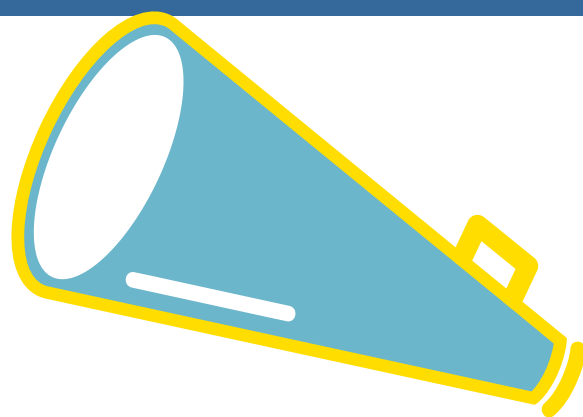


UP-AEPRO ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
ON IMPLEMENTING THE UPSKILLING
PATHWAYS INITIATIVE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This toolkit consists of a set of good practices and recommendations that could be used to achieve progress in the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative, both at practice and policy levels.

The first target group is the national policymakers, who still might to be convinced of the added-value and feasibility of the Upskilling Pathways initiative, and should to be informed about the gaps and the barriers faced by the adult education providers in reaching out to potential learners and providing them with adequate and meaningful learning offers. Policy recommendations will help policymakers working in adult education to identify the fundamental steps to improve policies and practices on upskilling and reskilling in their countries. They include direct quotations about the concrete experience of the UP-AEPRO project participants.

The second target group is the adult education providers and practitioners, who should be consulted more in the design of adult education policies and need advocacy tools to get recognition for their crucial job in upskilling and reskilling people all over Europe. The evidence and statistics and learner voices chapters will support them for this purpose.

This toolkit also addresses national adult education organisations who strive for exchange opportunities with other (European) colleagues on how to improve basic/life skills provision in Europe and thus contribute to the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

The collection of good practices on each step of the Upskilling Pathways initiative, as well as on its guiding principles, can support them as well as the toolkit's target groups to get inspired from other countries in Europe to make the Upskilling Pathways initiative a reality.

The glossary at the end of the document will help define the terminology used in this toolkit and to understand the approach applied by the UP-AEPRO partners.

This toolkit is the final output elaborated by the consortium of the UP-AEPRO project and is based on the practices and policies collected during the whole project's lifespan.

1. THE UP-AEPRO PROJECT

UP-AEPRO project[1] addresses the constant need and interest of adult education (AE) trainers and staff to learn more about European developments in adult education and other countries' systems and innovation.

In particular, the project contributes to deepening the knowledge and fostering the discussion about the Upskilling Pathways initiative (UP) [1] .

The UP-AEPRO project consortium is composed of 6 partners from 6 different countries.



Objectives

- To increase the knowledge about the Upskilling Pathways initiative and other Lifelong Learning policies at the European level;
- To allow the exchange of innovation across Europe on the Upskilling Pathways initiative related topics;
- To improve quality, professionalisation and capacity building of AE staff and providers;
- To support UP-AEPRO learners and partners to develop online learning and introduce ICT tools into their daily work;
- To strengthen the cooperation with peers and policymakers in their countries and in Europe;
- To improve the UP-initiative implementation at different levels by enabling AE trainers and staff (and the organisations for which they work) to be involved.

Outputs

- An online course on the Upskilling Pathways initiative, structured in four innovative modules on the following topics:
 - Policy overview and European Advocacy
 - Skills assessment
 - Tailored-made offer
 - Validation and recognition
- Five peer learning sessions
- An advocacy toolkit

[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC_2016_484_R_0001

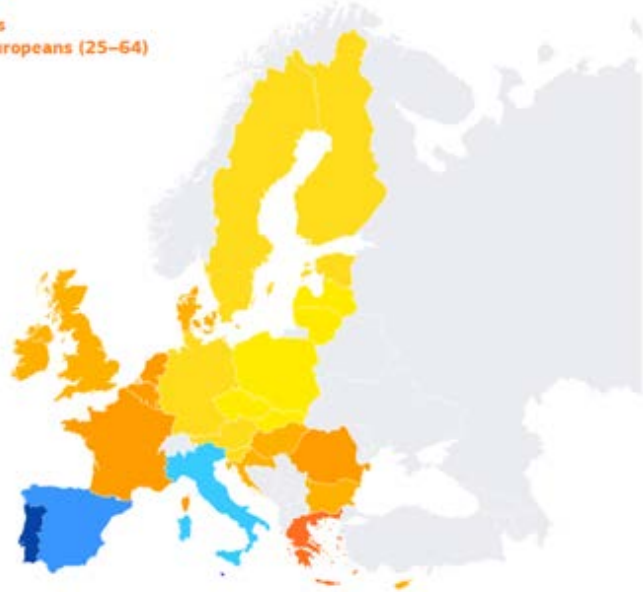
[2] <https://eaea.org/project/up-aeapro/>

2. THE UPSKILLING PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

According to the PIAAC survey[3], around 1 out of 5 European adults struggle with basic reading and writing, calculation, or using digital tools in everyday life. Furthermore, more than 61 million European adults have low qualification levels (lower secondary education at most). As the following map shows, the share of adults with low levels of education varies from more than 50% in Portugal to less than 10% in some Eastern European countries and Nordic ones.

Share of low-qualified adults
in the population of adult Europeans (25–64)

Data source: Labour Force Survey 2017



The New Skills Agenda for Europe in 2016[4] proposed several actions: 1) to improve the quality and relevance of skills formation to support individuals to acquire a minimum set of basic/life skills, 2) to improve skills intelligence and information for coping with the rapidly changing skills requirements of the labour market, 3) to make skills qualifications more visible and comparable, helping workers and learners to move more easily within the EU.

The first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights[5] states that “everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable people to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market”.

In July 2020, the European Commission launched a Communication on the revised European Skills Agenda [6]. The communication sets ambitious, quantitative objectives for upskilling and reskilling to be achieved until 2025. Its 12 actions focus on skills for jobs by partnering up with Member States, companies and social partners to work together for change, by empowering people to embark on lifelong learning, and by using the EU budget as a catalyst to unlock public and private investment in people’s skills. The communication prioritises non-formal, life-wide learning, and community learning and highlights skills for life as a key pillar of adult learning and education.

[3]<https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>

[4]<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-381-EN-F1-1.PDF>

[5]https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

[6] <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&furtherNews=yes&langId=en&newsId=9723>

As part of the Skills Agenda for Europe, the Council Recommendation "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults" was adopted in December 2016 [7]. It sealed the commitment of Member States to take action to address the high number of adults in the EU who have gaps in their basic skills, preventing them from engaging in further education or training, or progressing towards a qualification or better life and work chances. The Recommendation also contributes to ensuring that by 2030 all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men, and women, achieve literacy and numeracy. Through the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation, Member States agreed to adopt a strategic and coordinated approach to providing joined-up learning opportunities to the 61 million low-skilled adults in Europe. It aims to support adults in enhancing their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills and in acquiring a broader set of competences to progress in their personal, educational, and professional lives.

«In today's society, everyone needs to have a wide set of skills, knowledge, and competences, including a sufficient level of literacy, numeracy, and digital competence, in order to achieve his or her full potential, play an active part in society and undertake his or her social and civic responsibilities. Such skills, knowledge, and competences are also crucial for accessing and progressing in the labour market and for engaging in further education and training» [8].

The Upskilling Pathways initiative aims to ensure low skilled and low qualified adults access to assessment, learning and validation opportunities. The initiative suggests the following steps (as explained in the image below) and three guiding principles (effective outreach, guidance, and support measures).

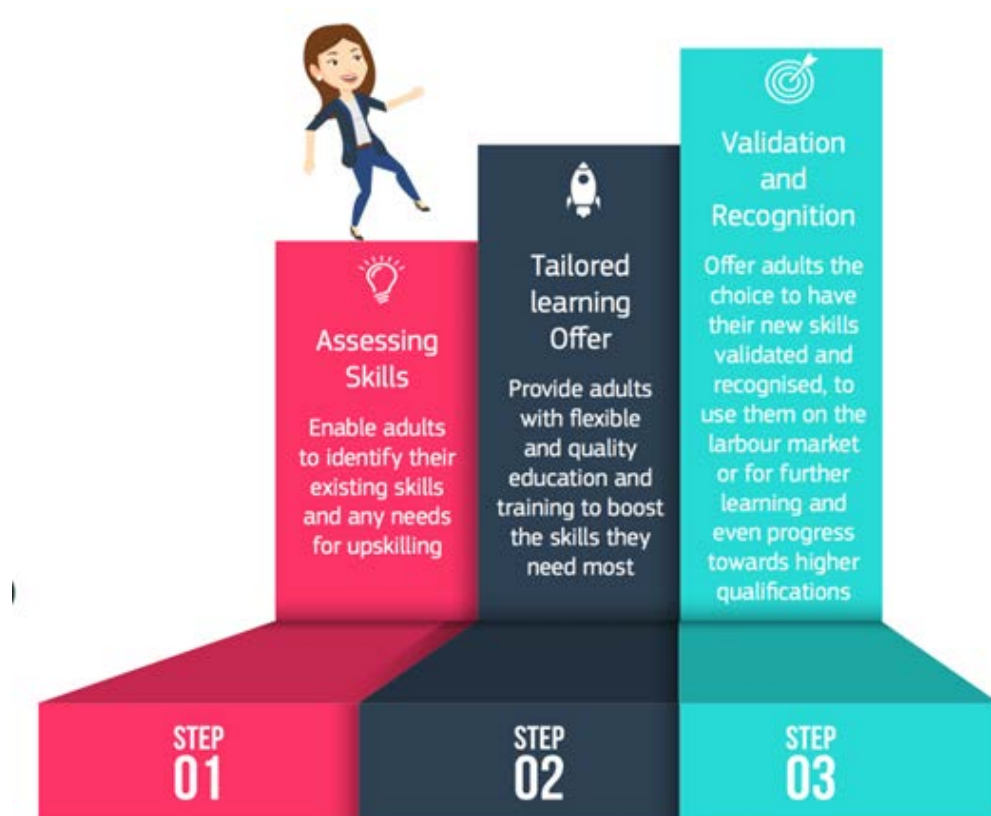


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1 <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7044-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

[7] <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1224>

[8] [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)&from=EN)

3 - PATHWAYS IN THE MAKING - WHAT CAN BE LEARNT FROM THE FIELD?

The UP-AEPRO consortium identified good practices throughout the whole project life span. Desk research was also carried out to draft this toolkit and provide more official sources and key policy documents. Readers can find them below, listed according to the more relevant aspects of the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

3.1 - INTEGRATED AND NATION-WIDE APPROACH

Upskilling pathways is about pulling together resources and creating the right synergies for supporting (low skilled) adults towards an individual path to empowerment. Adopting a comprehensive and holistic approach is crucial to achieving concrete and sustainable results in implementing the initiative. Both policy and practice measures should be address (potential) learners' needs in a coordinated and coherent way.

The integrated three steps approach is present in the cases below.

The Qualifica Centres in Portugal

In Portugal, the Qualifica initiative^[9] is built around the three Upskilling Pathways' steps: it supports less qualified adults, unemployed and young people not in education, employment, or training. The Qualifica Centres provide adults with advice and referrals on recognition and validation of prior learning as well as support them in accessing training opportunities. There are around 350 centres in Portugal. Most of them are located in existing public or private providers such as schools. Recent developments notably include a Qualifica Passport, an online tool where qualifications and information on acquired skills are recorded. The online system also provides individuals with guidance that they could use to complete learning pathways or obtain new qualifications.

The national credit system is aligned to the European Credit system for VET (ECVET) and used to translate validated non-formal or informal learning into credits of a qualification. That helps ensure that learners can undertake flexible pathways that build on what they already know.



[9]<https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/>

Fast track for newly arrived migrants in Sweden

In Sweden, the Government adopted policies and programmes to allow newly arrived immigrants to find a job that is relevant to the individuals' education and experience in a short amount of time. While doing so, they also address the need for labour force in many industries by equipping newly arrived immigrants with the necessary skills. That was possible via the creation of fast tracks^[10] by the Swedish Public Employment Service in cooperation with various industries: employers and trade unions have jointly agreed on the trades and professions covered and the content needed in a fast track.

With a combination of validation, work experience, language training, and tailor-made training and education, the newcomers to Sweden can find a job in a sector where their previous training and experience is valued. As the assessment is carried out through real-life observation, it allows the newcomers to show their real skills without being fluent in Swedish (the candidate receives help find a fast track and activities that suit him). The competencies of the candidate are formally recognised.

A French certificate of professional knowledge and skills

The Cléa, *Certificat de Connaissances et de Compétences Professionnelles*^[11], is the first inter-professional certification in France. It has a national scope; it is recognized in all sectors and by all actors. It potentially could address three to four million workers, employees, or job seekers in the country. The Cléa certificate is intended for low-skilled people, without professional certification, who are socially weakened by economic developments. This certification process allows them to be more visible in the labour market. Its broad spectrum of skills guarantees greater employability and facilitates professional development and mobility.

The idea of Cléa is to build on the candidate's strengths rather than highlight their shortcomings: it is about giving confidence, stimulating, motivating. Therefore, this assessment step is neither an examination nor a test. If gaps appear, a training course is offered to the candidate. In the meantime, a certificate of partial validation of prior learning is issued. If the candidate masters all seven professional areas of knowledge and skills, his file is presented to a jury of professionals. If necessary, an individualized training course is offered to the candidate. Based on the results of its evaluation, clear educational objectives and a precise timetable are set. The trainer, who cannot be the assessor, regularly checks on the progress made.

At the end of this course, which lasts a maximum of 5 years, a new evaluation of the knowledge and skills acquired is carried out. The jury validates the certification only if the candidate masters all skills in the seven areas, regardless of their trade or professional sector. The obtained Cléa certificate is unique and identical for all professional sectors. It does not include a level or grade. The ultimate goal of the assessment is to allow candidates to overcome the stigmatizing image of the examination or test, often linked to the learning of fundamental knowledge. Learners' efforts are made visible through a certificate recognized by the professional world.

[10]<https://www.government.se/articles/2015/12/fast-track---a-quicker-introduction-of-newly-arrived-immigrants/>

[11]<https://www.certificat-clea.fr/>

3.2 - SKILLS ASSESSMENT

The first of the three steps of the Upskilling Pathways is the skill assessment. The purpose of an assessment is to identify existing skills and upskilling needs. People with low levels of literacy, numeracy, or digital skills often already possess skills, including professional skills, but may have specific gaps in one basic skill or wider set of skills. Providing everyone with one-fits-all training courses that do not consider their existing skills would be inefficient and counterproductive.

Skills assessment allows learners to make sense of experiences and understand how they learn; to identify barriers to learning, and understand how to remove them; to be inspired, motivated, and ready to learn; to be appropriately aspirational (according to Sue Southwood, an independent education consultant[12]).

Skill assessment also benefits the adult education staff as it provides them with a clear indication of how to adapt the courses to learners' strengths and needs. That will lead to an increased motivation of adults to participate in a particular learning offer.

InnoVal Project

The InnoVal project (Innovative Assessment for Validation)[13] addresses the urgent need to offer valid and reliable assessment methods that allow all learners to have a chance at validation. First of all, they looked into reasons that lead to failed assessment, especially for disadvantaged groups of learners - migrants, long-term unemployed, those who have had an adverse experience in formal education, including school assessments. The results were anxiety, lack of motivation, lack of support, and trust issues. Alternatively to the traditional method, practitioners could adopt the summative assessment (of learning), the formative assessment (for learning), and the reflective assessment (as learning). The research conducted by the project led to the collection of more than 20 videos of innovative assessment practitioners and more than 50 case studies coming from 6 EU countries (Belgium, France, Finland, Greece, Germany, and Portugal).

MYSKILLS

MYSKILLS[14] is a digital assessment method used in Germany. In MYSKILLS, people without professional qualifications who look for a job can identify and demonstrate their professional skills. With the help of online images and video-based questions, participants are presented with typical situations arising in a particular profession and can show how they would react. That ultimately allows them to prove which activities they can perform. MYSKILLS is currently available for 30 professional areas in six languages: German, English, Arabic, Farsi, Russian and Turkish. The jobcentre or employment agency carries out the process, and it takes around four hours. MYSKILLS is suitable for all persons who have relevant experience in one of the 30 professions but do not have professional qualifications in that profession.

[12] <https://policyconsortium.co.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/04-Initial-assessment-sample-tool-Policy-Consortium-v2.1-in-PDF.pdf>

[13] <http://inno-val.eu/innoval-project/>

[14] <https://www.myskills.de/en/>

Learn with Nala

In Ireland, the «Learn with Nala» website[15] helps people with low basic skills improve their skills and get a qualification. Learners can study online by themselves, work with a tutor over the phone or do a combination of these. The courses are designed around the learners, their needs, and their skills. When completing a course, learners get a certificate issued by Quality and Qualification Ireland, which is the national agency responsible for qualification and quality assurance in further education and training and higher education in Ireland (examples of courses: Reading – level 2; writing – level 2; quantity and number – level 2). The platform provides an assessment of prior competencies and tailored-made courses. It leads to obtaining a recognised certificate.

Letters for life

«Letras prá vida»[16] is a Portuguese community intervention project that promotes literacy, empowerment, and social inclusion through literacy workshops with adults (some participants never went to school, others left school without completing the basic level, others are migrants). Reading and writing activities are developed, the participants are divided into six groups with several levels of literacy. The most important aspect of this project is that participants actively contribute to their learning process by identifying their existing skills according to their needs.



[15] <https://www.nala.ie/free-courses/learn-with-nala/>

[16] <https://www.facebook.com/letraspravida/>

Skills forward e-learning platform

Skills Forward e-learning platform[17] is one of the leading e-learning software in the UK for the assessment of literacy and numeracy skills, including Functional Skills and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in English and maths. This system identifies the learners' skill level, highlights their strengths and weaknesses, and provides them with engaging content to continue learning. The platform enables providers to capture learners' achievements digitally and supports their further development with high-quality resources. That includes interactive video content to inspire as well as teach. Learners reported that the embedded videos create deeper and richer experiences and are easily watchable when and where suits them the most.

The provided assessment tools and resources support education providers' work on Functional Skills, GCSE, and employability skills. The software is used by colleges, training providers, and employers who want a more accurate overview of learners' progress. They all work collaboratively to ensure the needs of their customers and the learners come first.

The portfolio, a biographical approach to assessment

The portfolio appears to be the main assessment tool in different countries, like Portugal (used by the Qualifica Centres in the RVCC process) or Iceland (ÍÐAN Education Centre). Using the portfolio as a tool means that the assessment is based on a biographical approach. The portfolio represents an opportunity to register what the learner knows (both formal and informal knowledge) and articulate the learning pathway in academic or professional blocks. Using a methodology that showcases the most significant personal, professional, and learning experiences; carries out a critical reflection on his/her pathway; and plans the future actions, a continuous process is made possible.

3.3 - TAILORED AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING OFFER

The second step of the Upskilling pathways initiative is about designing a learning provision that meets the needs of adult learners with low levels of basic skills. This may be organised in various levels but should from the outset be open to progression to an EQF level 1, 2, or 3 qualification.

The results of the skills assessment are the basis on which providers and practitioners should develop tailored-made offers. Thus, the learning programmes should concentrate firstly on building up learners' literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, providing them with a solid foundation for progressing towards further learning and, ultimately, a qualification. Programmes should not only aim to fill specific gaps but also build on what the learner already knows as well as fulfill his/her learning goals. The learner must be in the centre of the learning process.

[17] <https://www.skillsforward.co.uk/>

To overcome participation barriers, learning offers should be flexible and adapted to adults' learning habits and wishes. Adults whose experiences have been poor in the past are motivated to learn more by seeing that they are making progress. That can be achieved by creating an education and training plan and structuring it into manageable units of learning outcomes, which can be documented, assessed, and validated individually.

If the training leads to a qualification, this must be relevant to local labour market needs and match the skills gaps at a local and regional level.

An Cosán - Virtual Community College

The «An Cosán - Virtual Community College»[18] offers basic, professional, and higher education courses to adults across Ireland. It provides pathways for learners to be able to access at whichever level they wish to do. The VCC Online Community Education programmes combine face-to-face workshops with online lectures and assignments: discussion, interaction, and teamwork make for both an enjoyable and rewarding learning experience. The flipped classroom method adopted increases learners' engagement and promotes their acquisition of new transferable knowledge and skills.

German in the park

The project «German in the park»[19] was initiated by VHS Wien (Austria) to reach out to vulnerable (potential) learners that would benefit from German courses. Noting that the migrants in the neighborhood were reluctant to register for the language courses offered, VHS Wien decided to move the learning offer to the park surrounding the institution. Since then, Vienna's adult education centres have been offering free German courses in various parks during summer. The on-site team consists of two teachers for German as a second language and one literacy teacher. They thus can respond as flexibly as possible to the wishes and needs of the participants. The open and low-threshold approach combined with the free and tailored-made was a real success. In the last years, VHS Wien and its partners started offering advanced German courses as well.

Objectif Ville

The Objectif Ville[20] project aims at engaging young unemployed adults to create an interactive map of the cities of Charleroi and Châtelet for their peers. Eight courses were organised in the first 2.5 years of the project implementation. Courses are free of charge, last 12 weeks, and target young adults from 18 to 24 years old, who often have not completed formal education. These courses are built around the learners' needs: they feature flexible teaching methods and include tailored-made content. The guidance is always present, both during the programme and afterward. The innovative and empowering methodologies used by trainers and facilitators used during the courses are a great way to keep learners engaged.

[18] <https://www.ancosan.ie/>

[19] <https://www.vhs.at/de/deutschimpark>

[20] <http://objectif-ville.funoc.be/>

Life Skills for All – putting the learner in the heart of learning

The Life Skills for All model is a pedagogical model to learning and educating basic skills (literacy, numeracy, digital skills) that ties them in the context of adults' everyday lives, personal finance, health, and active citizenship and puts learner's needs at the centre. It is a Finnish adaptation of the Citizens' Curriculum designed at the Learning & Work Institute in England. In Finland, the model has been applied to migrants, families, people in a vulnerable labour market position, NEET youngsters and entrepreneurs.



A book to foster Digital Inclusion of Adults

«Activities for Digital Inclusion of Adults»[21] - was elaborated as part of the LIDIA project. It includes 20 proposals of activities using technologies that have been designed to promote the digital literacy of all citizens, but especially adults with fewer opportunities. Thus, this book aims to support adults in the acquisition of what is considered a vital skill of lifelong learning, essential for personal, societal, and professional inclusion. This book proposes activities for teachers and other social inclusion professionals which lead to the creation of a digital society. The book has been already translated into English, and the difficulty level of each activity is clearly stated (+Accessible; Intermediate; +Demanding).

The Bury College

After identifying a significant gap in the provision for people living in disadvantaged areas of the city, the Bury College[22] decided to start working with community-based organisations to offer demand led and tailored-made training programmes. The project team took a proactive approach, spending long periods in the community to build trust and engage residents. They delivered activities such as everyday English, reading to a child, and employability skills providing enhanced support to learners. The project has successfully engaged over 750 of residents. Learners have completed non-accredited courses, gained qualifications, moved towards further learning, and progressed into employment. Guidance has been instrumental for the project's success.

[21]https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/activities_for_digital_inclusionfinal.pdf

[22]<https://burycollege.ac.uk/information/projects/>

3.4 - VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION

The Upskilling Pathways initiative proposes that the Member States build on existing validation arrangements to assess and certify skills and ensure their recognition in accordance with national qualifications framework and systems. Validation should allow the recording of learners' progress at different stages of the pathway, which would enable them to reach a national qualification corresponding to level 2, 3, or 4 of the European qualification framework. That would be possible if national qualifications frameworks accommodate small and transparent steps toward full awards and value all forms of learning opportunities available for low-qualified adults.

Various European countries have developed procedures and arrangements leading to validation as public policies, and almost all of them have adopted national qualification frameworks.

The National System of Validation in Iceland

In Iceland, the national system of validation[23] has over 50 pathways open on upper secondary school level, aiming at people with a low-qualified background. The system is financed by the Educational fund and coordinated by the ETSC[24]. 14 regional lifelong learning centres provide validation services. The ETSC has close cooperation with guidance personnel at the lifelong learning centres regarding general career guidance and guidance in the validation process, which is embedded in the national system and financed. Most of the guidance personnel are specialists in career guidance. People in the target group have access to general guidance services free of charge. The guidance personnel take part in delivering information about validation options for the target group and recruitment of participants. Validation is conducted in groups, with individual components such as the screening interview (conducted by guidance personnel), documentation of competences, assessment, and guidance interviews are offered as needed during and after the process. It assists in providing relevant and accurate information and support to the target group going through validation. The interviewees that do not meet the set criteria for the validation process (age, competence) can benefit from tailor-made guidance and be addressed to other more suitable measures.

Still, in Iceland one of the pathways in the national system of validation, aiming at people with low-qualified backgrounds, is the validation of employability skills. It was developed in an EU funded project in cooperation with the social partners. About 15 competencies were chosen and described on EQF levels 1-4 (now up to level 7), and a process developed for working with the target group of the ETSC (people with low-qualified background) towards identifying employability skills, describing them, and going through an assessment interview based on that work. The main target group has been job seekers and people on welfare. The measure has been an effective enabler towards employment and studies.

[23]https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Iceland.pdf

[24]<https://viskaproject.eu/about-us/etsc/>

A model for validation of generic competences in Sweden

In Sweden, a model for validation of generic competences[25] has been developed by the Swedish Adult Education Association, in collaboration with Nordiskt Valideringsforum. It has been especially targeted at newly arrived young migrants, NEET youngsters (youth not employed, in education or training) as well as active individuals employed in the third sector and voluntary work. Around 60 different modules have been developed, making it possible to validate a wide aspect of generic competences.

These modules include:

- Knowledge on social interaction, attitudes, cooperation, decision-making processes, leadership;
- Understanding of unwritten rules at a workplace, modes of conduct, the difference between professional/personal/private;
- Skills in communicating with different people, digital communications, and IT;
- Ability to formulate a message and present it.

Local employees of the Swedish study associations have been trained to carry out the validation, using a structured process with steps and tools to make use of. The modules developed for generic competences are also being integrated and further used by Nordiskt Valideringsforum in other branch validation processes.

The Competitive skills project

In Finland, the Competitive Skills project[26] is developing a nationwide open badge constellation that enables the verification of adults' problem-solving skills in technology-rich environments. The project identifies and recognises competences acquired outside the formal education system, at different levels of education, and in transition phases of the education structure.

Besides, it provides a requirement framework of competence (determining the composition of objectives, core contents, and assessment criteria) for securing IT-related problem-solving skills in non-formal education. The framework is piloted with different target groups within vocational education and adult education.

The project also designs an assessment and validation process and creates competence-based learning objectives for IT-skills acquired in non-formal adult education. The cooperation between liberal adult education and vocational education benefits the learners and helps them proceed in the study path: IT-skills courses completed in liberal adult education can be recognized as units of the vocational education degrees.

[25] https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Sweden.pdf

[26] <https://tieke.fi/en/projects/competitive-skills/>

4. PAVING THE WAY FOR UPSKILLING - INSPIRING PRACTICES RELATED TO THE UP KEY PRINCIPLES

According to the "Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (2016)", the delivery of the Upskilling Pathways should be underpinned by the following key principles.

4.1 - COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Provision for adult learning is often fragmented, adult education policies may be made by different government bodies with responsibility for different subgroups, education and training for adults is delivered by a multiplicity of providers, the range of provision may differ from one place to another. The support available through active labour market policies for low qualified adults does not always focus on longer-term upskilling needs and, in most cases, targets only unemployed people. Effective coordination of policy and provision is one of the key facts proved to help ensure that public policy interventions in adult learning achieve their goals. While policy coordination is essential, implementation can only be successful through the active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, and partnerships are essential to make it work. Partnerships could be encouraged to involve a broad range of actors, social partners, education and training providers, employers, intermediary and sectorial organisations, local and regional economic actors, employment, social and community services, libraries, civil society organisations, etc. Local authorities can also play an important role in identifying needs at the local level and facilitating outreach to the target group. These can all play a key role in the delivery of the different steps of the initiative and in ensuring outreach and guidance throughout the whole process.

The Nordic Network for Adult Learning

In the Nordic region, a unique cooperation across national borders exists in many different fields. Cooperation in the adult education sector takes place under the auspices of two Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) programmes: NVL (Nordic Network for Adult Learning) and the Nordplus Adult Programme. In this way, the Nordic governments put together funding and set priorities, which fields they want to be developed in cooperation. NVL is a network organization and has one coordinator in each Nordic country and works through 8 to 10 different expert networks. The fact that networks consist of organisations representing different sectors of adult learning, research and decision makers, allows to develop solutions in cooperation that are broadly based of high quality and with relevance to the contexts in the different Nordic countries.

As concerns the implementation of Upskilling Pathways in the Nordic region, NVL can support the exchange of experience, gather evidence, and compare the situation in different sectors and countries, and support the development of policy and practice. Looking back at the work in AE-PRO project, the follow-up activities in Iceland, and being part of the Nordic cooperation, Eyrún Björk Valsdóttir, head of education at Alþýðusamband Ísland (Iceland's LO) talks about the value of partnerships in the interview with NVL[27]:

“ *We benefit from the great advantages we have gained from participating in several Nordic and European projects, such as UP-AEPRO. The experience we have acquired is reflected in the development of our measures, especially regarding validation and guidance [...] In Iceland, we have not yet analysed the need for competence on a national level. It lays the foundation for the development of a national strategy for both labour and competence policy. We propose that the social partners cooperate with the government on this development. Regarding this aspect, we could follow the development of competence policy measures in Finland and Norway. Finns have been able to analyse and shed light on skills needs for the future labour market in Finland, and Norwegians launched a national skills policy strategy as early as 2017.* **”**

As Upskilling Pathways (UP) initiative includes both skills assessment and design tailor-made education offer, it is important to have a dialogue between the providers of validation, guidance counsellors, and the education sector. The involvement of social partners is also important and can help reaching and motivating the UP target group through working life. Several studies (Epinion, DK) have shown that motivation for competence development varies between different groups of employees. The motivation to develop skills is namely lower among those with lower education levels. At the same time, studies, including from Norway, have shown that the need for skills development in working life is greatest among low-skilled occupations.

The Nordic network of social partners has recently published their report on competence development in working life, in which they strongly support the work with basic skills development at all education levels as well as point out the role of validation for effective competence development and as a motivating factor.

[27]<https://nvl.org/content/up-aeapro-in-iceland>

“ [...] In view of accelerated digitalisation and the need for continuing lifelong learning, basic competencies are crucial so that the individual can benefit from competence development. A challenge shared with others by the Nordic countries is employees with inadequate basic skills and/ or literacy or reading disorders [...] Validation is a potent tool, which can be used throughout the entire working life, in order to document and recognize existing competence, and a basis for developing the competencies for a special occupation. **”**

Cross-sectoral cooperation is essential for stepping up the implementation of Upskilling Pathways. The respondents also pointed out this aspect after the UP-AEPRO Peer learning webinars:

“ Better sector cooperation in public policies would support the implementation of Upskilling Pathways. **”**

The establishment of partnerships in Portugal

In Portugal, the law ruling on the Qualifica Centres[28] emphasises the importance of the establishment of partnerships at local/regional levels and encourages cooperation and synergies among employers, training institutions, organisations from the third sector, and public organisations. Territorial-based partnerships contribute to a more integrated and consistent approach in reaching out to potential learners and provide concrete responses to the population's learning needs. Partnerships also facilitate the signalling and identification of skills gaps and the creation of appropriate education and training pathways for people with low levels of basic skills. They are also crucial to ensure sustainable and community-based development of the sector.

Exploring local challenges: the «To-do methodology»

The “To-do methodology”[29] is a collaborative approach that can be used to organise events where new ideas and proposals are collected to tackle one or more identified challenges. This methodology suggests gathering the stakeholders directly or indirectly impacted by the challenge and can be adapted to the local context. The added value of this methodology is that the proposals are made collaboratively by all stakeholders and that it involves the target group that will use or implement the solutions. If many actors share the same goal, there are more chances that it becomes a reality.

This methodology was proven successful in increasing inclusion for refugees in local communities and in supporting them in accessing learning or work opportunities. Indeed, it provided new ideas for tailored courses and pointed out existing needs and barriers in assessment and validation procedures.

[28] <https://dre.pt/web/guest/pesquisa/-/search/75216372/details/maximized>

[29] https://nvl.org/Portals/0/DigArticle/15223/NVL_report_To_do_ENG_250917_web.pdf

4.2 - OUTREACH, GUIDANCE, AND SUPPORT MEASURES

Research shows that many adults are not aware of the benefits of raising their skills levels and the opportunities available for upskilling that do not require going back to a formal school setting. Carefully targeted outreach strategies are needed to encourage people to contact the relevant services and engage in learning pathways. Outreach strategies should include a comprehensive overview of the different groups in need of upskilling and reskilling opportunities, each of which may need a targeted approach. Unemployed people who are registered with an employment agency, for example, might be more easily reachable than NEETs. On the other hand, to reach out to employed people providers and policy-makers will need to plan strategies to involve companies or trade unions. Specific measures like language assistance or mediation support may be needed to reach vulnerable groups. A successful outreach strategy not only aims at contacting and engaging people who would not normally benefit from education but also at supporting them in jointly planning activities and courses relevant to their circumstances and needs.

Guidance is another prerequisite in providing advice and information as to what a Skills Guarantee entails, whom to refer to get started and how to stay on course throughout the process. Such guidance and support should be available to learners throughout all stages of the upskilling pathway. Adult learning staff has a key role in the education and training of low-skilled adults and in guidance and support. They require adequate initial and continuing professional development. In addition to outreach and guidance, it may also be useful to consider providing specific support to address barriers to participation.

Guidance in Iceland

In Iceland, guidance takes place before, during, and after the validation process and is an integral part of the process itself. The national system is financed by the Educational fund and coordinated by the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC). The ETSC works in close cooperation with guidance personnel at the 14 regional lifelong learning centres regarding general career guidance and guidance in the validation process, which is embedded in the national system and financed. Most of the guidance staff are specialists in career guidance, but project managers and teachers/trainers provide support as well.

4.3 - FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION

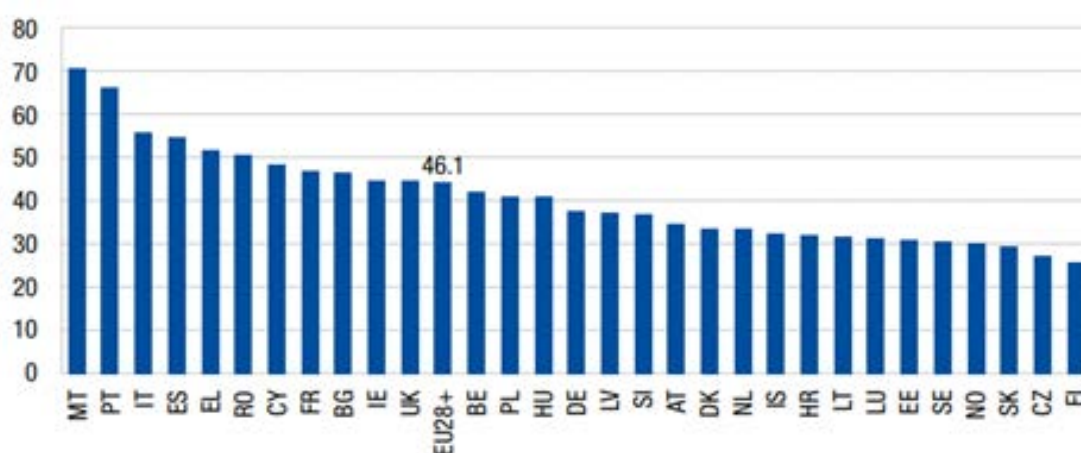
Part of the success of policy initiatives lies in the accuracy with which their design and implementation are regularly monitored and evaluated. In 2015, the European Commission published a study aimed to identify factors that help achieve effective adult learning policies[30]. After verifying that Member States lack sufficient monitoring systems to ensure that policies achieve their intended impact, the study proposes an analytical framework providing a firm basis to put those in place.

[30]<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c8c38dc9-89d0-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

5 - STATISTICS AND EVIDENCE

Education is a fundamental human right, a precious public good, and an indispensable tool in building peaceful, sustainable, and fairer societies. However, the educational challenges we face are complex. They include the rise of inequalities, demographic change, and climate change. More seriously, the world is also changing drastically and quickly. If we do not adapt and enhance adults' skills, they will be left behind. »[31]

In Europe, 128 million adults (46.1% of the adult population) are in need of upskilling or reskilling as they have «either low education, low digital skills, low cognitive skills or are medium- to high-educated at risk of skill loss and obsolescence because they work in elementary occupations». [32]



(*) EU-28+ = EU-28 plus Iceland and Norway.

Source: Cedefop calculation based on LFS 2016, CSIS 2015, OECD PIAAC 2012 and 2015.

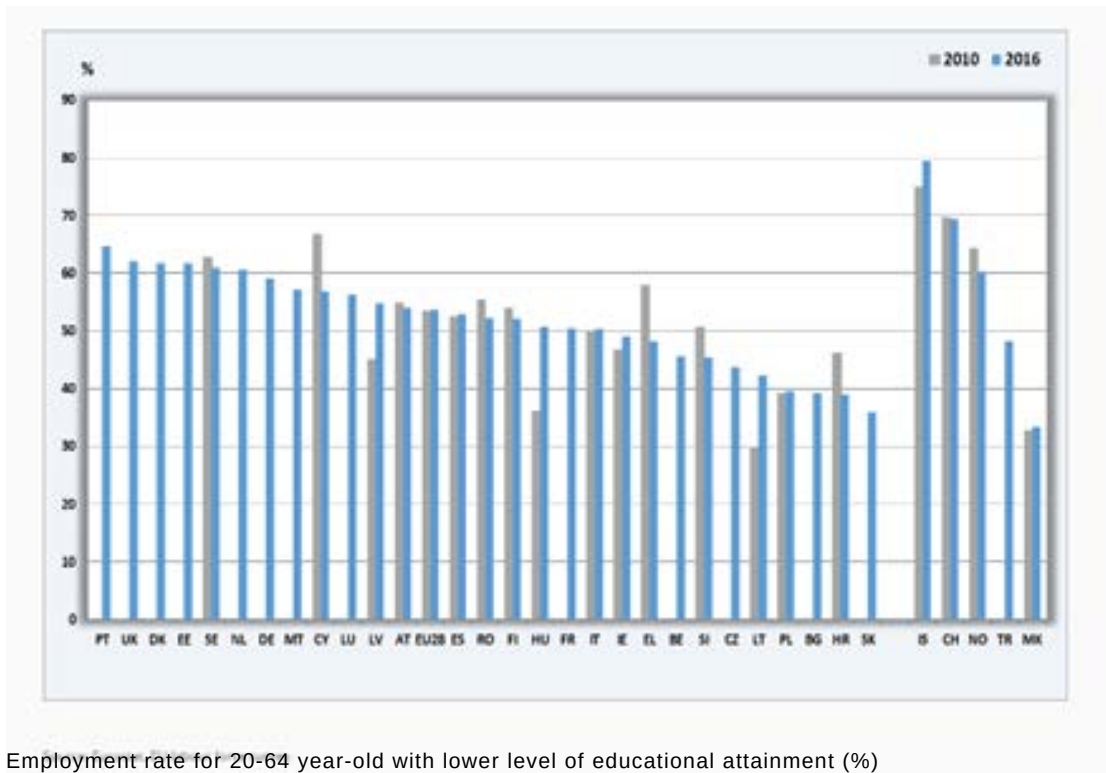
For growth and competitiveness, adult learning is crucial when it comes to:

- Changes in the structure of occupations, often requiring higher levels of skill;
- Changing ways of work (due to new technologies, for example) that call for constant updating of skills;
- The need to reduce levels of unemployment;
- Ageing societies in which individuals need to update their skills to stay in employment for longer.

The graphic below shows the percentage of the population aged 20-64 with a lower level of educational attainment who were employed. In 2016, the EU average employment rate for low-educated adults was 53.6%. Portugal had the highest employment rate for low-educated adults at 64.7%. The amount was lowest in Slovakia (35.9%).

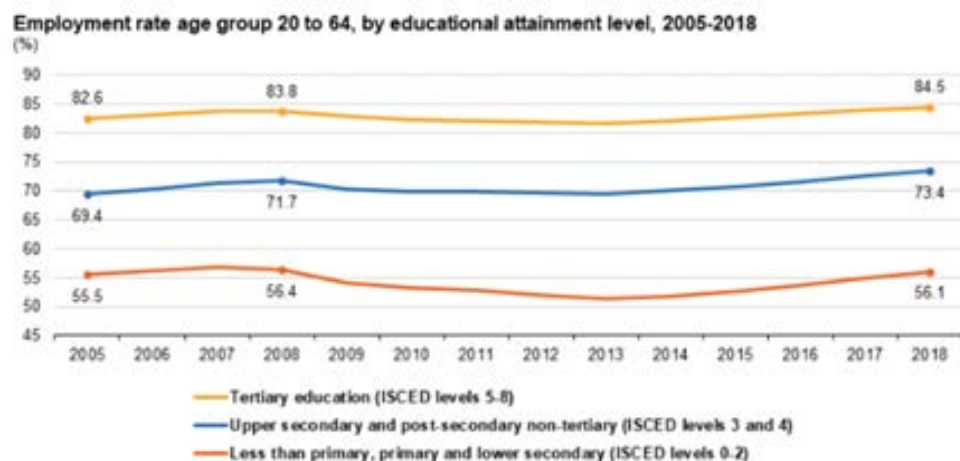
[31]4th Global Report on Adult Learning and education

[32]<https://jobmarketmonitor.com/2020/02/26/upskilling-and-reskilling-needs-in-europe-128-million-adults-or-46-1-of-the-adult-population-of-this-area/>



Employment rate for 20-64 year-old with lower level of educational attainment (%)

Educational attainment level is the main factor that influences employment rates. Employment rates are higher for people having at least upper-secondary education.[33] According to this graphic, more than half of those with at least primary or lower secondary education were employed (56%). The employment rate for people with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education was 73%. These results highlight the importance of education for employability. Without these qualifications and skills, they are at higher risk of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion.



Note: Break in time series in 2014 (switch from ISCED 1997 to ISCED 2011).
Source: Eurostat (online data code: lepr_wc120)

eurostat

[33]<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/pt/publications-and-resources/statistics-and-indicators/statistics-and-graphs/35-how-many-low-educated-adults-are-employed>

But a higher level of skills is not only a driver for competitiveness, innovation, and growth on the labour market but also fundamental for individuals' well-being and personal and educational paths.

«Adult learning benefits individuals, companies, and society. Adults that continue to learn, earn more, are more employable, enjoy better health, and are more active citizens. Adult learning improves companies' innovation performance, productivity, profitability, and workforce motivation. It helps to improve a country's economic competitiveness and growth.»[34]

Benefits of higher level of skills:



Source: Cedefop.

According to a European study on self-reported benefits [35], adult learning makes²⁹ people happier, healthier, and more self-confident. Learners participate more in society, tend to be more tolerant and better parents.

However, there are still many challenges to overcome to increase participation rates in Europe. As shown in the graphs below, the percentage of people participating in education and training is low in most European countries.

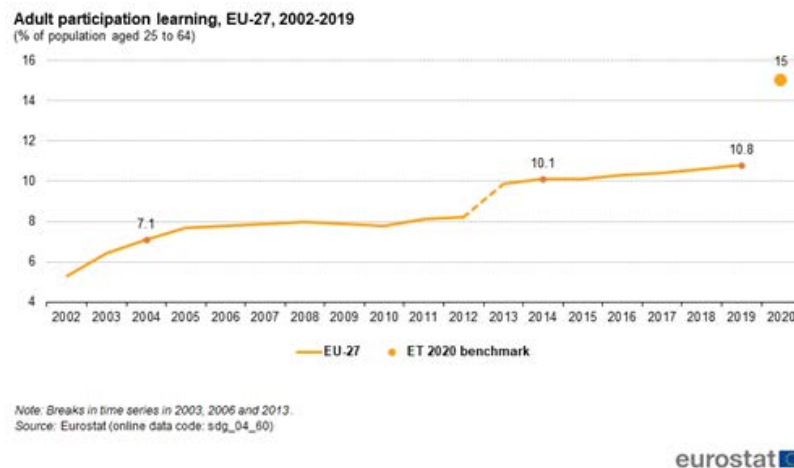


[34]<https://basicskills.eu/key-messages-of-the-et2020-working-group-on-adult-learning-2014-2015/>

[35]Benefits of Lifelong learning in Europe- Project Research Report, <http://www.bell-project.eu/>



The graph below instead show how the average in the EU is still far from the benchmark set for 2020 (15%).



The new benchmark set by the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience are even more ambitious and to be achieved they need strong political will by all the stakeholders involved.

Indicators (in %)	Objectives for 2025	Current level (latest year available)	Increase (in %)
Participation of adults aged 25-64 in learning during the last 12 months ⁵⁸	50%	38% (2016)	+32%
Participation of low-qualified adults 25-64 in learning during the last 12 months ⁵⁹	30%	18% (2016)	+67%
Share of unemployed adults aged 25-64 with a recent learning experience ⁶⁰	20%	11% (2019)	+82%
Share of adults aged 16-74 having at least basic digital skills ⁶¹	70%	56% (2019)	+25%

According to the Adult Education in Europe 2019 – A Civil Society View[36], the country reports from EAEA, the Upskilling Pathways has a mixed uptake: some of the members of the EAEA have reported that it formed the basis of most of their country's policy at present, while others noted that it was not being explicitly implemented at all.

[36]https://issuu.com/eaeapublications/docs/country_reports_2019_layout

6 - LEARNER VOICES

6.1 THE POWER OF LEARNER VOICES IN ADVOCACY

Using learner stories helps adult education organisations and providers to connect with a wide range of audiences, make research credible with real-life case studies, demonstrate the impact of the adult education sector.

One of the UP-AEPRO partners, the Learning & Work Institute, invites learners to speak at their annual Parliamentary Reception and other high-level events so that their voice is heard directly by politicians, policymakers, and other stakeholders. They also facilitate the link between media and learners so that they take part in press/media interviews. The EAEA Irish member, AONTAS, produces podcasts to share personal stories of people who returned to education as an adult learner[37] and collects many learners' life stories on their website[38].

The Slovenian Lifelong Learning Week

Since 1996, LLLW[39] has been paving the way for a profound understanding and implementation of the culture of lifelong learning in the country by attracting public attention to thousands of inspiring educational, promotional, information and guidance, as well as social and cultural events. The festival has grown into a movement which annually involves several hundreds of institutions, NGOs, interest groups and other stakeholders. At the national level, the LLW is coordinated by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE).

The Festival of Learning in England

The Festival of Learning is the biggest celebration of lifelong learning in England. Its mission is to highlight the benefits of learning and celebrate the achievements of adults who have used learning to transform their lives, to encourage everyone to embrace lifelong learning. Since its modest beginnings in 1992, Festival of Learning[40] has handed out a variety of learning awards to around 2000 inspiring winners. Learners' stories are broadcast on BBC, ITV, and Channel4. These anecdotes exposed the power of lifelong learning – that learning changes lives and helps people reach their full potential. The festival also helps decision-makers understand better how adult education could influence a whole range of social policies.

In few years, the festival spread to other countries in the UK. The Learning and Work Institute still coordinates it working in partnership with various organisations. The Awards are sponsored mainly by the Department of Education.

[37] <https://www.aontas.com/learner-voice/aontas-podcast>

[38] <https://www.aontas.com/learner-stories/>

[39] <https://llw.acs.si/about/>

[40] <https://www.festivaloflearning.org.uk/>

“

All my life, I hadn't been able to write. I became a skilled joiner (managing without writing skills) and then a school caretaker. I was doing the work of a site manager but needed literacy skills to apply for the site manager job. I joined a dyslexia study skills class where I learnt in an interactive way. I looked forward to going every week. My tutor was exceptional and I met other learners in similar situations to me. I joined a functional skills English class and was motivated to gain entry level 2 qualifications. I'd hoped to achieve qualifications and take on more responsibility at work and in the voluntary sector. This I have done, but I have changed my attitude to life as well. I'm more positive and rather than let life happen to me, I make things happen. I'm no longer letting life pass me by.

Stuart Ferriss, 2019 National Winner[41]

”

“

When my son was born I knew I needed to learn English to support him, to speak to the health visitor about his medical condition and later to support him with his own learning. I wanted to be able to go to the doctor without my husband's support, and open the door at home if someone knocked so I can see who is there and what they want. I started my learning journey in 2012 at Tameside ACE with ESOL Entry Level 1, and progressed to Functional Skills Level 1. This was a great achievement for me and once I was able to understand English I started maths and IT courses as well. Since then I have joined Tameside College and achieved my maths GCSE and Teaching Assistant Level 2 and 3. I now have a full time job as a teaching assistant.

”

Rubi Naz, 2020 national winner[42]

6.2 LEARNER VOICES IMPROVE THE LEARNING OFFER

Learner voice is about empowering learners by providing appropriate ways of listening to their concerns, interests, and needs in order to develop educational experiences better suited to those individuals (Walker and Logan 2008).

All learners should have a say in their learning. From setting regular consultations strategies to inviting them to committees or advisory boards, there are many possibilities to include learners in the management, organisation, and teaching of adult education providers. Adult education thus becomes more democratic and gets a better understanding of learners' needs[43].

[41] <https://www.festivaloflearning.org.uk/award-winners/stuart-ferriss/>

[42] <https://www.festivaloflearning.org.uk/award-winners/rubi-naz/>

[43] https://www.oed-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/oed_policy_recommendations_en.pdf

The National FET Learner Forum in Ireland

In Ireland, The National FET Learner Forum (NFLF)[44] began in 2016 as a one-day national event where learners could share their voice and reflect on ways to improve the Further Education and Training (FET) sector. Today the NFLF consists of a series of sixteen regional events organised in partnership with Education and Training Boards (ETBs) across Ireland.

At the NFLF, learners are provided with a safe space to voluntarily share their voices, ensure its methods and practices are inclusive and contain feedback structures that allow providers and AE organisations to respond to learner needs[45]. Power structures, even implicitly created, can pose a barrier[46].

6.3 INCLUDING LEARNER VOICES INTO POLICYMAKING

Taking the perspective of the learner and practice as a starting point in policymaking is as vital and beneficial as involving learners in the course design. Policies are more inclusive, easily implementable, and coherent with the population's real needs. Furthermore, including learner voices into policy design instead of adopting top-down regulations and procedures, fosters cooperation and coordination, which are crucial to ensure coherent pathways to the learners.

However, this is done very rarely by decision-makers who tend to include learner voices only in the monitoring and evaluation phase. A small number of countries have set targets in their national strategies or plans the attainment of which can be monitored either through information collected from adult learning providers or surveys of learners. As a consequence, it is often difficult to assess if policy actions are making a difference or if they are efficient[47].

The Adult Learning Labs in The Netherlands

The Adult Learning Labs are an initiative adopted by the Dutch government within the framework of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL). The Labs aimed to involve learners in a dialogue with the policymakers, to understand the main barrier they were facing in accessing learning opportunities. The final aim of this project was to improve the quality of basic skills education at the municipal level in the Netherlands. Participants in this dialogue were asked to identify gaps and together discuss means of filling these gaps. Developing complementary instruments and/or creating a new comprehensive quality assurance framework based on the literature review may result from this effort[40]. During the two year-project (2018-2019), they organised meetings across the country and national meet-up to present the results. As a result, over 100 learners were involved, including low-skilled and low-educated adults[48].

[44]<https://www.aontas.com/learner-voice/learner-forum>

[45]https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Adult-Learner-Journal/ALJ2019/Aontas_Adult_Learner_2019_Section_01.pdf

[46]<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/FUTL80/FUTL80.pdf>

[47]<file:///C:/Users/FRANCE~1/AppData/Local/Temp/KE0415182ENN.en.pdf>

[48]https://epuo.acs.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Compendium_2017_2019.pdf

7 - POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The UP-AEPRO partners and participants congratulate the European Commission on the Upskilling Pathways initiative and on the funding made available to increase basic skills in Europe. They acknowledge the efforts undertaken by many Member States in implementing the initiative both on a policy and practice level.

However, while Member States have adopted new strategies or refined their existing ones to increase upskilling and reskilling opportunities, several gaps persist in empowering people to engage in coherent and meaningful learning pathways.

The UP-AEPRO partners and participants identified as main challenges the difficulty of reaching out to potential learners and of removing the barriers that hinder their participation. They urge more actions for improved outreach and guidance strategies, sustainability measures as well as holistic policy approach as key areas to work on in the next future.

The key messages and recommendations that follow are the results of the discussions led throughout the whole project, as well as during the final project conference that took place online on the 20th of November 2020.

The UP-AEPRO partners and participants support the statement on the initiative published by the European Association of the Education of Adults in December 2018^[42], and they would like to call for policy intervention in the following areas:

1. Recognition of the importance of (non-formal) adult learning in bringing people into education;
2. Monitoring and analysis of existing barriers for potential learners;
3. Authorise flexibility and strengthen proximity of the learning offer;
4. Ensure information and guidance is available in all phases;
5. Assuming political responsibility for the design and implementation of coherent, holistic and sustainable policies;
6. Increase funding for and enhance (non-formal) adult education provision;
7. Support formal structures and informal opportunities for cooperation of providers;
8. Contribute to the promotion of basic/life skills learning opportunities and its wider benefits;
9. Create synergies with the business sector and social partners.

[41]https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/plf_upskilling_pathways_2020_netherlands_workshop.pdf

[42]<https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Upskilling-pathways-statement-Dec-2018.pdf>

1. RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF (NON-FORMAL) ADULT LEARNING IN BRINGING PEOPLE INTO EDUCATION



(Non-formal) Adult Learning and Education plays a pivotal role in achieving Europe's prosperity, and it is critical in promoting social cohesion, fostering basic and life skills as well as increasing the resilience of individuals and communities. However, it is under-funded and under-researched if compared with other educational sectors. Apart from some exceptions, the importance of Adult Education is not sufficiently recognised in Europe.

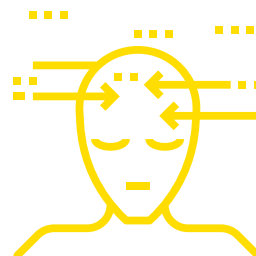
STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

Considering the ambitious strategies and goals, their implementation in national laws and practices, upskilling adults all over Europe is a huge undertaking."

"If we look at how the strategy is implemented in my country, it seems that the Upskilling Pathways initiative is (almost) all about upskilling the workforce."

"The main focus is only on formal education, but we need to cherish the non-formal dynamics promoted in the community, like associations, music groups, art groups, etc., and articulate them with formal services that need to be more flexible."

2. MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING BARRIERS FOR POTENTIAL LEARNERS



Analysing barriers that prevent disadvantaged groups from participating in learning is essential to design and implement inclusive policies. At the national level, a thorough analysis of the legal basis and financial tools can reveal built-in barriers which can then be removed[43]. To do so, the UP-AEPRO partners and participants call for more research, the creation of benchmarks, and the engagement of the learners into the design of AE policies and their implementation plans.

Targeted strategies should then be conceived to reach out to different (disadvantaged) groups and engage them in upskilling and reskilling opportunities. Local outreach centres, community-based associations, and other non-formal structures need to be provided with human and financial resources to strengthen their outreaching capacity.

[43]https://www.oed-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/oed_policy_recommendations_en.pdf

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

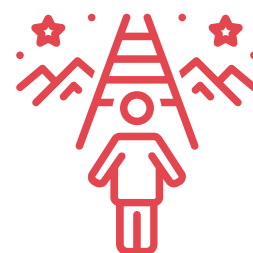
"The challenges are both on a systemic level (lack of outreach strategies, theoretical and inflexible curricula, few reskilling opportunities, insufficient screening methods) and on an individual level (negative perceptions about formal education, personal obstacles, etc.). For every group defined in the OECD study, there are different solutions and policy recommendations."

"Some adults do not want to go back to school as they perceived school when they were young. A focus on awareness of adults that it may not be the same as when they were in school as children, demystifying adult education pathways is important."

"In Greece, the distribution of wages and the lack of recognition towards skills are factors that demotivate low skilled individuals."

"Temporary employment after a particular learning programme also hinders successful upskilling. Enhanced working conditions and flexibility would maximize potentials and performances."

3. AUTHORISE FLEXIBILITY AND STRENGTHEN PROXIMITY OF THE LEARNING OFFER



Allowing flexibility of funding and curriculum design to providers is critical to foster the learner-centred approach of the learning offer and thus increase individuals' motivation to engage in upskilling and reskilling paths.

National and regional frameworks can be adopted to do so while ensuring coherence and quality at the systemic level. If providers are authorised to work with a curriculum which is truly responsive to learner needs and to the context in which it is taught, the participation rate of basic skills courses will increase and the dropout rate will decrease.

Tailored learning offers require adequate funding and educators who are trained to offer it. For this reason, the UP-AEPRO partners and participants call for the necessary legal basis and investment to foster this approach in all adult education institutions. According to the last Adult Education Survey (AES, 2016), and more specifically, by analysing the survey by the degree of urbanization, participation rates in cities are 5% higher than in towns and suburbs, and 5% to 10% higher than in rural areas. Since that is the average, in some European countries this gap is even larger, which is a huge problem, and action must be taken to address it. One reason that adults in rural areas have lower participation is the existence of significant barriers that make their participation difficult or even impossible, and the adult education providers lack of resources to provide what is needed for potential learners[44].

[44]<https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/EAEA-Outreach-and-Access-background-paper.pdf>

Communities are essential to promote increased participation of potential learners. Involving non-formal adult education institutions (and other community-based civil society organisations) in the further development of upskilling pathways is critical to increasing participation on a local level.

Some good examples have been already presented in this toolkit, as in Portugal, where partnership-based basic skills projects ensure outreach to the most vulnerable groups.

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

Setting up an individual learning path that reflects the participants' aims and aspirations not only does create a democratic atmosphere but it can also foster a sense of belonging bringing participants close to each other. In fact, negotiating significant learning aspects such as classroom practices, the teaching content and assessment methods may take one or even two sessions but it can actually help both the instructor and participants identify individual needs, possible obstacles or misconceptions. This way, participants can reflect and detect what they need to learn, why and how they can achieve this goal collaborating with their colleagues and an avid instructor who can pave the way."

"Focusing on digital skills, developing training in workplaces are also mentioned as ways to meet the challenges. The sad fact is that depending on where you live in Finland offers and possibilities for training differs."

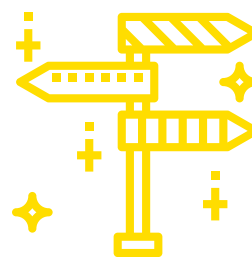
"Conciliate work, family and education is very important, especially for women: flexibility and accessibility is crucial."

"Regarding the private sector, some big companies in Portugal already have training departments, but the industrial reality of the country is a majority of small companies, so how to motivate workers to engage in LLL?"

"Diversity of the offer is an opportunity to answer to different contexts, realities and needs. But flexibility for and confidence in the professionals that work in various centres are needed."

"We need a local infrastructure, people who know the community and are local people themselves. Peer learners and local outreach centres also have a big role to play in outreach".

4. ENSURE INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE IN ALL PHASES



Adults need to be able to manage their individual paths in terms of learning, work and other activities. Career guidance for adults sets the prerequisites for conscious and meaningful choices in relation to career development and learning and enables adults to handle transitions and changes in their lives (NVL, 2020[45]). Information, guidance and support need to be accessible in all phases of learning. Learners need information about available opportunities based on outreach. For the learner to be able to make an informed choice based on needs, guidance should be available before entering a specific measure. It should also be provided during the process as means of support and motivation and after for making decisions about the next steps. As defined by OECD, career guidance includes a range of activities[46] and can be provided by various actors such as the teachers/trainer, frontline staff, career advisors and professionals, based on the situation and needs of the adult.

In a recent OECD research “Coordinating guidance and validation”[47], results revealed that cooperation and coordination between service providers gives more value to services provided to adults and that the competences of guidance staff can cover various parts of a larger spectrum based on needs. Many adults may need basic information about opportunities, content and processes which can be provided by various actors or through web-based material; others need support in the learning process and guidance linked to decision making and some may need more extensive professional counselling to overcome barriers. This notion of various needs is also supported in the GOAL project[48] where clients could be categorized into three broad groups reflecting their starting points and guidance needs.

Analysis of “Guidance in validation within the Nordic region”[49] revealed that guidance is in its core an integral part of lifelong learning as both policy areas share many similar aims (see table 2 in report).

Some good examples have been already presented in this toolkit, as in Iceland, where guidance is always present during the whole process of validation[50].

[45]<https://nvl.org/Portals/0/2020/vuxnas-laranda/resurser/nordic-definition-of-career-guidance-for-adults.pdf>

[46]<https://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/34050171.pdf>

[47]https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5575_en.pdf

[48]https://adultguidance.eu/images/Reports/GOAL_Final_cross-country_evaluation_report_-_Executive_Summary_FINAL.pdf

[49]https://nvl.org/Portals/0/DigArticle/13571/GuideInValalidation_web_2015_eng.pdf

[50]https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Iceland.pdf

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

"The guidance part of this strategy and its implementation is very important. How we as adult educators/people guiding other people work to break down the learning barriers for people who need upskilling. The guidance is not based on the deficits, but on the strengths. So we work on self-esteem and self-efficacy, based on significant activities related to life, not only work life, but other dimensions of life. People need to restore the confidence, the faith, the belief that they can learn and that education is for them."

"Feedback from the teacher to learners is important. It's too late to react when the course is finished. If learners haven't got feedback, they can't improve their learning outcomes in time. Therefore, it's good to give enough feedback and try to help learners to climb over upcoming difficulties in the learning process. Sometimes group work with sharing knowledge can be helpful."

"The challenge is to help unemployed people find themselves and their confidence on a learning pathway. Sometimes they do not have a clear picture of the pathway that they want to build for themselves, or they do not see a need for a pathway."

"Guidance is truly important but cannot stand alone; it depends on the learner's surroundings and institutions that can provide the learning needed. So systemic barriers are obvious, but also how to implement the strategy on a person to person level seems difficult. The amount of guidance that is offered to unemployed people is of very varying length and content, this is a key issue."

"Adult education needs to be joined up with the many services that address social, economic, health and political inequalities that people are experiencing not just before the Covid-19 crisis but also in this time of pandemic and post-pandemic".

5. ASSUMING POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COHERENT, HOLISTIC AND SUSTAINABLE POLICIES



The responsibility for adult learning policy is often divided across several ministries and agencies (e.g. education, training, migration, justice) and several levels of policymaking (municipal, regional, national). At the same time, the provision of adult education is delivered by a wide range of stakeholders, from the public to private sector as well from profit and no-profit organisations, which often leads to a worrying fragmentation of the field. The lack of coordination and cooperation between these many parties often undermines the effectiveness of adult learning policies (and their efficient and sustainable implementation). That is also true for the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

Effective AE policies require horizontal and vertical collaboration. “There is a need for more vertical cooperation– from the EU level to the local level and the other way round.”[51]

Cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders involved in adult education should encompass AE civil society and providers. Understanding the needs of the learners as well as the challenges of the field, AE civil society and providers are essential in the policy design process and implementation. Thus, it is crucial to include them from the early stages of any AE policies.

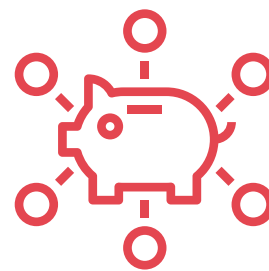
STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

“In Finland, guidance opportunities to upskilling are limited because the individual carries a lot of responsibility for learning, and some have more access to learning than others (highly educated and those in work).”

“Relevant concerns are on politics and professional responsibility, to promote adequate ways of engaging people into lifelong learning activities.”

[51] Said Camilla Winter, from EARLALL, at the 2020 EAEA Annual conference

6. INCREASE FUNDING FOR AND ENHANCE (NON-FORMAL) ADULT EDUCATION PROVISION



Adult education, according to a European study on self-reported benefits of Lifelong learning, makes people happier, healthier, and more self-confident. Learners participate more in society, tend to be more to-learn and better parents[52]. According to a survey recently launched by CEDEFOP[53], people agree that learning brings them real benefits for their work and personal development. Investment in adult education should be valued in light of all the above-mentioned long-term benefits.

Increased and continuous funding is crucial to ensure the sustainability of the work of adult education organisations and providers and their ability to innovate. Many providers express the need for multi-annual core funding, which would allow them to plan more effectively for their long-term strategies.

In many countries in Europe, adult education staff and trainers have short-term contracts or are free-lancers. While this might bring advantages (e.g. specialists from various fields that bring their expertise to adult education or teachers/professors that teach an evening class), it does mean that many trainers are paid very little to keep the costs of these measures low[54]. Volunteers also regularly work in adult education.

Professional developments for the AE staff is needed. High-quality education and in-service training opportunities should be guaranteed regardless of the trainers' working conditions.

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

“Something that is often overlooked is the “competition vs. cooperation” issue. Working in collaboration is crucial: the financing of training offers should promote a logic of cooperation rather than competitiveness between the structures and sustainability of the policies, financial support, professionals and continuous training, specific for adult educators.”

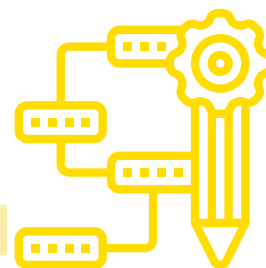
“In Portugal, we need sustainability of the policies, financial support, and professionals. The financing of training offers should promote a logic of collaboration rather than competitiveness between structures.”

[52] Benefits of Lifelong Learning in Europe: Main Results of the BeLL- Project Research Report, http://www.bell-project.eu/cms/?page_id=10

[53] <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/governments-should-prioritise-investment-learning-adults-new-edefop-survey-says>

[54] https://www.oed-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/oed_policy_recommendations_en.pdf

7. SUPPORT FORMAL STRUCTURES AND INFORMAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION OF PROVIDERS



Cooperation can support outreach to those that do not participate in learning and drive learner-centred policy and practice. Wide cooperation at the regional and local level play a key role in bringing information about learning opportunities directly to the learner, ultimately increasing participation rates. Partnerships are also key in bringing innovation, sharing best practices and supporting professionalization of adult educators. While in some cases the transferability of new practices is not immediate or requires careful consideration of the national or local context, transnational cooperation can help organisations get a wider perspective, increase their confidence, or discover that they are not alone in facing a particular problem[55].

In this regard, the example of The Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL), provided in the principles' chapter, shows how beneficial is cross-border and cross-sectorial cooperation among validation providers, guidance counsellors, and educators.

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

“Cooperation is necessary, both on horizontal and vertical levels, between different stakeholders.”

“Existing practitioners and trainers' network with other colleagues are useful to exchange information and ideas, but some aspects ought to be improved.”

“Cooperation at the local level (e.g. with municipalities) is fundamental for outreach”

[55]https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Policy-paper-on-partnerships-and-cooperations_final.pdf

8. CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROMOTION OF BASIC/LIFE SKILLS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND ITS WIDER BENEFITS



Fragmented information about adult learning opportunities is still a problem and impacts the participation of many potential learners. Strategies of promotion are needed to reach out to potential learners and engage them in learning[56].

At the same time, more needs to be done in sensitise the general public about the lack of basic skills in Europe.

Effective outreach strategies can increase awareness of the basic skills deficit, and increase individuals' motivation to improve their skills. For many adults, poor basic skills are a source of embarrassment and even shame. There is evidence that media campaigns can reduce the sense of taboo surrounding poor basic skills while informing the general population about the true extent of the problem[57].

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

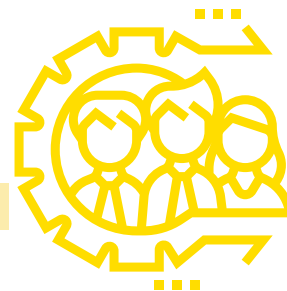
"In Finland, the discussion focused on how to make participation as easy as possible. Information and guiding in several ways and co-operation with the third sector associations and communities as well as social services in municipalities can help to get information for these target groups."

"Since the Qualifica Centres are highly diverse types of providers (e.g. private companies, schools, public unemployment centres), the Portuguese national agency invested in advertising the learning offer via flyers, TV, radio, etc. to facilitate the choice of potential learners".

[56]Best practices on how to organise awareness raising activities can be found on the ARALE website: <https://eaea.org/project/awareness-raising-for-adult-learning-and-education-arale/?pid=11336>

[57]https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/library/reports/policy-provision-adult-learning_en.pdf

9. CREATE SYNERGIES WITH THE BUSINESS SECTOR AND SOCIAL PARTNERS



Another essential issue in implementing the Upskilling Pathways initiative in the European Member States is the cooperation of the education and business sectors. On the one hand, employers need to be convinced of the benefits of basic skills learning opportunities so that they encourage employees to enrol in an upskilling or reskilling pathway. That is particularly difficult for employers of small companies who tend to be reluctant to offer learning opportunities to their workforce.

On the other hand, workers might not be motivated to learn because they are employed.

Professional development and job-related training are key factors that can motivate adults to return to learning. Ensuring that employers invest in adult learning is essential for increasing both the range of opportunities available and the number of employees taking part in learning[58].

Trade unions might be a precious ally in this and thus should be involved.

Awareness raising campaigns might be necessary to reach out to companies and employees and convince them of the benefits of having a more skilled and qualified workforce.

Policymakers could facilitate the creation of synergies among providers, business representatives, and trade unions backing up the system.

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

“In England, the Government has announced plans to end the Union Learning Fund, even though the evidence strongly supports the role of unions in engaging adults in learning[59]. This is very unfortunate since many learners entered adult education for the first time through Union Learning and many low-paid workers improved their literacy and numeracy skills through the opportunities they provided”.

[58]https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/towards_more_effective_adult_learning_policies.pdf

[59]<https://learningandwork.org.uk/news-and-policy/rethink-cut-to-union-learning-fund-and-work-with-unions-to-level-up-skills-after-coronavirus/>

8 - GLOSSARY

Adult Education

Adult education is all purposeful learning activities, whether formal, non-formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis by people considered adults in their respective countries with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences. The intention or aim to learn is the critical point that distinguishes these activities from non-learning activities, such as cultural or sporting activities.

Individuals pursue adult learning for a variety of reasons: to enhance their employment prospects, to develop personally or professionally and to obtain transferrable skills, such as critical thinking. Adult learning also contributes to improving social cohesion and promotes active citizenship. Increasingly, individuals must rely on continuous professional development to remain competitive on the labour market[60].

Career guidance

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services. Source: OECD (2004), *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, Paris.

Certification of learning outcomes

The process of formally validating knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired by an individual, following a standard assessment procedure. Certificates or diplomas are issued by accredited awarding bodies. Source: Cedefop, 2008.

Civil society

A 'third sector' of society beside the State and the market, embracing institutions, groups and associations (either structured or informal), which may act as mediator between citizens and public authorities. Source: Cedefop, 2001 in European Commission.

[60]https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/eu-policy-in-the-field-of-adult-learning_en

Curriculum

The set of courses and their contents offered by an institution such as a school, college or university, and partially or entirely determined by an external body.

Formal learning

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (such as in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification. Source: Cedefop, 2008.

Formal learning is always organised and structured, and has learning objectives. From the learner's standpoint, it is always intentional: i.e. the learner's explicit objective is to gain knowledge, skills and/or competences. Typical examples are learning that takes place within the initial education and training system or workplace training arranged by the employer. One can also speak about formal education and/or training or, more accurately speaking, education and/or training in a formal setting^[61].

Guidance and counselling/information, advice and guidance (IAG)

Range of activities designed to help individuals to take educational, vocational or personal decisions and to carry them out before and after they enter the labour market. Guidance and counselling may include:

- Counselling (personal or career development, educational guidance);
- Assessment (psychological or competence/performance-related);
- Information on learning and labour market opportunities and career management;
- Consultation with peers, relatives or educators;
- Vocational preparation (pinpointing skills/competences and experience for job-seeking);
- Referrals (to learning and career specialists).

Guidance and counselling can be provided at schools, training centres, job centres, the workplace, the community or in other settings. Source: Cedefop, 2008.

Governance

It is the application of policy, or a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services.

[61]<http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm>

Informal learning

Informal learning takes place outside schools and colleges and arises from the learner's involvement in activities that are not undertaken with a learning purpose in mind. Informal learning is involuntary and an inescapable part of daily life; for that reason, it is sometimes called experiential learning. Learning that is formal or non-formal is partly intentional and partly incidental: when we consciously pursue any learning target we cannot help learning things that are not part of that target. Informal learning, however, is exclusively incidental.

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective.

Informal learning outcomes may be validated and certified. Informal learning is also referred to as experiential or incidental/random learning. Source: Cedefop, 2008.

Learner-centred approach

Learner centred teaching is an approach that places the learner at the centre of the learning. This means that the learner or student is responsible for learning while the tutor is responsible for facilitating the learning. This is also known as student-centred learning.

Literacy

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.

Literacy is understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written text to participate in the society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential.[62] (It measures adults' proficiency in key information-processing skills - literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments)

Low-skilled adults

Adults with low educational levels, namely those whose highest qualification is at lower secondary level (ISCED 0-2), which means they have not completed high-school or equivalent, or Adults with low cognitive skill levels, namely those who score at proficiency level 1 or below in the literacy and/or numeracy dimension of the OECD survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC).

[62] OECD: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)

These are adults who can at most complete very simple reading tasks, such as read brief texts on familiar topics, and mathematical tasks, such as one-step or simple processes involving counting, sorting, basic arithmetic operations and understanding simple percentages. In addition, we recognise that low digital skills are an obstacle to adults' societal and economic participation and constitute an additional dimension of low skills. Using this definition, we see that more than one in five adults in the OECD has low skills. 22% of adults across OECD countries have low educational levels and even more adults have low cognitive skills. On average 26.3% of adults are at most able to complete some very basic reading and/or mathematical tasks in those countries for which data are available. Enabling them to up-skill for a changing world of work is a sizeable challenge. It is important to note that many adults with low skills are anything but 'low skilled': they may have low literacy and numeracy levels, but at the same time possess a range of other valuable skills such as the ability to drive different vehicles or care for customers. Equally, adults may have low qualification levels, but may have gained skills through years of work-experience that are equivalent to those associated with formal qualifications. (resource: OECD (2019), Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning[63].

This expression is usually based on two sources of data: educational outcomes and/or standardised assessments of reading and numeracy and so it recognises only a very narrow set of skills. But we know that no adult lacks skills, but that certain skills (usually those that are easy to measure), are more valued than others in policy rhetoric: it is just short-hand and masks the complexity of the lives and abilities of adults. Source: UNESCO, 2017

Despite this, the term is being used in this toolkit – not with an offensive purpose - but to talk about those who are at risk of social exclusion or excluded from the labour market.

Low-qualified adults

Having qualifications at level 1 of the European qualifications framework (EQF) for lifelong learning, that is: basic general knowledge, basic skills required to carry out simple tasks, and competence to work or study under direct supervision in a structured context[64].

Non-formal learning

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification. Source: Cedefop, 2003.

[63]www.oecd.org/employment/emp/engaging-low-skilled-adults-2019.pdf

[64]<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/glossary/low-qualified>

Outreach

Outreach is a process whereby people who would not normally use adult education are contacted in non-institutional settings and become involved in attending and eventually in jointly planning and controlling activities, schemes and courses relevant to their circumstances and needs.” (Kevin Ward, Replan Review 1, August 1986)

Like a number of the terms used in post-compulsory education, the word “outreach” tends to be used rather loosely. There is no single and universally accepted definition. While the central connotation is to go outside a centre or institution (a staff activity), a number of other meanings have accrued to the word: to make people in different locations or groups aware of what a provider can offer (a marketing or recruitment strategy); to mount learning programmes in community locations (a delivery mechanism); to liaise and make contact with community organisations and groups (a networking process); to work in an informal and participative way with people outside a centre or institution (a particular approach or way of working), to develop new learning programmes in response to identified needs (curriculum development)[65].

Portfolio

The portfolio is an assessment tool. It is a compilation of materials that exemplifies the beliefs, skills, qualifications, education, training and experiences of the learner. It provides a description of life experience, identification of the most significant learning moments, critical reflection on the life pathway and planning the future actions.

Reskilling

The process of learning new skills so you can do a different job, or of training people to do a different job[66].

Skill

Ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Source: Cedefop; European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2008.

Skills-assessment

A skills assessment is an evaluation of an individual’s ability to perform a specific skill or set of skills. Usually, it is an evaluation of skills specific to a job or role. Ideally, the assessment captures the level of proficiency for each skill, so you know which participants are new to a skill and which have mastered it.

[65]<https://www.oed-network.eu/>

[66]<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/reskilling>

Tailored learning pathways

Establishing an individual learning plan, which outlines personalised learning objectives. This refers to the content of the learning and the way it is delivered, as well as any [...] means that people can be given a tailored learning experience. [...] initial assessment can help to ensure that the learning programme offered meets the needs of the individual in terms of both content and learning styles. Source: CEDEFOP

Upskilling

Short-term targeted training typically provided following initial education and training, and aimed at supplementing, improving or updating knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired during previous training[67].

Validation of learning outcomes

Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification. Validation consists of four distinct phases:

- Identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual;
- Documentation to make visible the individual's experiences;
- Formal assessment of these experiences; and
- Certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification.

Source: Cedefop, 2008; Council of the European Union, 2012.

Validation of prior learning

Validation or the “validation of non-formal and informal learning” (VNFIL) is defined at EU level as the process of the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of competences (from Council recommendation).

Another definition: Prior learning comprises all the competence a person has acquired through paid or unpaid work, in-service training, continuing education, leisure activities in addition to the competence documented through basic education and training[68].

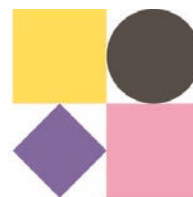
[67]<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/glossary/upskilling>

[68]<https://www.nokut.no/en/foreign-education/validation-of-prior-learning/>

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