, or disabled people [4].

- Spanish Federation of Popular Universities - FEUP

As far as popular universities are concerned, it is first necessary to underline the role played by the **Spanish Federation of Popular Universities (FEUP)**. The FEUP is currently made up of 210 Popular Universities and is the representative body of the UU.PP. on a national and international level. The Spanish Federation of Popular Universities is the meeting point for the interchange of experiences, systematisation, reflection, theoretical production and collective communication between the UU.PP., the Association of Popular Universities and those comprising the technical and institutional representatives, along with the participants. The Spanish Federation of Popular Universities is a non-profit association based in Madrid. FEUP projects are subsidised by different public



institutions, such as the **Ministry of Education and Culture**, the **Social Ministry Work** and the **European Commission** [5].

- The Instituto Paulo Freire de España

The Instituto Paulo Freire de España is also important, because of its activity related to the non-formal learning, with a specific focus on adult education. It is a **network** of organisations and people involved in the promotion of adult learning but also engaged in the promotion of **social inclusion** and in combating racism and discrimination. It provides courses and seminars in order to promote the awareness of adult education issues in Spain and makes publications on these themes. Its main objectives consist of the promotion of lifelong learning, the promotion of activities both at an institutional and civic society level to increase the awareness about adult education, and also the creation of networks between associations and institutions at national and international levels [6].

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Spanish civil society is also characterised by a wide range of NGOs and associations whose aim is the promotion of adult education. This sector of activity is gradually increasing its importance throughout the Spanish society, reflecting the growing interest in adult education and lifelong learning during the last few decades.

Some associations can be mentioned here to highlight the relevant experience they provide in improving the level of adults' participation in education, although there are many more in the country working in a similar field. These are:

ACEFIR, the Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research, manages a social initiative that brings together a team of professionals from different fields with the common interest of working for education, training and research related to youth, adults and the elderly. Its aims include:

- developing and launching activities aimed at these groups in the fields of education, training and research;
- to make institutions, media and society more sensitive to the importance of lifelong training and education;
- promoting international cooperation among different cultures;
- and to offer support and advice to any other organisations working in the same field.



ACEFIR is involved in the promotion of training courses and projects, and participation in projects as an organiser and/or co-organiser. It also offers courses promoted by private and public institutions and carries out of research studies in the field of educations and training [7].

Associació ESPIRAL - Entitat de Serveis, is a private non-profit NGO that since 1992 has been working for the integral development of individuals and the **social cohesion of local communities**. It comprises professionals from the fields of education, health and social services. Espiral supports organisations to provide a European dimension to local projects and promotes good practices. It also provides support and expertise for the implementation and monitoring of projects. Espiral co-ordinates and manages social projects financed by both local and national programmes and sponsored by the EU Commission as a tool for social integration, employment and personal development throughout life. It also promotes European mobility for different groups through work experience and language learning [8].

Radio ECCA Fundación Canaria is an association whose purpose is the development of adult education, with a particular focus on disadvantaged people. In particular it operates to increase the level of self-awareness of adult education, promoting the intellectual, social and professional well being through training courses. It works via a **distance learning** system, using radio and other technologies to break distances and/or geographical, temporal and social gaps. Radio ECCA Canary Foundation is an institution in continuous renewal which meets the new demands of the society on Canaria [9].

The **UPDEA** Foundation is a non-profit, private and independent entity, founded in Madrid in 1999, whose purpose is to contribute to the cultural, social and personal development of adults through **lifelong learning**. It works in various ways, including to:

- contribute to the cultural and **social development** through lifelong learning;
- increase the use of **new technologies**;
- promote solidarity and **inter-generational** dialogue as a means to improve social integration;
- to share experiences with national and international entities;
- and to diffuse **Spanish language** and culture.

Other associations promote the development of adult education in several fields.



The role of **FAEA** (Federation of Adult Education Associations - Federación de Asociaciones de Educación de personas Adultas) is particularly relevant in this case. It was created in 1984 as a platform where a wide range of self-governing organisations could co-ordinate themselves with the common mission of promoting a comprehensive, open and collaborative model of lifelong learning, in which each person is the agent of their educational process, giving priority to the needs of people at risk of social exclusion. It works to create opinion through the analysis of social and educational policies and the dissemination of information and documentation about lifelong learning for adults within the context of Intercultural Education. It also aims to innovate by developing research projects; to use new didactic materials and training strategies adapted to the needs of each association and their professionals; and to provide high quality services by offering organizational counselling about professional changes to associations, about issues such as planning, management, project design, evaluation, training and technical support [10].

The Research Centre for Peace (CIP- Ecosocial) aims to provide a space to reflect and debate, which analyses social trends and development from a critical perspective. Created by FUHEM in 1984, it is devoted to the analysis of threats deriving from the Cold War. Later on, it also began to address issues such as globalisation, multilateral systems, human rights, ecology, migration, identity and education for peace and development. Aware of emerging issues, since 2007, the Centre for Peace Research has been focusing its attention towards an approach that links economic and social relationships with their social and natural environment. According to the three of the major challenges of modern society such as sustainability, social cohesion and quality of democracy, the Centre established its central theme: education. The development of the personality is considered by FUHEM as an important step towards the research of identity. This is the reason why it provides both general and vocational courses [11].

Also:

- Associació Catalana per a l'Educació,
- la Formació i la Recerca,
- Escuelas para la Vida, Feder.
- Española de Universidades Populares



Vocational Institutions and career-related training

Vocational education in Spain is mainly provided by public institutions. Several programmes are organised for the social inclusion of adult people.

One of the most important programmes is known as "**Basic Education**" and it is structured on three levels. These programmes are carried out in institutions specialised in adult training or in ordinary educational centres, and training does not exceed 12 hours per week.

At **Level One** an **initial training** is provided concerning basic literacy skills. **Level Two** then allows for the consolidation of basic knowledge and instrumental techniques. Both Levels One and Two concern initial education. **Level Three** was specifically introduced for the Secondary Education Training (or Secondary Education for Adults). At the end of Level Three students obtain the **Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate** (Graduado en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria).

Another important programme is oriented towards training to obtain official certificates and **the access to higher level training through open examinations**. Adults with basic training needs may participate in **preparation courses** for the examinations to obtain the Certificate of Graduate of Compulsory Secondary Education, which provides access to **Medium-level Vocational Training Cycles** (Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio). There is also specific training to prepare for examinations to access Higher Secondary Education, Higher VET vocational training and for access to University.

Specific Social Guarantee Programmes were introduced for students older than 16 and under 21 years old (in some Autonomous Communities, the maximum age may be 25) who do not have either a Compulsory Secondary Education diploma, or a Vocational Training certificate. These programmes are organised to improve their general training and to enable them to acquire skills to carry out some specific work and to facilitate professional placement. Usually, the length of the training varies between 720 and 1,800 hours, distributed between 26 and 30 hours per week; in addition, some modules are compatible with a work contract, and there is the possibility for practical training within some companies [12].

At the different territorial levels and in collaboration with other public or no-profit organisations, the Labour Administration fosters the following free programmes (occupational workshops). These programmes are co-financed by the European Cohesion Fund.

- **Workshop Schools** (Escuelas Taller) and **Trade Schools** (Casas de Oficios), for unemployed young adults between 16 and 25 years old. These programmes



combine vocational training in a first period with professional practical training in a second one. Learners also receive training to make them aware of the basic knowledge necessary to find a job, such as the prevention of work risks or computer literacy. General training for those who do not have any basic official certificate is also offered. During the first stage of the programme, students receive a grant, and during the second one, a salary equivalent to 75% of the minimum inter-professional wage (salario mínimo interprofesional) based on the training contract that has been signed with the hosting organisation. The length of these programmes varies from 1 to 2 years.

- **Employment Workshops** (Talleres de Empleo), for unemployed people over 25 years old, especially for those individuals belonging to groups with greater difficulties in professional placement (**long-term unemployed**, those **over 45** years old, **women** and individuals with **disabilities**) are also provided. No certificate is required, and the programmes that are carried out also combine theoretical with practical training, in addition to computer literacy. Students sign a training agreement and they receive a salary equivalent to 1.5 times the minimum inter-professional wage. Programme lengths vary between 6 months and 1 year and public works or services are carried out for the community [13].

- **The National Plan of Training and Professional Placement** (FIP Plan, Formación en Inserción Profesional) includes vocational training for unemployed workers. Its aim is to provide them with the qualification required for the introduction into the labour market. These courses, which must include practical aspects such as training within companies, may deal with special fields, according to the training needs of each region or area. These courses are carried out in "**Collaborating Training Centres**" authorised by the Labour Administration.

Ongoing training includes courses addressed to inactive individuals with the aim of improving their employability, as well as encouraging their professional specialisation. Since 2002 these programmes have been managed by the **Tripartite Foundation for Employment Training** (Fundación Tripartita para la Formación en el Empleo, FORCEM), a body composed by trade unions, entrepreneurs' associations and the Public Administration [14].

Universities

Spanish universities are **gradually increasing their role** in adult education. They provide different typologies of courses for adults and every single institute is free to provide courses specifically designed for adults or to continue to focus its attention on young people's education. They also provide **Spanish language courses** for non-native speakers.



e-learning

Distance learning is managed by the **Ministry of Education, Social Policies and Sport via the Innovation and Development Centre for Distance Learning** (Centro para la Innovación y Desarrollo de la Educación a Distancia - CIDEAD), created in 1992 with the purpose to organise and coordinate all kinds of e-learning activities and to facilitate the improvement of adults education. CIDEAD provides Courses for Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria - ESO), Secondary Education Distance Learning for Adults (Educación Secundaria para personas adultas a Distancia - ESPAD), and Bachelor degrees (Bachillerato). Autonomous Communities regulate distance learning for adults. They have created some specific centres of primary and secondary distance learning education. They are fully supported by CIDEAD [15].

Thanks to the initiative of the **National Centre of Information and Educational Communication** (Centro Nacional de Información y Comunicación Educativa), **Mentor Classes (Aulas Mentor)** organise distance-learning courses initiated throughout the Spanish territory. Courses are provided in Mentor Classrooms, where there is an administrator who plays the role of "learning facilitator" and a tutor. Courses are available for learners **studying at home**, if the Internet is available. These courses are mostly organised in **rural areas**, located in Centres of Adult Training, in **prisons or town councils**. There are over 100 different courses on different subjects, including many aspects of the environment, as well as health care, entrepreneurship, languages, or history. Students learn on their own with an absolute **flexibility** and pay a small monthly fee.

When participants finish a course, they take the relative examination, obtaining **the Certificado de Aprovechamiento**. [16].

In Spain other platforms provide on-line training systems specifically dedicated to adults. In particular **CIRCULUM.org** is a professional association of Adult Education that aims to promote the application of New Information Technologies and Communication in education. It provides distance courses for adult people, teacher training programmes and is also active in several research projects [17].

Furthermore, **Dialogues is a journal of Education and Training of adults** who started its activity in 1994. Dialogues is the result of a collective work of individuals and groups for education and training that invested effort in creating a space of communication in order to improve adult education. Dialogues was conceived as a tool to connect perspectives and people coming from organisations involved in social problems. The magazine aims to encourage networking and exchange of proposals, publications, seminars, conferences, seminars, training courses, etc [18].



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