



STATE-OF-PLAY REPORT

BASIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

MARCH 2021



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Publisher: European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

Year of publication: 2021

Layout and Editing: European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with more than 120 member organisations in 43 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide. EAEA promotes adult learning and access to and participation in non-formal adult education for all; particularly for groups that are currently underrepresented.



This publication has been produced in the framework of the BLUESS project: Blueprint for basic skills development in Slovakia, funded by the EaSi programme and coordinated by the State Vocational Education Institute SIOV.

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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1 Introduction

This report provides an overview of research concerning current developments in the area of basic skills of adults (i.e. upskilling and reskilling of adult population in literacy, numeracy and digital skills) in selected countries, in the European Union and beyond. More specifically, an international perspective will provide an insight into the ongoing practices concerning upskilling of the adults having at best lower secondary education attained (ISCED¹ 0-2). In other words, the report will encompass practices and policy initiatives in basic skills development concerning adults with primary, less than primary, and lower secondary education in the selected countries.

The report moreover depicts civil society perspective on adult learning. European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) underlines the significance of adult education in enhancing people's opportunities in life, while simultaneously providing conditions for developing fairer societies as well as more economic growth². EAEA brings together 124 members in 43 European countries, and the information included below is predominantly based on regular consultations with members on the topic of basic skills provision, and their feedback on the implementation of European policy initiatives such as Upskilling Pathways.

The present document has been drafted for the purpose of BLUESS: Blueprint for basic skills development in Slovakia, a project funded by the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) between 2019 and 2021.

1.1 Basic skills in the Economy 4.0 - European perspective

Basic skills of adults have been a frequent topic of discussion amongst various policymakers, educators and employers over the course of the recent years. Our society is facing challenges such as globalisation, climate change, digitalisation and an aging population in a rapidly changing world. Hereby, skills development is paramount in developing balance and cohesiveness in overcoming the aforementioned challenges. Skills insufficiency therefore evidently has a significant impact on our societies. Low-educated individuals are less likely to participate and have a positive role in public life³. Citizens lacking literacy skills moreover face obstacles interacting with written information in daily life, at home, work and in the community. Consequently, adults encounter challenges in accessing healthcare services, alongside having limited chances to actively participate in society. Lack of numeracy and digital skills affects individuals' financial capabilities and comprehension of messages received via media. Ultimately, equally impacted are individuals' chances of accessing the labour market⁴.

¹ International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/eag-2015-5-en.pdf?expires=1582643113&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=1DFFD7E568BF305D6795976175FCB06B>

² Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century: The Power and Joy of Learning, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Discrepancies between the labour market and skills in the adult population represent a significant obstacle for both employers and employees. Indeed, the European Commission's Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2018 review⁵ emphasizes the rapid technological change and, *inter alia*, its effect on the world of work, stating that upskilling of the European labour force is pivotal in bridging the gaps and avoiding the risk of unemployment. In addition, it was remarked that concerns over the loss of low-skilled jobs prevail.

The World Economic Forum's report on the future of jobs⁶ from 2018 found that approximately 50% of companies envisage some reduction in their full-time workforce by 2022 due to automation, i.e. it is expected that by 2022, 62% of organisation's information and data processing, including the information search and transmission tasks will be performed by machines compared to 46% in 2018. Furthermore, by 2022 no less than 54% of all employees will require significant re-skilling and upskilling. This corresponds to the implications of the Employment and Social Development in Europe 2018 review⁷ whereas the importance of upskilling and re-skilling of workers to avoid the risk of income poverty was emphasized. In addition, lifelong learning was suggested as a solution in enhancing the opportunities and addressing the issues of adults from disadvantaged backgrounds with low-skill levels and those working in low-skilled jobs, as their participation in education and training is somewhat scarcely observed across the EU.

According to the European Commission's Education and Training Monitor 2019⁸, the European Union target for average participation of adults in lifelong learning across the EU was 15% by 2020. However, it was stated that the average participation of adults aged 25-64 in the EU is at 11.1%, thus indicating there is still space for improvement. Evidently, despite having more young people attaining tertiary education levels (exceeding the EU's target of 40%), the latest OECD's PISA⁹ results (2018) indicate that a significant number of 15-year old Europeans scored insufficiently in reading, mathematics, and science. More specifically, 21.7% of pupils scored insufficiently in reading, 22.4% in mathematics, and 21.6% in science¹⁰, it meaning that on average, one out of five pupils in the EU is regarded as

⁵ Employment and Social Development in Europe, European Commission, 2018
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9150>

⁶ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2018.pdf

⁷ Employment and Social Development in Europe, European Commission, 2018

⁸ Education and Training Monitor, European Commission, 2019
<https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-1-2019-education-and-training-monitor.pdf>

⁹ PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

¹⁰ PISA 2018 and the EU - Striving for social fairness through education (research note), European Commission, 2019. https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/pisa-2018-eu_1.pdf

underachiever¹¹. It is important to note that a rising trend in decrease of students' performance has been observed compared to the PISA survey results from 2015 and 2012¹².

The European Commission's Employment and Social Development review for 2018¹³ indicated that the lower the educational attainment, the lower are the chances of employability. In addition, it was maintained that the level of parents' education significantly impacts the level on their children's education attainment, which is aligned with the OECD's PIAAC¹⁴ study findings (2012 or 2015)¹⁵. Moreover, findings from the PISA report for 2018¹⁶ indicate that disadvantaged students were less likely to achieve the minimum levels of proficiency in reading compared to their peers. Countries where the link between students' performance and their socio-economic background was particularly strong included Belarus, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Peru, the Philippines, Romania, and the Slovak Republic. Furthermore, it was stated that in some of the aforementioned countries, including Slovakia, disadvantaged students were placed in specific schools, hence interventions targeting those schools were recommended.

1.2 The scope of low-skilled adults in the EU

As stated in the Cedefop report¹⁷ on upskilling and reskilling of adult population, for the purposes of finding the scope of low-skilled adults, including the identification of groups of adults most at risk, a thorough analysis of skills assessment surveys concerning adults' skills aged between 25 and 64 in the EU-28 Member States, Iceland and Norway (EU-28+) was conducted.

¹¹ Underachieving pupils are those who perform below the minimum level necessary to participate successfully in society. Failing to meet this basic proficiency level lowers a pupil's future chances both on a personal and professional level. https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/pisa-2018-eu_1.pdf

¹² PISA 2015: EU performance and initial conclusions regarding education policies in Europe, European Commission, 2016
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312176108_PISA_2015_EU_performance_and_initial_concl](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312176108_PISA_2015_EU_performance_and_initial_conclusions_regarding_education_policies_in_Europe)
[usions_regarding_education_policies_in_Europe](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312176108_PISA_2015_EU_performance_and_initial_concl)

¹³ Employment and Social Development in Europe, 2018, European Commission.
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9150>

¹⁴ The OCED-PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) is a programme of assessment and analysis of adult skills. The Survey of Adult Skills conducted as part of PIAAC measures adults' proficiency in cognitive skills (literacy and numeracy) and problem solving in technology-rich environments. PIAAC covers 21 countries of the EU-28+: 18 surveyed in round 1 (2012): AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, NL, NO, PL, SE, SK, UK; and three surveyed in round 2 (2015): EL, LT, SI. No data in proficiency in problem-solving in technology-rich environments are available for ES, FR, CY and IT. <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/> Austria, Belgium-FL, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, UK, Hungary is currently doing the survey.

¹⁵ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/eag-2017-10-en.pdf?expires=1582632845&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=F2E46735BF2706713470892665CE922A>

¹⁶ [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PD](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf)
[F.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf)

¹⁷ Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways, Cedefop, 2020
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3081_en.pdf

As a result, four sets of low-skilled adults were identified: adults with low education¹⁸, adults with medium-high education working in elementary occupations¹⁹, adults with low digital skills²⁰, among those which have medium-high education, who are not employed in a manual job, and adults with low cognitive skills (low literacy and/or low numeracy²¹, among those who have medium-high education, who are not working in an elementary occupation and have already used computer. According to the findings, 3.3% of the adult population in the EU-28+ are at risk of skills loss or obsolescence. Countries with a high share of high-educated adults such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia are nevertheless at risk of skill loss and/or obsolescence while simultaneously being at risk of overqualification²².

As of 2017, 61 million adults aged between 25 and 64 have completed their formal education only up to the upper secondary level²³. Moreover, according to the Cedefop's report²⁴, the number of adults in the EU-28+ with potential for upskilling and reskilling amounts to a staggering 128 million. The potential for upskilling and reskilling emerges from their low education, low digital skills, low cognitive skills or are medium-to-high educated at risk of skill loss or obsolescence, because they work in elementary occupations. Unemployed adult population is at risk of absolute skill deficiency, particularly older unemployed adults. In contrast to adults, the younger population is less prone to exhibit digital skill insufficiency. Conversely, younger adults out of the labour force tend to have a lower level of digital skills than older unemployed adults. Moreover, adults out of the labour force are more likely to have low education attainment compared to the overall adult population. In Slovakia, the prevalence of older adults out of the labour force amounts to 25% of the total adult population with low education. In addition, the possibility of younger adults out of the labour force in Slovakia having low cognitive skills is twice as high compared to the total adult population in the country. From the European perspective, employed adults are at lower risk of skill loss somewhat, although digital skills deficiency is prevalent among adult population, particularly in individuals aged between 55 to 64²⁵.

¹⁸ Low education refers to people who have successfully completed at most ISCED levels 0-2 or ISCED 3c short programmes lasting less than two years.

¹⁹ Adults with medium and high educational attainment levels (ISCED 3 to 8) working in elementary occupations (ISCO 08 group 9).

²⁰ Refers to people with low use of the internet or below basic digital skills.

²¹ Low literacy or numeracy skills are defined as PIAAC scores lower than 226 points (i.e. at most level 1 on the proficiency scale ranging from below level 1 to level 5 of OECD-PIAAC).

²² Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways. Volume 1: adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling, Cedefop, 2020
of the European Union. Cedefop reference series; No 112. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/475393>

²³ Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults. Taking stock of implementation measures, European Commission, 2019

²⁴ Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways. Volume 1: adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling, Cedefop reference series; No 112, 2020
<http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/475393>

²⁵ Ibid.

1.3 Defining challenges in basic skills development of adults in Europe

According to the Cedefop report²⁶ on the implementation of Upskilling Pathways initiative, variances were observed in measuring adult participation in education and training across the EU²⁷. The findings show that the prevalence of low-skilled adults participating in education and training remains scarce²⁸, which coincides with previously mentioned implications made in the European Commission's Employment and Social Development in Europe 2018 review²⁹, indicating that more efforts are required in implementing the Upskilling Pathways initiative. Moreover, considerable differences were observed in terms of participation in formal and non-formal education. The Cedefop report suggests that thorough analysis and classification concerning the low-skilled adults is required, hence encompassing the adult population with obsolete skills and mismatched workers. The conclusions were based on the fact that low-skilled adult population is rather diverse, whereby a more detailed approach is required in determining the causes concerning low skills for the purposes of enabling tailor-made approach in meeting the needs of all adult learners in need³⁰. In addition, literature finds that coherence in terminology regarding categorisation of skills and abilities is required.³¹

1.4 Upskilling Pathways: new opportunities for adults

Improving people's skills is one of the main priorities of the European Union, as various policies specify the need for upskilling the adult population. As part of the Skills Agenda for Europe³², the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults³³ was adopted in December 2016. Its objectives aim to enhance basic skills in the adult population in the EU, thus providing opportunities for adults and help them acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and/or to acquire a broader set of skills by progressing towards an upper secondary qualification or equivalent³⁴ (level 3 or 4 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)³⁵.

²⁶ Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways. Volume 1: Adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling, Cedefop reference series; No 112, 2020
<http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/475393>

²⁷ in Austria, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, participation rates are near or above 60%, while in Greece and Romania they are well below 20% (16.7% and 7%, respectively).

²⁸ On average in the EU-28, participation of low-educated adults in education and training is 47% lower than the average rate; in Greece, Croatia, Poland and Romania it is about 80% lower.

²⁹ Employment and Social Development in Europe, 2018, European Commission.

³⁰ Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways. Volume 1: Adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling, Cedefop reference series; No 112, 2020
<http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/475393>

³¹ L. Kureková, Demand for low- and medium-skilled workers across Europe: between formal qualifications and non-cognitive skills. NEUJOBS working paper; No 4.3.3, 2013
http://biblioteka-krk.ibe.edu.pl/opac_css/doc_num.php?explnum_id=592

³² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223>

³³ Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, 2016 [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)

³⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1224>

³⁵ European Qualifications Framework.
https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f%5b0%5d=im_field_entity_type%3A97

The Recommendation contributes to the UN Sustainable Goal 4 (SDG4)³⁶ which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. Besides, some principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights³⁷, such as provision of the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning, including equal opportunities for underrepresented groups and access to the labour market reflect the objectives of the Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways. In addition, one of the objectives of the European Education Area is to improve education, training and lifelong learning by 2025³⁸. Similarly, the European Agenda for Adult Learning³⁹ coincides with the Upskilling Pathways initiative in its support for the Europe 2020 Strategy goals⁴⁰, mainly in terms of enabling low-skilled adults' and older workers' active participation in society and labour market. Furthermore, one of the EU objectives is to ensure that the competences required to engage in further learning and the labour market are acquired and recognised throughout general, vocational, higher and adult education and to develop a common language and operational tool for education/training and work, as it is outlined within the European Skills, Competences and Occupations framework (ESCO)⁴¹.

In implementing the Upskilling Pathways initiative it is essential to consider the three focal steps stated in the Recommendation⁴², i.e. skills assessment⁴³, provision of a tailored, flexible learning offer⁴⁴, and validation and recognition of skills acquired⁴⁵. Moreover, outreach, guidance, and support measures are pivotal in implementing the initiative successfully⁴⁶.

The European Commission's report⁴⁷ on the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways indicated that 34% of low-qualified people are at risk of poverty, while the percentage of high-qualified people amounts to less than 11%. However, it was noted that the differences between low-qualified and high-qualified people at risk of poverty vary amongst Member States of the EU, e.g. in the Netherlands the

³⁶ Sustainable Development Goal 4 <https://sdg4education2030.org/the-goal>

³⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

³⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0673&from=EN>

³⁹ Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, 2011 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011G1220\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011G1220(01)&from=EN)

⁴⁰ Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, European Commission, 2010 <https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

⁴¹ ESCO: European Skills/Competences, Occupations and Qualifications, European Commission, 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

⁴² [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)

⁴³ Offer provision for adults within the priority target groups the opportunity to undergo an assessment, e.g. a skills audit, to identify existing skills and upskilling needs.

⁴⁴ Provision of an offer of education and training meeting the needs identified by the skills assessment. For migrants from third countries, as appropriate, opportunities for language learning and preparation for training.

⁴⁵ Validation of non-formal and informal learning to assess and certify the knowledge, skills and competences acquired, including learning at work, and encourage their certification towards a qualification, in accordance with national qualifications frameworks and systems

⁴⁶ Implementation of outreach measures that include raising awareness on the benefits of upskilling, provision of guidance and/or mentoring services to support learners through all steps of the upskilling process; initial training and continuous professional development of staff engaged in the delivery of upskilling pathways, in particular teaching professionals.

⁴⁷ Implementation report on upskilling pathways: staff working document, 2019, European Commission

difference is approximately at 10%, while in Bulgaria 70% of low-qualified people are at risk of poverty, including the 16% of adult population with high qualifications. Alongside the differences in levels of educational attainment regarding the population at risk of poverty among the Member States, variance in prevalence of jobs at risk due to automation is equally significant. The OECD's study on *Automation, skills use and training*⁴⁸ found that jobs at risk due to automation are routine jobs with low skill and education requirements. Furthermore, in the context of Slovakia, it is estimated that 33% of jobs are at risk, while in Norway, the percentage of jobs at risk amounts to 6%. Nonetheless, it was emphasized that probability of automation is not correlated with the prevalence of jobs at risk due to automation.

2. Improving basic skills in adulthood: analysis of national approaches and tools for skills assessment in selected countries

Austria

Skills assessment and flexible learning offer

The Austrian government recently introduced policies in addressing basic skills in adults. The new policies entail improving digital skills in enterprise and in the adult education sector. The government currently is in the process of developing learning offers focused on upskilling⁴⁹.

Adult Education institutions that are funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung), such as Adult Education Centres (Volkshochschulen), Vocational Training Institutes (Berufsförderungsinstitute), Institutes for Economic Promotion of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitute), Austrian Bildungshäuser, confessional institutions and a range of other regional non-profit Adult Education institutions, often also offer courses that enable individuals to catch up on educational qualifications in the context of "Second Chance Education"⁵⁰. During their professional life, many people participate in Continuing Education arranged or organised by their workplace. Adults also have a possibility to gain access, in the context of labour market policy measures, to funded Continuing Education⁵¹. In addition, adults may gain support in form of educational counselling, provision of basic education and basic skills and the opportunity to gain or catch up on educational qualifications at various levels. Free information and advice about Adult Education is available from education counselling, guidance and information centres in all federal provinces. In the context of Austria, provision of adult education opportunities still tends to encompass those who can afford the education and have access to it, while access for disadvantaged adults is rather limited⁵². However,

⁴⁸ L. Nedelkoska and G. Quintini, *Automation, skills use and training*, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 202, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/2e2f4eea-en>

⁴⁹ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

⁵⁰ Second Chance education <http://www.secondchanceeducation.eu/about>

⁵¹ <https://www.bildungssystem.at/en/adult-education/>

⁵² <https://www.bildungssystem.at/en/adult-education/>

integration centres for asylum seekers have been implemented in recent years⁵³, providing integration counselling services and German language courses. As the country regards itself as monolingual, learning German is necessary for the purposes of integration and assimilation in the society⁵⁴. Moreover, The Austrian Public Employment Service offers “competence checks” for asylum seekers. These checks include the validation of informal learning⁵⁵.

Austria has been offering distance-education programmes since 1979 under the coordination of the Inter-University Research Institute for Distance-Education programmes⁵⁶. In addressing and encouraging the civic and democratic participation of adults in Austria, the Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres (Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen, VÖV) launched a Democracy MOOC in 2019 aiming to deliver information on political issues as well as providing support and opportunities to reflect on behaviours, values, skills and attitudes relating to democracy and civil society. Moreover, demographic scope of the participants tends to be diverse as everyone can enroll and participation is free of charge⁵⁷. Particular focus has been placed on enhancement of digital skills, thus initiatives tackling digital literacy emerged. Such initiative is the ‘Digital Competence Framework for Austria - DigComp 2.2 AT’ - a complex project involving schools, open youth work and adult education⁵⁸, based on the ‘DigComp’ reference framework of the European Commission⁵⁹. As of 2019, all citizens have the opportunity to conduct a free online test at fit4internet.at to assess their own digital competence. Furthermore, Fit4Internet provides courses to spread basic digital skills for employees aged above 45 years. The main instrument used is the issuing of digital competence certificates as the courses focus on basic skills of older employees and workers⁶⁰.

The Austrian Adult Education Initiative (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung) was introduced in 2012⁶¹ aimed at two areas: enabling adults who lack basic skills (literacy, numeracy) and those who never graduated from a lower secondary school to continue and finish their education, free of charge. During the first program period (2012-2014), about 9 000 people participated in basic education courses and about 4 700 attended adult programmes to complete compulsory schooling (Pflichtschulabschluss)⁶². In addition, the second program period ran from 01.01.2015 to 31.12.2017, while the third program period started on January 1st, 2018 and runs until December 31st, 2021⁶³.

⁵³ <http://www.verein-menschenrechte.at/en-integration.html>

⁵⁴ A. Heinemann, The making of ‘good citizens’: German courses for migrants and refugees, 2018 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02660830.2018.1453115>

⁵⁵ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/64-validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-austria>

⁵⁶ <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/93/Austria-NONFORMAL-EDUCATION.html>

⁵⁷ <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/democracy-mooc-education-democratic-citizenship-adults>

⁵⁸ <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/en/Topics/Digitalisation/For-citizens/Digital-literacy.html>

⁵⁹ The Digital Competence Framework 2.0, European Commission. <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/digital-competence-framework>

⁶⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2019-32/country_report_-_austria_-_final_2019_0D3204BD-9F89-F6DD-1A7E1A4E2A02FA42_61227.pdf

⁶¹ https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/Austrian_Initiative_for_Adult_Education_2016.pdf

⁶² <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/austria-evaluation-adult-education-initiative>

⁶³ <https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/initiative-erwachsenenbildung/was-ist-das/>

Validation and recognition of skills acquired

Currently, there is no overall and coherent framework for the validation of prior learning (VPL) in Austria. For this reason, a national strategy is currently being developed, based on the recommendation of the European Council of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁶⁴. However, it is possible to validate non-formally gained skills in some federal states, e.g. the Viennese Validation System “My Chance, I am able to do this!” (Wiener Anerkennungssystem “Meine Chance, ich kann das!”). With this Viennese recognition system developed by the social partners, the Viennese vocational schools, the public employment system (AMS) and the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds, waff) the city of Vienna offers a new way to the extraordinary apprenticeship diploma since May 2015. The Viennese recognition system is another milestone in the scope of the Qualification Plan Vienna 2020⁶⁵. In Austria, those involved in up-skilling processes can find a range of subsidies in order to fund validation activities, for example by the PES Austria⁶⁶.

In terms of validation of competences of adult educators, the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education (Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich, wba) is a validation system for the qualification and recognition of adult educators. Adult educators’ qualifications are recognised according to set standards based on qualification profiles. As of 2007, wba acknowledges prior learning results and offers guidance and counselling concerning the acquisition of missing skills⁶⁷.

Belgium

Due to Belgium’s complex institutional organisation, drawing up an overall picture of the state of adult education in Belgium is unattainable. The country consists of three Regions (Flemish Region or Flanders, Walloon Region or Wallonia, and Brussels-Capital Region), the Federal State and has three Communities (Flemish, French, and German-speaking community).⁶⁸

On a larger scale, policy makers in Belgium have taken steps in supporting unemployed adults in receiving appropriate training and enhancing their chances of employability⁶⁹, by developing two skills assessments that are hosted on the DOCIMO online platform⁷⁰. Skills assessments take effect in two forms: test on literacy and numeracy competences⁷¹ to predict job seekers’ ability to be successful in

⁶⁴ <https://vince.eucen.eu/validation-in-austria/>

⁶⁵ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/64-validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-austria>

⁶⁶ European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Synthesis report, Cedefop, European Commission, ICF, 2019 http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_synthesis.pdf

⁶⁷ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/64-validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-austria>

⁶⁸ https://www.belgium.be/en/about_belgium/government/communities

⁶⁹ Implementácia Ciest zvyšovania úrovne zručností - Workshopy vzájomného učenia sa na Slovensku a v Belgicku https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

⁷⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317956083_DOCIMO_an_Online_Platform_Dedicated_to_the_Construction_and_Quality_Management_of_Learning_and_Impact_Assessments_in_the_Digital_Age

⁷¹ These tests consist of multiple choice questions or open questions with a short answer. If successful in the tests, the applicant can start the vocational training programme.

learning the skills of particular vocational training programmes. Moreover, online screening of the knowledge and the cognitive skills that are necessary for a specific occupation is available. However, disadvantage of online screening is that job seekers who lack digital literacy skills may be hesitant in taking tests on online platform⁷².

Flemish-speaking community

The Department of Education and Training in Flanders is a part of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training⁷³. Adult learning in Flanders is distinguished into two categories⁷⁴: adult education and adult training. Adult education (volwassenenonderwijs) encompasses all programmes of adult basic education (basiseducatie), secondary adult education (secundair volwassenenonderwijs) and (adult) higher vocational education (hoger beroepsonderwijs). Moreover, the specific teacher training programme is organized in adult education⁷⁵.

In Flanders, adult education is provided by the adult education centres (CVOs) and centres for basic education (CBEs)⁷⁶. The centres offer a variety of learner guidance and orientation services, including study support and career counselling. In addition, initiatives regarding lifelong guidance projects and activities are pursued by various socio-cultural organisations⁷⁷. Adult basic education (basiseducatie)⁷⁸ is offered to poorly educated adults (from the age of 18 years upwards). The Centres for Adult Basic Education (CBE) have a broad and varied course offer, ranging from reading, writing and arithmetic classes, social orientation and ICT, Dutch for non-native Dutch-speakers, step-up English, and step-up French, covering basic skills at the level of primary education and the first stage of secondary education. Upon passing a module in a study programme, participants receive a partial certificate that is recognized by the Flemish government. Upon completion of all modules of study programme, participants receive a certificate that is recognized by the Flemish government⁷⁹.

Adults interested in pursuing secondary education (secundair volwassenenonderwijs) are offered two paths to choose from: they may follow a course in the field of general education at the level of the ASO, the former second chance education; follow a diploma-oriented training, in combination with a supplementary general education (AAV) training. Moreover, the AAV program is encompassed in the field of General Education. Comparing to the adult basic education, certification on secondary education level differs: participants receive partial certificate upon completion of each module, while if they pass all modules in the diploma-oriented study program and the AAV study program, participants receive a diploma of secondary education. Moreover, participants obtain a diploma of secondary education provided they successfully complete all modules⁸⁰.

⁷² tests are available for more than 50 occupations and contain 30-60 multiple choice questions per screening. This screening is targeted at unemployed people that experience difficulties in finding a job

⁷³ <https://viskaproject.eu/about-us/det/>

⁷⁴ Adult education and training in Flanders, 2018, Eurydice https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-3_en

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-system-in-belgium-flanders>

⁷⁷ <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-system-in-belgium-flanders>

⁷⁸ <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/basiseducatie>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/een-diploma-secundair-onderwijs-halen-in-het-volwassenenonderwijs>

Adult training in Flanders is defined as a broader concept than adult education and provides, next to the programmes of formal learning, all forms of non-formal and informal learning by adults⁸¹. In each of the Flemish provinces adults can receive advice and guidance on learning opportunities in a Leerwinkel ('learning shop'). Furthermore, in the province of East-Flanders, young people and adults in their search for education or training can receive guidance at De Stap - a partnership between the CLB centres in the city of Ghent⁸².

Concerning job-seekers and employees, ESF Flanders⁸³ acquires and shares knowledge in order to help organisations in working out solutions for overcoming challenges of the labour market and supporting a sustainable future, consisting of two operational services: the Job-seekers service is responsible for the calls for proposals in which job-seekers constitute the final target group. The Employees service is responsible for the calls for proposals in which employees as well as employers constitute the final target group⁸⁴.

In July 2015, the concept for an integrated framework for VNFIL (EVC, Erkennen van verworven competenties / recognition of acquired competences) in Flanders was approved by the Flemish Government⁸⁵.

French-speaking community

Adult education sector in the French-speaking part of Belgium made efforts in improving various areas relating to professional training and social inclusion issues, among others.⁸⁶ In French-speaking community, Lire et écrire⁸⁷ is an organisation that initiates literacy education for low-educated and illiterate adults and supports the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative. However, literacy education in Belgium has been limited to increasing learners' employability, leaving very little space for innovative pedagogy, hence unlikely to ensure learning opportunities for adults regarding numeracy and digital literacy skills.⁸⁸

In francophone Belgium (Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles) literacy provision training can be broadly divided into four types, defined by two criteria: the previous education level of learners, and learners' grasp of French. Furthermore, literacy actions aim to teach reading, writing, calculating to adults who have never been schooled or have never acquired a diploma in Belgium or abroad, or to schooled adults who have not acquired skills equivalent to the CEB (the Certificat d'Etudes de Base, affirming competencies in reading, writing, calculating, history, geography and science, mastered at the end of

⁸¹ Adult education and training in Flanders, Eurydice, 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-3_en

⁸² <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-system-in-belgium-flanders>

⁸³ <https://www.esf-vlaanderen.be/en/mission-statement>

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Implementácia Ciest zvyšovania úrovne zručností - Workshopy vzájomného učenia sa na Slovensku a v Belgicku https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

⁸⁶ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

⁸⁷ Lire et Écrire <https://www.lire-et-ecrire.be/?lang=fr>

⁸⁸ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

six years of primary school). In terms of quality standards for the quality of adult literacy providers in the non-profit sector, each association organises training according to its public, taking into account general objectives of professional insertion, permanent education or social cohesion. Besides, training content is decided by certain associations which apply a tailor-made approach in regard to their learners⁸⁹.

In French-speaking Belgium, there are four systems of validation. The French-Speaking Government of the French Community and the Walloon and Brussels Regions are involved in various respects but each system, governed by a specific legal framework, has its own institutional framework. The skills validation system was set up in the context of policies promoting lifelong learning at the Federal level in the early 2000s.⁹⁰ Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) was first developed in adult education (Enseignement de promotion sociale: EPS) in 1991, followed in 2003 by the continuing vocational education and training (CVET) sector, with a focus on individuals with no formal qualifications⁹¹. In the CVET sector, the 'validation of competences' (validation des compétences, VDC) aims at recognising the professional knowledge and know-how acquired outside of typical training channels. When successful, the validation procedure leads to the issuing of a titre de compétence (Skills Certificate). However, Skills Certificates are not equivalent to formal VET qualifications. There are now two types of VNFIL in Belgium, the validation of competences (VDC) in the continuous vocational education and training (CVET) sector, leading to the award of a recognised certificate. Furthermore, the valorisation of prior experience (VAE-valorisation des acquis de l'expérience) in adult education and higher education, leading to the validation of learning units or exemptions from certain parts of a study pathway. However, there is some space for improvement in improving the value of the skills certificate on the labour market, and widening the profile of VAE users. In addition, VAE constitutes a major component of the government's strategy since 2014. VAE in adult education falls within the remit of competence of the Regions⁹².

Recognition of prior learning (Reconnaissance des acquis de formation or "RAF") has been provided in Belgium since 2011. Public sector training providers such as Bruxelles formation, Forem, Ifapme, Sfpme offer Skills Certificates corresponding to learners' acquired learning outcomes. RAF equalizes the evaluation of the training center and the evaluation of the validation centre, thus encouraging lifelong learning by building bridges between training⁹³. Since 2013, VET actors in the French-speaking part of Belgium have focused on soft skills⁹⁴, such being Erasmus+ Step4 project⁹⁵, implemented by

⁸⁹ Literacy in Belgium (Wallonie), Country report adults, ELINET, 2016 http://www.elinet.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Belgium_French_Adults_Report1.pdf

⁹⁰ Country report, Belgium-French, update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Cedefop, 2016 https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

⁹¹ Country report, Belgium-French, update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Cedefop, 2016 https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Implementácia Ciest zvyšovania úrovne zručností - Workshopy vzájomného učenia sa na Slovensku a v Belgicku https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

⁹⁵ Step4 <https://step4-sfc.eu/>

Forem⁹⁶ as of 2016⁹⁷. The project developed tools as follows: methodology to work on the professional behaviours, it is delivered in form of a massive open online course (MOOC)⁹⁸, aimed at creating a training methodology and tools to enhance work-related behavioural skills. Furthermore, a SFC radar Visio4-sfc to make it possible to objectify the progression of behavioural skills acquired⁹⁹. Aside from Step4 project, Le Forem in Wallonia provide network of 24 competence centres¹⁰⁰ which provide training, information and awareness-raising for workers, job seekers, students, teachers, business leaders and executives, and contribute to support for business competitiveness.

In Wallon region, Forem offers training courses for adults in different sectors, including courses on developing and improving digital skills. In addition, Technofutur TIC offers a wide range of in-person and remote training, summer internships and ICT-related events, while Technobel is a skills centre offering training in information and communications technologies (ICT) professions. These courses are aimed at job-seekers, employees, personnel managers, teachers and students¹⁰¹. Digital Wallonia sets the framework for all of the Walloon Government's actions in terms of Wallonia's digital transformation, aiming to ensure digital inclusion of all citizens¹⁰². In addition, TOSA DigComp¹⁰³ is a comprehensive test of the digital skills described in the DigComp framework as defined by the European Union, and it includes multiple-choice questions, interactive activities, and true software and operating system manipulations in "real-life" situations. In Walloon Region it was launched by Bruxelles Formation in 2018, as it was available/similar in French, Dutch and English and could reliably and rapidly assess and certify the level of unemployed people and trainees. Since 2019 it's also used by Actiris for purposes of assessing unemployed interviewees and can be used to identify the applicant's skills that could be improved and/or formally recognized¹⁰⁴.

Teaching for social advancement (enseignement de promotion sociale-EPS) has 160 establishments on the territory of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation providing services aimed at individual's personal development, in addition to services based on societal needs, such as training needs and requests from businesses, administrations, education and, in general, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds¹⁰⁵. Moreover, EPS offers flexible courses for adults, organised into short modules, taught either during the day or evening. EPS is organised in modules leading to credits that can be accumulated to obtain 'titles' (certificates or degrees, titres de section). These modules are called learning units (UE, i.e. unites d'enseignement), which are described in two types of pedagogical files

⁹⁶ Le Forem <https://www.leforem.be/>

⁹⁷ https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

⁹⁸ A massive open online course (MOOC) is a free Web-based distance learning program that is designed for the participation of large numbers of geographically dispersed students

⁹⁹ <https://step4-sfc.eu/Visio4-SFC-un-pas-plus-loin-dans-l-observation-evaluation-des-SFC>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.leforem.be/centres-de-competence.html>

¹⁰¹ <https://economie.fgov.be/en/themes/online/online-games/digital-duel/digital-skills/digital-skills-training>

¹⁰² <https://www.digitalwallonia.be/fr/strategie-numerique/competences-numeriques>

¹⁰³ TOSA DigComp-assessment and certification on digital skills

<https://www.isograd.com/EN/tosadigital.php>

¹⁰⁴ Implementácia Ciest zvyšovania úrovne zručností - Workshopy vzájomného učenia sa na Slovensku a v Belgicku https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

¹⁰⁵ l'enseignement de promotion sociale (EPS) <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=27151>

for learning units for a whole section¹⁰⁶, or a single learning unit¹⁰⁷. These courses are accessible to all and allow everyone to combine employment and training education. On the basis of a modular design of EPS and the flexibility available in defining personal study pathways, recognition of previous experience (8th article of the decree of 1991) can allow certain courses to be waived within a so-called “pedagogical file”. Recognition can apply to skills acquired in any form of formal education or in other recognised types of training, and to professional experience¹⁰⁸.

Concerning the recognition of Skills Certificates on labour market, the Federal Government introduced a right of the worker to a ‘skills audit’ (bilan de compétences)¹⁰⁹ which has been in force since 2004¹¹⁰. Specialised service providers such as ONEM (Office National de l’Emploi)¹¹¹, ACTIRIS (Office Régional Bruxellois de l’Emploi)¹¹², FOREM (Service Public Wallon de l’Emploi et de la Formation)¹¹³, provide information to adults interested in skills audits¹¹⁴, while Bruxelles Formation¹¹⁵, the local employment office in the Brussels region supports jobseekers to elaborate a professional project. Cités des Métiers (CDM)¹¹⁶ in French-speaking Belgium provides job offers, brochures, documents and other works related to the major themes of professional life. Furthermore, CDM provides individual counselling sessions for jobseekers, workshops and information sessions, as well as company visits¹¹⁷.

German-speaking community

The Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium has been working on a project aiming at developing the validation of non-formal and informal learning in cooperation with diverse partners present in the area¹¹⁸. The German-speaking Community offers various forms of education and training for adults. Evening schools offer a variety of courses, such as: language instruction, computer science, household courses and the certificate-oriented second chance education¹¹⁹.

¹⁰⁶ on the basis of a section's vocational profile approved by the General Council, it sets up a working group with the responsibility of compiling, for each section, a pedagogical file covering all branches.

¹⁰⁷ as with each section, each educational module within the section similarly has its own pedagogical file. Each file lists the overall and specific goals of the training module, the preliminary required skills necessary at the start of the module and the certificates attesting such, the module's minimum duration, the programme (i.e. a list of the capabilities to be acquired), the learning outcomes, the profile of the person(s) responsible for the course (a teacher or outside expert) and practical recommendations for the constitution of groups.

¹⁰⁸ https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

¹⁰⁹ The law grants every worker a right to be assessed to identify and validate skills gained outside the formal education system.

¹¹⁰ https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

¹¹¹ <http://www.onem.be/>

¹¹² <http://www.actiris.be/>

¹¹³ <http://www.leforem.be/>

¹¹⁴ https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

¹¹⁵ <http://www.bruxellesformation.be/>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.citedesmetiers.brussels/fr-BE/Page/Index/51>

¹¹⁷ <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/fr/blog/les-cites-des-metiers-cdm-en-belgique-francophone>

¹¹⁸ Belgium-German speaking community, Validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2018, European Commission https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-7_sk?2nd-language=bs

¹¹⁹ Belgium-German speaking community overview, Eurydice, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/belgium-german-speaking-community_en

With the project “Shaping Future Paths”, the German-speaking community wants to promote the professional development of the active population. Furthermore, professional training advisors are available for low-skilled job-seekers and people who wish to recognise and develop their skills. Recognition of professional skills encompasses adults without a vocational qualification who have acquired many skills in a certain profession through work experience. They are given the opportunity to demonstrate their professional skills in a center for training and further education for small and medium-sized businesses (ZAWM) and to have them recognized in the form of certificates of competence¹²⁰.

Croatia

The beginnings of adult education in Croatia date to early 20th century, while the Adult Education Act was introduced in 2007¹²¹. Currently, the Croatian Ministry of Education continuing its work on drafting the new Adult Education Act¹²². The Ministry of Education has been implementing European Agenda for Adult Learning since 2012, and a new curriculum for adult education has being developed, complementing the Upskilling Pathways initiative, in which emphasis is placed on strengthening the provision of basic skills¹²³.

The adult education system in Croatia offers¹²⁴:

- elementary (single structure primary and lower secondary) education – primary and lower secondary education programmes are provided in duration prescribed by the curriculum for the primary and lower secondary adult education
- middle (upper secondary) education – the number of teaching hours for each subject in the programme for adult education aimed at acquiring an upper secondary qualification, upper secondary vocational qualification or lower vocational qualification cannot be lower than 50% of the number of hours prescribed by the curriculum for the full-time education, regardless of the teaching mode
- retraining – the number of teaching hours for each subject in a retraining programme cannot be lower than 50% of the number of hours prescribed by the curriculum for the full-time education
- training – the minimum training programme duration is 120 teaching hours, unless the training is provided for one or only a few job activities that are typically taught individually, in which case the minimum duration of the training is 60 teaching hours

¹²⁰ Ostbelgienbildung http://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-5981/10188_read-54632/

¹²¹ Obrazovanje odraslih -Hrvatska, Eurydice, 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-14_hr

¹²² Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

¹²³ Implementacija Evropske agende za obrazovanje odraslih - Kurikulum za razvoj temeljnih digitalnih, matematičkih i čitalačkih vještina odraslih: Temeljne vještine funkcionalne pismenosti, Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja, 2019 http://obrazovanje-odraslih.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MZOS-KnjizniBlokBros%CC%8CuraOO_WebOKr.pdf

¹²⁴ Adult education and training - Croatia, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-14_en

- professional development – the duration of a professional development programmes depends on the programme type. For the programmes aimed at refreshment and improvement of acquired knowledge and skills and the acquisition of new knowledge in the profession of the same complexity level, the minimum programme duration is 150 teaching hours. For the jobs of higher complexity levels, the minimum programme duration is 500 hours, with the exception of CPD programmes in computing

Strategy on Education, Science, and Technology¹²⁵, adopted in 2014, perceives lifelong learning as a foundation of education that encourages individuals from different age groups to study through the different learning forms and with the continuous access to the education. The Strategy sets several goals related to adult education¹²⁶:

- provide preconditions for increasing adult involvement into lifelong learning and education processes
- improve and expand learning, education, training and refining skills
- establish a quality assurance system in adult education
- improve organisation, funding and the management processes of adult education.

Non-formal adult education

Various organisations provide non-formal adult education in Croatia; a few of them are briefly mentioned below.

Algebra Institute offer workshops on basic digital skills in various cities across Croatia¹²⁷. Participants may obtain European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) verifying that the individual acquired basic digital skills. To obtain the licence, the prerequisite is to pass all 4 modules of the programme. The workshops are designed primarily for teachers, educators, school principals, and other individuals providing educational services¹²⁸. Some adult education providers, such as Ambitio College, offer reskilling programmes for adults¹²⁹.

Institute for Development of Lifelong Learning (PAR), is working on promoting SDG by organising events, promoting lifelong learning, and promoting learning for entrepreneurship. Among the organization's activities are: PAR International Leadership Conference in Opatija, Entrepreneurial Camp (for start-ups and young entrepreneurs) and "Women with no excuses" in Rijeka¹³⁰.

¹²⁵ Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – Nove boje znanja <https://vlada.gov.hr/highlights-15141/archives/strategy-of-education-science-and-technology-nove-boje-znanja/17784>

¹²⁶ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

¹²⁷ Osnovne digitalne vještine za djelatnike odgojno-obrazovnih ustanova – pripreme i polaganje ECDL-a, Algebra zavod za kvalitetu obrazovanja <https://www.algebra.hr/zavod-za-kvalitetu-obrazovanja/53627/>

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Secondary vocational education/reskilling programme for dental assistants, Ambitio college, <https://uciliste-ambitio.hr/en/secondary-vocational-education-retraining-program-for-dental-assistants/>

¹³⁰ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

Dante¹³¹, EAEA member, is an adult education institution offering language courses and participating in EU projects such as: E-trainers: New Skills and Tools for VET¹³², MAFLE – Methods of more attractive foreign language education, excluding English as a medium of instruction for applicants for job and asylum¹³³, DiGiS – Teaching Digital Competences to Seniors¹³⁴, ENGAGE: Supporting Migrant Women as Integration Leaders¹³⁵, among others.

Denmark

Adult education in Denmark is based on to strengthen democracy through participation in free and open competence development, to ensure personal development and quality of life for the citizens, to ensure equality through education, with emphasis on participation by the low-skilled and to develop professional competence and flexibility in a changing labour market. Danish adult education system is divided into formal adult education and non-formal adult education¹³⁶.

Formal adult education

Adult education and continuing training in Denmark concerns education and training provision for adults at all levels, such as: preparatory adult education (FVU), general adult education (AVU), higher preparatory single-subject courses (HF enkeltfag), short vocational training programmes (AMU), vocational education and training for Adults (EUV), Academy Profession programmes (akademiuuddannelse), diploma programmes, and master programmes¹³⁷. Formal adult education comprises both vocational and general adult education and concluding with formal exams¹³⁸.

General adult education aims to provide education that will enable young as well as mature adults to improve or supplement their knowledge and skills within general subjects, thus enhancing their future job prospects and educational possibilities. The general adult education programme is included in public education system¹³⁹. Adult Education Centres (voksenuddannelsescenter) offer general education programme, including the adult education programme for people with reading and writing disabilities (dyslexia), preparatory education for adults (FVU), higher preparatory examination courses (HF), supplementary examination courses at upper secondary level (GS)¹⁴⁰.

Non-formal adult education

¹³¹ Dante Ustanova za obrazovanje odraslih (Adult education institution) <http://www.dante-ri.hr/kontakt/>

¹³² E-trainers: New Skills and Tools for VET <http://www.e-trainers.eu/>

¹³³ MAFLE – Methods of more attractive foreign language education, excluding English as a medium of instruction for applicants for job and asylum <http://www.dante-ri.hr/eu-projekti/aktivni/mafle/>

¹³⁴ DiGiS – Teaching Digital Competences to Seniors <http://www.dante-ri.hr/eu-projekti/aktivni/digis/>

¹³⁵ ENGAGE: Supporting Migrant Women as Integration Leaders <http://www.dante-ri.hr/eu-projekti/aktivni/engage/>

¹³⁶ Adult education in Denmark, KEB Deutschland <https://keb-deutschland.de/adult-education-in-denmark/>

¹³⁷ Adult education and continuing training, Ministry of Higher Education and Science <https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system/adult-education-and-continuing-training>

¹³⁸ Danish Adult Education Association <https://www.daea.dk/themes/adult-learning-in-denmark/>

¹³⁹ The General Adult Education Programme <https://eng.uvm.dk/adult-education-and-continuing-training/the-general-adult-education-programme>

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Non-formal adult education in Denmark emphasises individual choice and is characterised by NGO-organisation and no grades and exams¹⁴¹. Different schools operate within the framework of non-formal adult education (folkeoplysning)¹⁴². Folk High Schools are residential schools providing general and non-formal education¹⁴³, offering non-qualifying courses meant to broaden general, social and democratic competencies¹⁴⁴. Day Folk High Schools and Adult Education Associations offer programmes of liberal adult education, and they are also offered as university extension courses¹⁴⁵. Moreover, educational instruction and lectures by the extra-mural departments of the 4 Danish universities, organised by about 80 local committees¹⁴⁶. Study associations and their local schools offer non-formal adult education to increase the individual's overall subject-related insight and skills¹⁴⁷.

Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA)¹⁴⁸ raises awareness about the purpose and value of non-formal adult learning and encourages the state authorities to increase funding allocated to adult education¹⁴⁹. Moreover, the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is one of the organisation's objectives¹⁵⁰.

Validation of prior learning

Adults in Denmark can have their competences assessed via Individual Competence Assessment (Individuel Kompetence Vurdering, IKV)¹⁵¹. All adults are eligible for the individual competence assessment. Besides, adults may obtain financial compensation from a job centre for the time spent in this process¹⁵². Upon the completion of competence assessment, learners receive an individual plan for education and a competence document listing formal qualifications, the individual's prior experiences and learning equivalents, or a course certificate depending on the relevance and validity of his or her former experiences. Moreover, it is compulsory for learners to have prior learning and experiences assessed before enrolling in vocational education¹⁵³.

¹⁴¹ Adult education in Denmark, KEB Deutschland <https://keb-deutschland.de/adult-education-in-denmark/>

¹⁴² Adult education and continuing training, Ministry of higher education and science <https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system/adult-education-and-continuing-training>

¹⁴³ Danish Folk High Schools <https://www.danishfolkhighschools.com/about-folk-high-schools/>

¹⁴⁴ Adult education and continuing training, Ministry of higher education and science <https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system/adult-education-and-continuing-training>

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Adult education in Denmark, KEB Deutschland <https://keb-deutschland.de/adult-education-in-denmark/>

¹⁴⁸ Danish Adult Education Association <https://www.dfs.dk/>

¹⁴⁹ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Vocational education and training in Europe <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/denmark>

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Finland

The Finnish National Agency for Education and the National Forum for Skills Anticipation outlined future skills structures referring to national long-term foresight and anticipatory views, sights and calculations. The anticipation of skills and training needs is conducted at national and regional level. The Forum has been appointed for a term of three years between 2017 and 2020 and its members represent working life, vocational education and training providers, higher education institutions, teachers and the administration of the education sector. Foresight and anticipation results are used in education policy decision-making and in the development of education by the Ministry of Education and Culture when issuing authorisations to provide education, the Finnish National Agency for Education when drawing up the national qualification requirements, and education providers and higher education institutions in targeting their own education provision. Besides, anticipation is developed and adapted accordingly to respond to changes in working life and to the challenges of digitalisation¹⁵⁴.

There is a high degree of stakeholder involvement in skills anticipation activities. Major trade unions, employers, regional councils, and representatives of educational institutions are involved in anticipation exercises. The responsibility of education providers for anticipating and responding to the labour market changes has increased, as operational targeting and steering powers have been devolved to universities, polytechnics, and VET providers. In addition, skills anticipation takes into account sectoral, occupational and geographical differences, and includes skills assessments, skills forecasting, skills foresight, and employer surveys¹⁵⁵.

The forecast for 2035 conducted by the National Forum for Skills Anticipation in Finland estimated that new jobs will emerge particularly in the high-tech industry and in the marketing and processing of highly processed products. In addition to that, the importance of development of cost-efficiency and ecological sustainability was also emphasized. More specifically, it was estimated that knowledge of sustainable development will be an important basic skill in the future, especially in industrial sectors¹⁵⁶. Successfully identifying and anticipating the skills required for 'greening' the economy requires stakeholders adapting their existing approach to skills strategies. Besides, acquisition of skills required to improve sustainability in an area of activity can create a need for a new occupation, or for a very distinctive new specialization or set of new skills within an existing occupation. It is stated that, hence, with regard to initiatives taken to develop new qualifications and update the existing ones, all areas of education need to be included. Thus, encompassing all levels of initial education and also continuing vocational training and other forms of adult education¹⁵⁷. Finland is nevertheless committed to implementation of SDGs in its internal and external policies. In 2019/2020, sustainable

¹⁵⁴ Anticipation of skills and education needs, Ministry of Education and Culture Finland, 2019 <https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4150027/Anticipation+of+skills+and+education+needs/d1a00302-8773-bbe0-39a0-46e0d688d350/Anticipation+of+skills+and+education+needs.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ Skills Anticipation in Finland, Skills Panorama, 2017 https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/analytical_highlights/skills-anticipation-finland

¹⁵⁶ Finland: skills in 2035, Cedefop, 2019 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/da/news-and-press/news/finland-skills-2035>

¹⁵⁷ Anticipating skill needs for green jobs: a practical guide, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2015 https://www.oitcinterfor.org/sites/default/files/file_publicacion/antici_green.pdf

development, environmental-social education and transformative learning for liberal education will also be in the centre of educational policies and initiatives in Finland.¹⁵⁸

Liberal adult education in the context of Finland originates in the establishment of the Workers' Education Association in 1919. By the early 1920s, workers' educational institutes were increasingly seen as educational establishments for the entire population¹⁵⁹. Nowadays, it concerns grassroots education and continuous learning to all citizens, aiming to promote social cohesion, equality and active citizenship and to support the well-being and versatile development of the citizens¹⁶⁰. It is offered by adult education centres, folk high schools (Volkshochschulen), learning centres, sports training centres and summer universities. Low- skilled adults, including refugees and immigrants, take part in tailored courses - literacy, writing, numeracy and digital skills, are actual topics of courses as well as Finnish language, working life and society orientation courses are delivered. Liberal adult education organisations are independently responsible for the education they provide and its development. Studies vary from night school to full-time short-term or long-term courses, distance studies and intensive courses. Moreover, the affiliated organisations can represent various worldviews or religious beliefs or act on the basis of local or regional civic needs. In addition, liberal adult education institutions offer studies that improve civic skills, social studies, general education studies and studies for hobby-based or interest-based information and skills acquisition. However, the education does not provide a degree or qualification, and its content is not governed by legislation¹⁶¹.

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture launched a working group on continuous learning in 2019, aiming to reform educational efforts to meet the challenges of the labour market. Moreover, the working group is concerned with questions of upskilling, competence assessment and flexible arrangements for creating individual learning paths¹⁶². Prior to the Ministry's initiatives, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra has been working on developing recommendations for cross-sectional policies in lifelong learning, envisaging competences and work being seen as the building blocks of well-being¹⁶³.

The basic right to education in Finland is entrenched in the Constitution. Public authorities must secure equal opportunities for every resident in Finland to access education after compulsory schooling and to develop themselves. Besides, adult literacy provision in Finland is part of the basic education provision for adults and the integration education¹⁶⁴. In 1995, The Finnish National Board of Education determined the framework for evaluating educational outcomes, of which learning to learn

¹⁵⁸ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

¹⁵⁹ E. Pantzar, 2007, Introduction to lifelong learning and adult education in Finland, Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung

¹⁶⁰ Liberal adult education, Finnish National Agency for Education <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system/liberal-adult-education>

¹⁶¹ Liberal adult education , Ministry of Education and Culture <https://minedu.fi/en/liberal-adult-education>

¹⁶² Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Literacy in Finland, country report short version, Elinet, 2016 http://www.elinet.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Finland_Short_Report.pdf

competences and motivation for lifelong learning were key objectives¹⁶⁵. Adult education is mostly provided within the normal educational system¹⁶⁶. In terms of individual approach in non-formal adult education, tailor-made guidance and counselling services to the enrolled students are compulsory for the VET providers. More specifically, each individual is provided with a personal competence development plan, in which the learner's individual study plan and prior learning, including non-formal and informal are documented¹⁶⁷.

Programmes and projects aimed at digital skills acquisition and enhancement in Finland encompass strengthening digital skills in the adult population, the creation of digital learning environments, and the development of digital pedagogy¹⁶⁸. Finland will make the Elements of AI online course available to EU citizens in 2020–2021¹⁶⁹ available in all EU languages, aiming to encourage everyone, regardless of age or educational background, to learn the basics of artificial intelligence. The initiative for offering the Elements of AI course to all EU countries was launched in the context of Finland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union (from 1 July to 31 December 2019)¹⁷⁰.

France

PIAAC findings from 2012 show that 22% of adults in France had low literacy skills, while 28% of the participants had low numeracy skills¹⁷¹. Following that, the French government made the fight against illiteracy a policy priority¹⁷².

France joined several European initiatives, such as Europe 2020 and Education and Training 2020, which led to improvement of the education system and emphasizing development vocational training in the adult education sector. In the beginning of 2019, a new governmental unit, France Compétences, responsible for the regulation and financing of vocational training and apprenticeship was established¹⁷³. The agency merged the function of four original bodies (Copanef, du FPSP, du

¹⁶⁵ J. Hautamäki and S.Kupiainen, Learning to learn in Finland: Theory and policy, research and practice, 2014

¹⁶⁶ H. Niemi and U. Isopahkala-Bouret, Lifelong learning in Finnish society – An analysis of national policy documents, International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Volume 5, Issue 1, 2012

¹⁶⁷ European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Synthesis report, Cedefop, European Commission, ICF, 2019
http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_synthesis.pdf

¹⁶⁸ Basic digital skills for adults in the Nordic countries, Nordic Network for Adult Learning, 2019
<http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1426282/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

¹⁶⁹ Finland to enhance Europeans' digital skills – Elements of AI online course to be launched in EU countries, EPALE, 2020 <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/content/finland-enhance-europeans-digital-skills-elements-ai-online-course-be-launched-eu-countries>

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Adult Education and Training in Europe: Programmes to Raise Achievement in Basic Skills, Eurydice Report, European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice, 2015
Available at
https://www.erasmusplus.sk/uploads/publikacie/2015_AEducation_BasicSkillsRise_EurydiceReport_en.pdf

¹⁷² K.H. Windisch, K.H. Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills: OECD Education Working Papers No.123, 2015 <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jrxnjdd3r5k-en>

¹⁷³ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

Cnefop et de la CNC) ¹⁷⁴. Currently, it is placed under Ministry of Labour and it works in collaboration with regional inter-professional joint committees, Caisse des Dépôts, Regions, OPCOs ¹⁷⁵. Besides, France Competences will also be responsible for redistribution of funds for vocational training towards various channels, including the low qualified job seekers training ¹⁷⁶.

Lifelong learning guidance

There is distinction between lifelong learning (la formation tout au long de la vie) and further and continuing education (formation professionnelle continue). Lifelong learning is under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education as is defined as “a continuum between initial education, general education or vocational training and refers to all situations where competences are acquired: activities in further and continuing education, in the working context, in associations or voluntary work. It comprises measures of advice and guidance, documentation, counselling on behalf of employment/career (re-)entry, training and the validation of acquired experience (p.22) ¹⁷⁷.” Further and continuing education (formation professionnelle continue) is governed by the Ministry of Labour and it concerns everyone over 16 years of age and having left the initial formal school system. Furthermore, it concerns vocational re-/integration into the labour market, retention in employment, competence development and access to different qualification levels, contributing to economic and cultural development and to upward social mobility, and it is also meant to support adults returning to work after parental leave or a break to care for family members. ¹⁷⁸

The current Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) system was launched at the beginning of the 1970s ¹⁷⁹. Besides, the French System lifelong guidance has always been guaranteed to all individuals, ensuring access to career guidance and counseling, training, qualifications, mainly via dematerialised tools ¹⁸⁰.

Professional development and training

Training courses for adult education are offered by various providers, such as private sector (companies of all sizes), non-profit organizations (associations) or individual providers, as well as public and semi-public bodies ¹⁸¹. Personal training account (CPF) was created in 2015 ¹⁸² with aim to

¹⁷⁴ Enhancing Qualification of Adult Learners through the implementation of Upskilling pathways, 2019 <http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.francecompetences.fr/>

¹⁷⁶ Enhancing Qualification of Adult Learners through the implementation of Upskilling pathways, 2019 <http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>

¹⁷⁷ Schreiber-Barsch, S., 2015, Adult and continuing education in France https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320322599_Adult_and_Continuing_Education_in_France

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Enhancing Qualification of Adult Learners through the implementation of Upskilling pathways, 2019 <http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ How informal and non-formal learning is recognised in Europe, France – country report, Bertelsmann Stiftung, https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/LL_France_FINAL_Web.pdf

¹⁸² Enhancing Qualification of Adult Learners through the implementation of Upskilling pathways, 2019

provide any person older than 16 years with a personal account, lead to recognized qualifications or certifications, programs included on specific lists created either at the national level or at the regional level by social partners. As of 2018, everyone eligible receives certain monetary support which they can spend on training of their choice, whereas the amount offered is higher for low-skilled individuals. The purchase of training can be done via mobile application, hence no intermediate body is involved¹⁸³. The Professional Development Counseling (CEP) is provided by professional advisers belonging to 5 authorized organizations, as follows: Pôle Emploi¹⁸⁴, APEC¹⁸⁵, Cap Emploi¹⁸⁶, Local Mission¹⁸⁷ and the and the OPACIFs¹⁸⁸. In addition, the CPF can also be mobilized for actions such as validation of prior learning (VAE), skills assessments and preparation for driving license (license B and heavyweight). Having an extensive offer of certifying training is therefore a prerequisite¹⁸⁹.

Literacy skills

Since 2003, illiteracy (Illettrisme) in France is defined as: "Illettrisme describes the situation of individuals over 16 years of age who, although they have attended school, cannot read and understand a text dealing with an everyday situation, and/or cannot communicate simple information in writing¹⁹⁰". As of 2007, Savoirs pour Réussir Paris offers French language classes as part of the programme Fight Against Illiteracy (Lutte contre l'illettrisme) for young people over the age of 16 who have major difficulties with their basic literacy skills, coming from diverse backgrounds¹⁹¹. The French government has made the fight against illiteracy a priority and declared it a "grande cause nationale" in 2013¹⁹².

<http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.pole-emploi.fr/>

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.apec.fr/>

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.agefiph.fr/>

¹⁸⁷ Agency specialized in the promotion of employment for youth aged 16-25 years old experiencing difficulties for labour market insertion.

¹⁸⁸ Collecting parity body (OPCA) having the task to fund employees' personal training leaves. It is one of the bodies particularly affected by the 2018 reform since the mechanism of redistribution of funds for continuing education will be centralized to URSSAF and managed by France Compétences. (from <http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>)

¹⁸⁹ Enhancing Qualification of Adult Learners through the implementation of Upskilling pathways, 2019

<http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>

¹⁹⁰ J.-P. Jeantheau, J.-P., Assessing Adult Literacy in France. The national survey IVQ a basis for an indicators net and an opportunity for research, 2014
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333560373_Assessing_Adult_Literacy_in_France_The_national_survey_IVQ_a_basis_for_an_indicators_net_and_an_opportunity_for_research_by_Jean-Pierre_Jeantheau_Adult_literacy_assessment_in_France_Programme_for_Inte

¹⁹¹ Fight against illiteracy, France, UNESCO Institute of lifelong learning, 2016
<https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/fight-against-illiteracy-france>

¹⁹² Vocational training and adult learning for better skills in France, OECD Economics Department Working Papers No. 1260, 2015 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/5jrw21kjlthn-en.pdf?expires=1590415045&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=DB5A8D5DE15C9274620527B6F50E25BE>

Validation of prior learning

Regarding the validation of prior learning, Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience – VAE = Validation of Acquired Experience), established in 1984¹⁹³, is one of the key pillars of the French lifelong learning agenda, established besides initial formal education, further and continuing education to attaining national qualifications and diplomas¹⁹⁴.

In France, vocational certificates are delivered through four different pathways, as follows:

- 1) Initial vocational education in schools, primarily administered by the Ministry of Education, but also other ministries (Agriculture, Health and Social Affairs, National Defence, etc.) and Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Trades and Crafts ("Chambres des métiers et de l'artisanat") and Chambers of Agriculture.
- 2) Apprenticeship meant for the 16-25 years old (recently prolonged until 29 years old)¹⁹⁵
- 3) Continuous vocational training (CVT) organized by ministries (mainly Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and Ministry of Industry), local authorities (regional councils), Chambers of Commerce and Industry, industry branches and enterprises themselves.
- 4) Recognition and validation of informally acquired competences: "validation des acquis de l'expérience" (VAE) since 2002¹⁹⁶

Germany

Adult education in Germany originates at the turn of the 18-19th century, emerging at the end of feudalism. More specifically, first forms of adult education concerned – folk enlightenment (Volksaufklärung) focusing on crafts and agriculture, while the term "folk enlightenment" was replaced with "folk education" (Volksbildung) as well as the concept of "workers' education" (Arbeiterbildung) in the 1820s¹⁹⁷. At the dawn of the 20th Century, the term "adult education" was placed in use, as all institutions, organizational forms and educational ideas that coexist, focusing on the adult population. The Education Reform German Council of Education from the 1970s defined merged adult education into education system, introducing the term "continuing education" (Weiterbildung)¹⁹⁸. Nowadays, Germany's focus is now education for sustainable development, digitalisation, and social cohesion in both Germany and Europe¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹³ How informal and non-formal learning is recognised in Europe, France – country report, Bertelsmann Stiftung, https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/LL_France_FINAL_Web.pdf

¹⁹⁴ S. Schreiber-Barsch, Adult and continuing education in France, 2015 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320322599_Adult_and_Continuing_Education_in_France

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>

¹⁹⁶ How informal and non-formal learning is recognised in Europe, France – country report, Bertelsmann Stiftung, https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/LL_France_FINAL_Web.pdf, page 6

¹⁹⁷ T. Hizhynska, State education policy in the field of adult education policy in Germany. Comparative Professional Pedagogy 6(1), 2016

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

In German language, there is a broad and a narrow concept of “Erwachsenenbildung” (English “adult education”), which include educational processes that can be referred to as “Bildung” (education) in an emancipatory tradition and is mostly associated with general education. The concept then contrasts with “Weiterbildung” (continuing education) that describes the occupational context and where learning processes take place that do not necessarily contribute to positive personal development.²⁰⁰ However, it is noted that the term “adult education” and “continuing education” are used interchangeably²⁰¹.

Adult education policy in Germany is managed by the state federal bodies, as it is determined in the Basic Law for Federal Republic of Germany²⁰². Besides, the target of 50% of participation in adult education has been introduced by the federal government. A study on adult participation in education from 2014 conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF) indicates that indeed, 51 % of the population at the age of 18–64 participated in educational events²⁰³.

German government provides 25% of labour market policies’ budget on services, such as job-seeking assistance. Besides, training measures represent 72% of consistent share of active labour market expenditure²⁰⁴. An investigation commission (Enquete-Kommission) has been set up in the parliament to approach the “Strengthening of vocational training to secure a qualified workforce in the future”²⁰⁵.

Government initiatives, such as General Agreement on the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Skills 2016-2026 aim to reduce functional illiteracy and raising the level of basic skills in Germany²⁰⁶. More specifically, its objective is to enhance reading in writing skills within the adult population, intensify public relation activities, in terms of raising awareness regarding the importance and necessity of literacy and basic skills amongst the general public and the immediate environment of the persons concerned. Further objectives include improvement of the overall situation of research on adult literacy and basic skills, as well as the expansion of learning offers, in particular tailor-made learning offers for different target groups embedding other basic skills areas (e.g. topics as finance, health, politics, etc.) and to elaborate suitable measures of approach. Moreover, it is stated that best practice initiatives and results in adult literacy and basic skills will be continued and disseminated. Professionalisation of staff in further and continuing education and training is outlined as further objective of the Decade, specifying qualification of teaching staff with regard to the use of specific teaching and learning material focusing adult learners, as well as to new approaches in didactics and

²⁰⁰ Adult education in Germany <https://keb-deutschland.de/adult-education-in-germany/>

²⁰¹ T. Hizhynska, State education policy in the field of adult education policy in Germany. Comparative Professional Pedagogy 6(1), 2016

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways, 2020, Cedefop https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3081_en.pdf

²⁰⁵ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

²⁰⁶ General Agreement on the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Skills 2016-2026, https://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/EN_General_Agreement_on_the_National_Decade_for_Literacy_and_Basic_Skills.pdf

methodology tailored to this target group. In addition, the emphasis will be placed on teaching heterogeneous groups of adult learners, while simultaneously placing actual needs of adult functional illiterates at the core of newly implemented learning offers. Besides, establishing, developing and disseminating structures in achieving sustainability and interdisciplinarity is one of the further objectives of the Decade²⁰⁷.

Studies find that less than 5% of adults in Germany would claim they had never used a computer, while unemployed young adults have twice the risk of having low numeracy than the average adult population in the country²⁰⁸. However, Germany has a high level of skill proficiency with respect to other OECD countries²⁰⁹.

Exploring attitudes of adult educators toward digitalisation in Germany, a study²¹⁰ found that adult educators having a higher level of educational attainment, perceive the media in a more critically reflective manner, while adult educators who worked in adult education centres were less critically reflective towards digital media. Moreover, an OECD study on digital skills from 2019²¹¹ indicated that teachers in Germany appear to be less likely to have higher proficiency in problem solving in a technology-rich environment than other tertiary-educated workers. Besides, general populations' scepticism towards digital technologies has been noted, alongside the country's under-investment in digital infrastructure²¹².

Basic skills provision within non-formal adult education

DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV)²¹³, representing the largest providers of further education in Germany. Further, DVV International brings citizens, educational organizations and governments together in building a sustainable system of further education, aiming to create places for lifelong learning in various countries across the world. Its members are encouraged to work with basic skills and literacy projects. The funding for "Global Learning" project²¹⁴ is allocated to DVV's members, community-based adult centres, to work on high-quality education provision and supply accessible educational offers for learners²¹⁵.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways, 2020, Cedefop
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3081_en.pdf

²⁰⁹ Skills outlook scoreboard - thriving in a digital world, OECD, 2019
<https://www.oecd.org/germany/Skills-Outlook-Germany-EN.pdf>

²¹⁰ M. Rohs, R. Bolten, & J. Kohl, Between adoption and rejection: attitudes of adult educators toward digitization in Germany. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 2020 doi: 10.1111/ijtd.12170

²¹¹ OECD Skills Outlook 2019 <https://www.oecd.org/germany/Skills-Outlook-Germany-EN.pdf>

²¹² Index of readiness for digital lifelong learning: changing how Europeans upgrade their skills, Centre for European Policy Studies, 2019

²¹³ DVV International <https://www.dvv-international.de/ueber-uns/profil>

²¹⁴ DVV International: Global Learning <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-722009/activities/global-learning>

²¹⁵ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

Workplace learning

Workplace learning in Germany may be accessed through three projects and initiatives:

- AlphaGrund Bildung für den Arbeitsplatz²¹⁶ refers to basic job-related education for companies. More specifically, the target group are both HR experts and low-skilled employees. The AlphaGrund qualified project (job-oriented literacy and basic adult education) develops free, tailored to the world of work, further training for post-basic training for employees.
- BasisKomPlus (Arbeit und Leben)²¹⁷ aims to further develop and expand the area of job-oriented basic education. Further, it aims to reach employees and implement individual training courses who improve both literacy and basic skills like e.g. communication skills, digital skills or workers participation skills²¹⁸. BasisKomPlus develops different strategies to inform and sensitize multipliers groups within and beyond companies. Unions are an important access and work councils are important „key persons” to support basic education in companies.
- Toolbox: Arbeitsorientierte Grundbildung (AoG)²¹⁹ is aimed at trainers, educational institutions, HR staff and HR networks as well as educational advisers who are interested in dealing with the topic of work-oriented basic education. The toolbox contains a variety of tried and tested materials that can be used to initiate, implement and evaluate work-oriented basic education offers. Background information, short film clips and further information supplement the toolbox.

Ireland

Skills assessment and flexible learning offer

As of 2019, Ireland’s policy framework focuses on enhancing education opportunities for employability²²⁰. Moreover, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) released a new ‘Action Plan for Education 2019’, supporting the EU Upskilling Pathways initiative. Among its strategic goals, the plan sets out to reach especially learners at risk of educational disadvantage and to build closer links between education and the wider community. In April 2019, a programme ‘Skills to Advance’²²¹ was launched, aiming to support retraining and upskilling of employees in low-skilled and enabling vulnerable Irish workforce in adapting to the labour market.

Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025²²² is based on the progress made under the previous strategy Towards Tomorrow’s Skills. The aim is to enhance people’s lifelong learning, particularly of those in employment. Besides, National Framework of Qualifications that is maintained by Quality and

²¹⁶ AlphaGrund Bildung für den Arbeitsplatz <https://www.alphagrund-projekt.de/>

²¹⁷ BasisKomPlus (Arbeit und Leben) <https://www.arbeitundleben.de/projekte/laufende-projekte/item/basiskomplus>

²¹⁸ Workplace basic skills provision: Germany, Epale, 2019

<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/workplace-basic-skills-provision-germany>

²¹⁹ Toolbox: Arbeitsorientierte Grundbildung (AoG) <https://www.toolbox-aog.de/>

²²⁰ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

²²¹ <https://www.solas.ie/programmes/skills-to-advance/>

²²² Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025 https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf

Qualifications Ireland (QQI)²²³, an independent State agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services established in 2012²²⁴, aiming to promote the enhancement of quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training, quality assurance providers and support and promote a qualifications system that benefits learners and other stakeholders.

Validation and recognition of skills acquired

QQI established a network to provide a coherent voice and a peer support environment for practitioners, including the objective that they may shape and inform policy relating to validation of prior learning.²²⁵ Furthermore, Ireland's policy makers and education providers jointly enhanced learning opportunities in the workplace, i.e. retraining and certification of people on basis of their prior learning. There is a growing awareness of people's knowledge, skills and competencies gained through informal and non-formal learning and Ireland has set some good examples. However, some space for improvement remains regarding validation in the third sector.²²⁶

Norway

In Norway, the mean proficiency scores of 16–65 year-olds in literacy and numeracy are significantly above the average of the OECD countries participating in the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC). Further, only 6.9% of the adult population (16–65 year-olds) report no prior experience with computers or lack very basic computer skills. In contrast, 41% of the adult population score at the highest level in problem solving in technology-rich environments, a proportion significantly above the average of the OECD countries participating in the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)²²⁷.

Kompetanse Norge²²⁸ is an agency aiming to improve basic skills in the adult population in the areas of literacy, numeracy, oral communication and the use of ICT. Its Competence Goals are examples of local curricula in basic skills for adults. They are based on the curricula in the Knowledge Promotion Reform and the Framework for Basic Skills prepared by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. The curricula entail reading and writing, numeracy, digital skills and oral skills²²⁹.

SkillsPlus²³⁰ aims to give adults the opportunity to acquire the basic skills they need to keep up with the demands and changes in modern working life and civil society. Funding and participation have increased every year since the programme was established in 2006. The programme's focus is placed on reading, writing, numeracy, and digital skills. Since 2014, the programme also includes oral communication in combination with other skills. Any enterprise in Norway, private and public, are

²²³ Quality and Qualifications Ireland <https://www.qqi.ie/>

²²⁴ Who we are and what we do, QQI, 2017 <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Who%20We%20Are-Booklet-August%2017.pdf>

²²⁵ Vince <https://vince.eucen.eu/validation-in-europe/ireland/>

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Kompetanse Norge <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/>

²²⁸ Kompetanse Norge <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/>

²²⁹ Competence goals for basic skills: examples of local curricula in reading and writing, numeracy, digital skills and oral skills, Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning, 2013

²³⁰ SkillsPlus Norway <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/#ob=9958>

eligible for funding. However, certain criteria need to be met, such as: the learning activity should be combined with work and basic skills training should preferably be linked to other job-relevant learning; the courses should strengthen the participants' motivation to go on learning; the courses have to relate to the competence goals expressed in our Framework for Basic Skills developed by Skills Norway and approved by the Ministry of Education and Research. The providers concern a range of training providers, study associations, and public and private providers.²³¹ The programme includes a database including detailed information on participants (gender, formal education, industry etc), established for monitoring whether the programme reaches the intended target groups.

The Netherlands

Skills assessment and flexible learning offer

It is noted that participation of adult learners in the Netherlands is being regarded as rather high, i.e. reaching close to 60% according to PIAAC data²³². However, adults encounter challenges in participation and labour market transition. The Netherlands implements the Upskilling Pathways initiative in making efforts to further develop a vocational training sector²³³. According to the OECD's report on assessment and recommendations from 2019²³⁴, the increasing offer of non-formal basic skills provision in the Netherlands lacks a quality assurance framework. In addition, in the Netherlands, the funding of adult basic education falls in most cases under the Adult Education and Vocational Education Act (WEB). Moreover, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, the State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment and the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations have agreed to jointly allocate significant funding to the New Approach to Low Literacy, 2020-2024²³⁵.

Validation and recognition of skills acquired

In the Netherlands, each individual is provided with a competence development plan, which is updated based on the individual learner's needs²³⁶. The country has developed systematic arrangements for migrants and refugees. Moreover, the group represents a majority of users regarding validation opportunities in the higher education sector in the Netherlands²³⁷. Besides, employers making redundancies can offer employees a procedure for an Ervaringscertificaat (certificate of expertise), or an Ervaringsprofiel (validation portfolio). The scheme is targeted at

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² OECD: Better quality and monitoring in the Netherlands <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/skills-and-work/adult-learning/quality-monitoring-netherlands.htm>

²³³ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

²³⁴ OECD: Improving the quality and monitoring of basic skills education for adults, 2019 <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2020/01/06/oeso-rapport-2019-assessment-and-recommendations-improving-the-quality-and-monitoring-of-basic-skills-education-for-adults-engels/oeso-rapport-2019-assessment-and-recommendations-improving-the-quality-and-monitoring-of-basic-skills-education-for-adults-engels.pdf>

²³⁵ OECD: Better quality and monitoring in the Netherlands <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/skills-and-work/adult-learning/quality-monitoring-netherlands.htm>

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2018 update: Synthesis report, Cedefop, European Commission, ICF, 2019. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_synthesis.pdf

unemployed people and employed people at risk of losing their jobs. The cost of this procedure is subsidised by the employment agencies (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen). Half of the costs are subsidised for companies with more than 25 employees, and all costs are subsidised in the case of companies with fewer than 25 employees²³⁸.

Poland

Developments of adult education in Poland date back to the 18th century with the initial aim to support adults in developing skills in literacy, agricultural cultivation and new forms of craft. In 1919, the Central Department of Courses for Adults was established, which was transformed into the Institute of Adult Education in 1928²³⁹. Nowadays, adult education (AE) (edukacja dorosłych) is used interchangeably with adult education and training (AET) (kształcenie i szkolenie dorosłych)²⁴⁰. Aside from being delivered in form of school and higher education training courses, it is also provided as on-the-job practical training or as organised activities of citizens' groups or communities. However, there is no comprehensive definition of AET in Poland²⁴¹. Nevertheless, adult education in Poland has recently experienced significant changes²⁴². Some of the recent developments include an increase of funding allocated for adult education, which enabled organisations in supporting individuals particularly in the area of basic skills acquisition²⁴³. In 2019, Polish Ministry of National Education started addressing "National Skills Strategy for Poland"²⁴⁴.

Besides, continuing education (CE) (kształcenie ustawiczne) is defined in the Law on School Education 2016 (Article 4, section 2, subsection 30, which came into force on 1 September 2019). It is understood as education / training in schools for adults, stage II sectoral vocational schools and postsecondary schools, and as acquisition of new and supplementary knowledge, skills and vocational / professional qualifications in non-school settings by individuals who have completed part-time compulsory education (after completion of full-time compulsory education)²⁴⁵.

Integrated Skills Strategy (Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności - ZSU)²⁴⁶ aims to build, maintain, and using the country's human capital to increase employment and economic growth and promote social inclusion²⁴⁷. More specifically, the main goals of the strategy are as follows: designing a coherent skills

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Z. Dacko-Pickiewicz, Lifelong learning in Poland and European experience, 2013 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292146973_Lifelong_learning_in_Poland_and_the_European_experience

²⁴⁰ Adult education and training, Poland, Eurydice, 2019 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-56_en

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Adult education and training, Poland, Eurydice, 2019 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/poland-developing-integrated-skills-strategyeducation-and-training-56_en

²⁴⁶ Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności <http://www.ibe.edu.pl/pl/projekty-krajowe/zintegrowana-strategia-umiejtnosci>

²⁴⁷ Poland: developing the Integrated skills strategy, Cedefop

development policy, coordinating stakeholder activities, providing equal access to information on skills demand and supply, vocational counselling and supply of education services, increasing knowledge on the benefits of developing skills for individuals, society and economic growth, and increasing educational and labour market activity among all social groups, especially among those at risk of poverty²⁴⁸.

Implementation of Upskilling Pathways initiative in Poland is realised via joint efforts made by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System and the Educational Research Institute within the project “A Chance – New Opportunities for Adults”²⁴⁹. The project is aimed at supporting adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences who are not eligible for support under the Youth Guarantee²⁵⁰ and it is supposed to run between 2018 and 2021²⁵¹. The project’s target groups include employees, unemployed or inactive adults, adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, elderly people (over 50 years of age), immigrants, adults with intellectual disabilities, adults with physical and/or sensorial disabilities, and adults affected by abuse (e.g. physical, mental, economic)²⁵². Furthermore, the project aims to enhance their literacy, numeracy, digital and social competences, as well as to progress towards higher Polish Qualifications Framework levels²⁵³. In addition to this, through Erasmus+ project, “Education by the way”²⁵⁴, educators can enhance their skills while working in the adult learning sector²⁵⁵.

Workshops on digital skills acquisition for adults aged 50+ are often offered by amateurs or students as part of their internship²⁵⁶. In fact, only a little more than 25% of the citizens aged 60+ use online resources on a regular basis²⁵⁷. For this reason, Digital Poland of Equal Opportunities (Polska Cyfrowa Równych Szans) and is carried out by the Ministry of Administration and Digitisation and the Cities in Internet Association (Stowarzyszenie Miasta w Internecie)²⁵⁸. Moreover, Universities of the Third Age (U3A) also engage in developing digital literacy among seniors. However, it is stated that digital skills deficiency in adult population in Poland corresponds with lack of motivation somewhat rather than due to a limited Internet access²⁵⁹. Besides, OECD study finds that many adults in Poland report that they prefer not to participate in formal and/or non-formal adult education or training, indicating that there is space for improvement concerning raising awareness of adult learning benefits and

²⁴⁸ Poland: developing the Integrated skills strategy, Cedefop,

²⁴⁹ Upskilling Pathways in Poland <https://szansa-power.frse.org.pl/en/>

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

²⁵² Upskilling Pathways in Poland <https://szansa-power.frse.org.pl/en/>

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Education by the way, Erasmus+ project <https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/education-by-the-way/>

²⁵⁵ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

²⁵⁶ Ł. Tomczyk, J. Wnęk-Gozdek, A. Mróz, K. Wojewodzic, ICT, digital literacy, digital inclusion and media education in Poland, 2020 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339182044_ICT_DIGITAL_LITERACY_DIGITAL_INCLUSION_AND_MEDIA_EDUCATION_IN_POLAND

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

opportunities, making access and learning more flexible, and increasing participation in adult learning²⁶⁰.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is currently in development, aiming to develop effective mechanisms for the validation of learning outcomes achieved by adults. In addition, adults may take extramural exams for purposes of validating learning outcomes achieved in schools for adults at the level of primary, lower secondary and basic vocational schools (within the requirements laid down in the core curriculum for general education) and general upper secondary schools. The exams are managed by the Central Examination Board and Regional Examination Boards²⁶¹.

Spain

In Spain, objectives of adult education consist of supporting adults in basic skills acquisition, knowledge attainment, professional qualification acquisition or acquisition of the necessary training for the practice of other professions. Furthermore, adult education aims to respond adequately to the challenges related to the gradual aging of the population, ensuring older people the opportunity to increase and update their skills, foster real equality of rights and opportunities between men and women, as well as critically analyse and assess inequalities between them, and acquire, increase and renew the knowledge, abilities and skills required in order to create companies and carry out business activities and initiatives²⁶².

Training provision encompasses different types of programmes, which are organised by the education, employment and local authorities, such as: basic education provision for adults resulting in completion of the different types of provision of the education system leading to the award of an official qualification, employers providing training for employed and unemployed adults, provision of popular education through popular universities, which offer a wide range of educational, training and cultural activities²⁶³.

Non-formal adult education in Spain

Several projects have been developed in recent years to improve basic skills among adults. DomSpain's Open IT Up - Boosting Adult Educator Competences to Upskill Pathways of Adult Learners is a multinational project that develops capacity building and suggests new methods and tools for formal, non-formal, and informal education and training in order to improve the quality of linguistic, digital, and entrepreneurship skills formation in adult education²⁶⁴. The project includes an e-course "Start

²⁶⁰ OECD, OECD Skills Strategy Poland: Assessment and Recommendations, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.1787/b377fbcc-en>.

²⁶¹ Validation of non-formal and informal learning, Poland, EACEA National policies platform, 2019 <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/64-validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-poland>

²⁶² Adult education and training - Spain, Eurydice, 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-79_en

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Open IT Up - Boosting Adult Educator Competences to Upskill Pathways of Adult Learners <https://www.openitup.eu/>

Your Own Business” in English, Bulgarian, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Polish and Turkish available to adult learners and educators.

SRSS Spain aims to improve the integration of low-skilled adults in education and, in the long-term, in the labour market by the design of a National Reference Framework and an assessment, validation and recognition model to identify, assess, validate and recognise their basic skills. Furthermore, it will raise awareness among main stakeholders on the principles, conditions and requirements for an effective assessment, validation and recognition of basic skills and reach a common understanding on the new procedures proposed.

Sweden

Adults in Sweden may participate in education and training in following forms²⁶⁵:

- study guidance is offered for students hesitant about choice of their studies and/or those who require information on certain study programmes or any other information concerning education
- guidance centres provide information for individuals under age of 20 regarding information about study programmes and jobs
- Swedish for immigrants (SFI) is a basic Swedish language course for adults whose first language is not Swedish
- Municipal adult education - Komvux school offers basic education for adults equivalent to compulsory education (Year 1-9). In addition to that, the school offers upper secondary adult education. Furthermore, continuing education is offered in a form of a vocational study programme for adults. Adult education programmes for people with cognitive or mental impairment are also offered (Särvux). Komvux, Särvux, and SFI are based on the needs and requirements of the individual²⁶⁶.
- Folk high schools offer courses at secondary and upper secondary levels as well as vocational training programmes at post-secondary level. Many folk high schools also offer on-campus accommodation. General courses instead of upper-secondary education and sometimes compulsory education are offered. Also, special courses are courses focused on a specific subject. Folk high schools sometimes offer SFI courses as well.
- Higher vocational education is closely linked to career development, as students are encouraged to have a lot of contact with businesses during their studies, through work placements/WIL (Work-integrated Learning). Some higher vocational education programmes offer vocational Swedish as additional support for those who have a mother tongue other than Swedish.
- University and university college
- Study programme or separate courses

²⁶⁵ Adult education, Sweden, 2018 <https://www.informationsverige.se/en/jag-har-fatt-uppehallstillstand/samhallsorientering/boken-om-sverige/att-forsorja-sig-och-utvecklas-i-sverige/utbildning-for-vuxna/>

²⁶⁶ Adult education and training in Sweden, Ministry of Education and Research, 2013 <https://www.government.se/contentassets/d82941161bd54cfc82727c76526ee06e/adult-education-and-training-in-sweden-u13.012>

According to the Swedish National Council for Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet)²⁶⁷, more than one million people participate each year in the activities of student associations and folk high schools. Liberal adult education (Folkbildning)²⁶⁸ is a voluntary and decentralised form of learning²⁶⁹, referring to non-formal adult education, fostering active learning adapted to learners' needs²⁷⁰, while the focus is placed on mapping and visualizing general competences within lifelong learning²⁷¹.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The implementation of validation is decentralised at regional and local level and embedded in the municipal adult education system and public employment services. Public authorities within the field of education, the public employment service, adult education providers or competent bodies for regulated professions are responsible for validation of adult non-formal and informal education in Sweden. The process of validation differs depending on whether validation is part of formal education, the private sector, adult education or higher education, and/or performed by accredited actors or non-accredited. The Education Act affirms the possibility of undertaking validation in all types of adult education²⁷².

Ukraine

In the context of Ukraine, adult education has been delivered in a form of formal education mostly, while non-formal education has been legally recognised as of 2017²⁷³. In their study, Babushko and Solovei find that non-formal adult education in Ukraine is delivered with support of Ukrainian non-governmental public organisations, some international organisations, and different programmes. In addition to that, it was mentioned that the majority of adult education centres in Ukraine is created or supported by DVV International - the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association, in effort to create a sustainable system for further education. The aim of adult education centres is to provide literacy and basic education, vocational training, global and intercultural learning, environmental education and sustainable development, migration and integration, refugee work, health education, conflict prevention and democracy education²⁷⁴.

²⁶⁷ Swedish National Council for Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet)
<https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkbildning/>

²⁶⁸ Liberal adult education (Folkbildning), Glossary, Eurydice, 2020
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-70_en#F

²⁶⁹ Swedish non-formal adult education, <https://studieforbunden.se/other-languages/>

²⁷⁰ Swedish National Council for Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet)
<https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkbildning/>

²⁷¹ Validation of non-formal and informal learning, Sweden, Eurydice, 2019
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-77_en

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ S. Babushko & L. Solovei, Models of adult education centres in Ukraine, 2019
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340163662_Models_of_Adult_Education_Centres_in_Ukraine

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

Further, Babushko and Solovei observe that non-formal education in Ukraine is an addition to formal educational institutions. However, the authors posit that recent trends in adult education exhibit that interest in adult education is on the rise, whereas open universities, third-age universities, corporate universities and other non-formal forms of organising learning process emerge as new approaches to adult learning adopted by formal educational institutions²⁷⁵.

The Ukrainian Adult Education Association (UAEA)²⁷⁶ is an umbrella association for adult learning that participates in forming the policy of adult education and the policy of lifelong learning education in Ukraine, including the drafting of legislative acts. Moreover, UAEE contributed in drafting “Conception of Development of Adult Education in Ukraine for 2020-2022” regulation²⁷⁷.

United Kingdom

Adult education in the United Kingdom (UK) has undergone various changes since the start of literacy campaign in 1970s²⁷⁸. Preceding the literacy campaigns, basic adult education was non-existent in the social and educational policy of the UK. However, nowadays various government-led initiatives concerning basic skills and continuing adult education exist in the UK, including multiple adult education offered by non-governmental providers. It is estimated that, in the UK, around 1 in 6 adults struggle with reading and writing, and around 1 in 4 adults find maths difficult. In addition, 850,000 people are not proficient in speaking English and one half of adults in England and Northern Ireland is unable to use computers effectively²⁷⁹. This report looks more closely at the development of basic skills policy in England.

England

Department of Education in the UK is responsible for the education system in England²⁸⁰. It is led by the Secretary of State for Education who is assisted by a team of Ministers. The Secretary of State has responsibility for the following policy areas: adult education, including the National Retraining Scheme, further education colleges, apprenticeships, including the apprenticeship levy, traineeships and institutes of technology, technical education and skills, including new T level qualifications²⁸¹, careers education, information and guidance, post-16 funding (including support for young people and adult learners). Further, the Department aims to reduce the number of young people who are not

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ukrainian Adult Education Association (UAEA) <http://www.uaod.org.ua/en/>

²⁷⁷ Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019 <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

²⁷⁸ Adult learning and literacy in the United Kingdom: Volume 1, chapter 7, National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

²⁷⁹ Citizens' Curriculum [https://learningandwork.org.uk/what-we-do/essential-life-skills/citizens-curriculum/#:~:text=Citizens'%20curriculum,and%20financial%20capabilities%20they%20need.&text=In%20the%20UK%20around%](https://learningandwork.org.uk/what-we-do/essential-life-skills/citizens-curriculum/#:~:text=Citizens'%20curriculum,and%20financial%20capabilities%20they%20need.&text=In%20the%20UK%20around%20)

²⁸⁰ United Kingdom - England: Distribution of responsibilities, Eurydice, 2019 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-91_en

²⁸¹ T Levels are new courses coming in September 2020, which will follow GCSEs and will be equivalent to 3 A levels. These 2-year courses have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work.

in education, employment or training (NEETs). The Minister for the School System has responsibility for the further education provider market, including quality and improvement.²⁸².

Among government-led adult education initiatives, such is the National Retraining Scheme - the government's new programme aiming to support low-qualified adults in employment, its objective being supporting adults in retraining for better jobs and enhancing their employability. In addition, the need for reskilling of adults is unassailable with regard to future economical changes, including those brought about by automation²⁸³. The aforementioned scheme will concern provision of training and tailored advice for adult employees, complementation of existing training programmes for adults. Besides, it will concern provision of support for adults in order to encourage people to develop their flexibility and resilience in the world of work, so they can take advantage of new opportunities.²⁸⁴ In 2020, Get help to retrain²⁸⁵ will be available across England. The programme was first included as part of the Industrial Strategy White Paper²⁸⁶, published by the Government in 2017²⁸⁷.

Provision to raise achievement in basic skills

In June 2020, the UK government has set out the funding and performance management rules that apply to all providers of education and training who receive adult education budget funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency²⁸⁸. Moreover, the government is committed in provision of funding for adults older than 19 who are employed, aged 19 or older, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C), or higher, in English and maths, as part of their legal entitlement on the day they start the specific qualifications²⁸⁹. Further, it is stated that the government will fully fund individuals who are employed, aged 19 or older, assessed at below level 1 on the day they start the course in Essential Digital Skills qualification (EDSQ up to and including level 1). Currently, digital skills are not fully funded. However, the government is planning to introduce adult digital skills entitlement alongside maths and English from 2021 onwards²⁹⁰.

Basic Digital Skills Qualifications is a government initiative implemented by the Department of Education, aimed at improving adult basic digital skills and enhancing adults' participation in society. More specifically, the purpose of these qualifications is to provide learners with the core digital skills

²⁸² United Kingdom - England: Distribution of responsibilities, Eurydice, 2019
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-91_en

²⁸³ National retraining scheme, Department of Education, 2019
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-retraining-scheme/national-retraining-scheme>

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Get help to retrain is the first part of the national retraining scheme, launched in July 2019

²⁸⁶ Industrial Strategy: building a Britain fit for the future, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy UK, 2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future>

²⁸⁷ United Kingdom - England: Distribution of responsibilities, Eurydice, 2019
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-91_en

²⁸⁸ ESFA funded adult education budget (AEB): funding and performance management rules 2020 to 2021, Education & Skills Funding Agency
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/893033/AEB_2020_to_2021_funding_rules_v.1_FINAL.pdf

²⁸⁹ GCSE English language or maths, Functional Skills English or maths from Entry to level 2, Stepping-stone qualifications (including components, where applicable) in English or maths approved by the Department for Education and ESFA

²⁹⁰ United Kingdom - England: Main types of provision, Eurydice, 2019

and knowledge that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life, and support progression into employment and further study²⁹¹. In preparation for this, in October 2018, a consultation²⁹² on improving adult basic digital skills was launched. The initiative encompassed education and training providers, including Further Education colleges, independent training providers, adult and community education providers, teachers and tutors, subject experts, learners, employers, business sector, awarding organisations, third sector organisations, and libraries and other delivery/representative organisations²⁹³.

National standards for essential digital skills²⁹⁴ set out the digital skills needed for work and life across Entry level²⁹⁵ and Level 1²⁹⁶. Essential Digital Skills Qualifications encompass the following five skills areas set out in the national standards: using devices and handling information, creating and editing, communicating, transactions and being safe and responsible online. The standards are primarily intended for use by awarding organisations in developing new essential digital skills qualifications, available for first teaching from August 2020. In addition, the standards will also concern the development of new subject content for digital Functional Skills qualifications, available for first teaching from 2021²⁹⁷.

Functional skills qualifications in English and maths and information and communications technology (ICT) are currently available at Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3, and at Level 1 and Level 2²⁹⁸ of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)²⁹⁹.

Concerning further education opportunities, courses in English, writing and basic maths are free of charge for learners under 24 studying for their first qualification equivalent to General Certificates of

²⁹¹ Decisions on the regulation of Essential Digital Skills Qualifications, Ofqual
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796811/6500-2_Decisions_on_the_regulation_of_Essential_Digital_Skills_Qualifications_Post_12.45pm_version.pdf

²⁹² Improving adult basic digital skills: government consultation, Department of Education, 2018
https://consult.education.gov.uk/post-16-basic-skills-team/improving-adult-basic-digital-skills/supporting_documents/Improving%20adult%20basic%20digital%20skillsconsultation.pdf

²⁹³ Improving adult basic digital skills: government consultation, 2018, Department of Education
https://consult.education.gov.uk/post-16-basic-skills-team/improving-adult-basic-digital-skills/supporting_documents/Improving%20adult%20basic%20digital%20skillsconsultation.pdf

²⁹⁴ National standards for essential digital skills, 2019, Department of Education
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796596/National_standards_for_essential_digital_skills.pdf

²⁹⁵ Entry – designed for adults with no or little prior experience of using digital devices or the internet.

²⁹⁶ Level 1 – designed for adults with some experience of using digital devices and the internet but lacking secure basic digital skills.

²⁹⁷ National standards for essential digital skills, Department of Education, 2019
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796596/National_standards_for_essential_digital_skills.pdf

²⁹⁸ United Kingdom - England: main types of provision, Eurydice, 2019
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToRaiseAchievementInBasicSkills

²⁹⁹ Regulated Qualifications Framework: a postcard, Ofqual, 2015
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulated-qualifications-framework-a-postcard>

Secondary Education (GCSE) or A level³⁰⁰. Programmes are usually available on a part-time basis at further education colleges³⁰¹. Adults who wish to return to education for GCSE and A Levels have an opportunity to build on the qualifications they obtained at school without repeating subjects already successfully completed. Programmes are also available through distance learning³⁰².

National Numeracy is an independent charity established in 2012 to enhance numeracy skills among both adults and children and to promote the importance of everyday maths skills³⁰³. The charity, moreover, is devoted to raising awareness regarding poor numeracy levels across the UK, as well as promoting the recognition that everyone can improve through campaigns such as National Numeracy Day³⁰⁴. Family Maths Toolkit³⁰⁵ aims to improve maths skills in children and their parents. In addition, the site also offers resources to help teachers support family engagement with children's maths learning.

National Literacy Trust³⁰⁶ is an independent charity based in London, England, that promotes literacy in the UK. The charity's aim is to raise awareness, enhance literacy attainment and employability skills, and improve health outcomes and social capital in most deprived areas of the UK. National Literacy Trust Hubs³⁰⁷ and regional campaigns work in communities to achieve these aims.

Provision to achieve a recognised qualification during adulthood

In addition to (GCSEs) and A levels opportunities for adults provided, adult learners may obtain vocational qualifications and access to Higher Education Diplomas which are designed specifically to prepare adult learners for higher education³⁰⁸. Access to Higher Education Diploma programmes are also supported by higher education institutions. Moreover, Open University³⁰⁹ offers Access modules, including courses with focus on specific subjects, such as Access to HE Diploma (Law) or Access to HE Diploma (Nursing and Healthcare Professions). The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is an independent body responsible for monitoring and advising on standards and quality in higher education across the United Kingdom³¹⁰.

³⁰⁰ Further education courses and funding, <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>

³⁰¹ United Kingdom - England: main types of provision, Eurydice, 2019
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToAchieveARecognisedQualificationDuringAdulthood

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ National Numeracy, <https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/about-us>

³⁰⁴ National Numeracy Day, <https://www.numeracyday.com/>

³⁰⁵ Family Maths Toolkit, <https://www.familymathstoolkit.org.uk/>

³⁰⁶ National Literacy Trust <https://literacytrust.org.uk/>

³⁰⁷ National Literacy Hubs: a place-based response to tackling low literacy, National Literacy Trust
https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/National_Literacy_Trust_Hubs_a_place_based_response_to_low_literacy.pdf

³⁰⁸ United Kingdom - England: main types of provision, Eurydice, 2019
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToRaiseAchievementInBasicSkills

³⁰⁹ The Open University, <http://www.open.ac.uk/>

³¹⁰ The Quality Agency for Higher Education (QAA) UK, <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en#>

Provision targeting the transition to the labour market

The Work and Health Programme is an employment support programme commissioned by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It is designed to improve employment outcomes for people with health conditions or disabilities and those unemployed for more than two years³¹¹. The programme was launched in North West England and Wales November 2017, while in the rest of England it was introduced in 2018³¹².

Flexible Learning Fund was launched in 2017, with aim to encourage lifelong learning and adult participation in new training courses and help them to secure a new job, or progress in their current employment³¹³.

Traineeships in the United Kingdom were introduced in 2013, and are aimed at 16-to 24-year-olds who need to gain extra skills and experience to access an apprenticeship or employment. Young adults interested in traineeships may also receive support via Education, Health and Care plan³¹⁴, or they may receive guidance from career advisors, such as National Careers Service³¹⁵ or Jobcentre Plus³¹⁶. Further, National Careers Service offer skills assessment and provides various courses³¹⁷ for learners. Individuals whose mother tongue is other than English are moreover encouraged to seek career advice via the provided translation service³¹⁸.

The Skills Toolkit³¹⁹ is an online platform made up of free online courses, tools and resources to help learners improve their digital and numeracy skills. The Department for Education has consulted some of the country's leading educational experts and employers to make up a collection of high quality resources to suit a range of interests and skill levels, various introductory courses concerning digital and numeracy skills, involving various providers.

³¹¹ Shaw Trust: Work and Health Programme [https://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/en-GB/Services-\(2\)/Work-and-Health-Programme](https://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/en-GB/Services-(2)/Work-and-Health-Programme)

³¹² Work and Health Programme <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7845/>

³¹³ United Kingdom - England: Main types of provision https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToRaiseAchievementInBasicSkills

³¹⁴ An education, health and care (EHC) plan is a document which identifies the educational, health and social needs of children and young people up to the age of 25 which cannot be met by mainstream support. Plans are issued to a child or young person by their local authority following an EHC assessment process, which takes place under the terms of the Children and Families Act 2014. EHC plans replaced statements of special educational needs.

³¹⁵ National Careers Service <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/about-us>

³¹⁶ Jobcentre Plus <https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus>

³¹⁷ Learning and training opportunities offered by providers contracted with the Education and Skills Funding Agency concern college courses, apprenticeships, GCSE and A levels, hobby and leisure courses, and training for 16 to 19 year olds

³¹⁸ National Careers Service <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/about-us>

³¹⁹ The Skills Toolkit <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/find-a-course/the-skills-toolkit>

Returnships (return to work programmes) in the UK aim to support adults who experienced career break and would like to return to work, particularly women and elderly. The initiative was first introduced in 2014, while over the years the provision of returnships by businesses³²⁰ increased³²¹.

Various employment schemes enable adults who are unemployed but capable of work and claiming benefits (usually the Jobseeker's Allowance), such as:

- work experience³²² opportunities have been available since January 2011. The scheme is aimed at 18- to 24-year-olds and people aged 25 and over who don't have recent work history.
- sector-based work academies³²³ are collaborations between Jobcentre Plus, businesses and training providers.
- Skills Conditionality concerns a referral process for benefits claimants who have a skills need which is the main barrier preventing them from moving into work. However, certain requirements apply³²⁴.

Provision of liberal (popular) adult education which focuses on community learning

Community learning concerns a broad range of flexible non-formal learning opportunities, ranging from personal development through to older people's learning, IT courses, employability skills, family learning, and activities to promote civic engagement and community development³²⁵. Local authorities³²⁶, further education colleges³²⁷, community groups and voluntary (third) sector organisations, such as the University of the Third Age (U3A)³²⁸, provide unaccredited learning opportunities for adults of different ages and backgrounds who are interested in learning³²⁹. In July 2020, the Department of Education dismissed the previous target of having 50% of young people in the UK going to university introduced in 1999, in an effort to enhance post-school education

³²⁰ Runneth Londo: Return to work programmes 2020 <https://www.runnethlondon.com/uk-returnships-2020/>

³²¹ United Kingdom - England: Main types of provision https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToRaiseAchievementInBasicSkills

³²² Work experience: employer guide <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employers-could-you-offer-work-experience/work-experience-employer-guide>

³²³ Sector-based work academies <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide>

³²⁴ It is mandatory for these claimants to attend skills provision funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Where a claimant's skills needs are less clear, they are mandated to the National Careers Service for a further skills assessment.

³²⁵ United Kingdom - England: main types of provision, 2019, Eurydice https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToRaiseAchievementInBasicSkills

³²⁶ In the context of education legislation, a local authority is the tier of local government with responsibility for education for children and young people from 0 to 19. Formerly, the function of the local authority in respect of education was described by the term 'local education authority' (LEA).

³²⁷ Further education (FE) is education for people over the age of full-time compulsory education (16 years) which does not take place in a secondary school. It is often vocational but also includes general (academic) programmes.

³²⁸ U3A is a UK-wide movement which brings together people in their 'third age' to develop their interests and continue their learning in a friendly and informal environment.

³²⁹ United Kingdom - England: main types of provision, Eurydice, 2019 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToRaiseAchievementInBasicSkills

participation towards further education colleges and apprenticeships for those aged over 18 in England³³⁰.

Another example of non-formal learning is that of the Citizens' Curriculum³³¹, based on a holistic approach³³² and aiming to equip adult learners with skills in English, maths, digital, civic, health, and finance management. The initiative is implemented by Learning and Work Institute³³³, independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. Learning and Work Institute³³⁴ moreover bring together over 90 years of combined history and heritage from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion. The Institute runs a number of high profile campaigns, to raise the demand for learning and skills and to celebrate outstanding learning achievements. Festival of Learning (Adult Learners' Week) is the UK's largest and longest running festival of learning with the aim of promoting adult learning in all its diversity.³³⁵

Continuing education courses are offered by universities, including lecture series and one-day courses, weekend courses and summer schools, as well as longer part-time programmes³³⁶.

Other types of publicly subsidised provision for adult learners

Apprenticeships in the UK may be studied at various qualification levels: intermediate, which incorporate Level 2 qualifications, equivalent to 5 GCSE passes, advanced, which incorporate Level 3 qualifications equivalent to 2 A Level passes, higher, which incorporate Level 4 qualifications and above, degree, which incorporate Level 6 qualifications and above³³⁷. The regulating body responsible for assuring apprenticeship quality standards is Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education³³⁸, while all apprenticeship programmes must comply with the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE)³³⁹.

³³⁰ The Guardian: Ministers to ditch target of 50% of young people in England going to university, 9/7/2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jul/09/ministers-to-ditch-target-of-50-of-young-people-in-england-going-to-university>

³³¹ Learning and Work Institute: Citizens' curriculum <https://learningandwork.org.uk/what-we-do/essential-life-skills/citizens-curriculum/#:~:text=Citizens'%20curriculum,and%20financial%20capabilities%20they%20need.&text=In%20the%20UK%20around%201,4%20adults%20find%20maths%20difficult>.

³³² Entry pathways: the Citizens' Curriculum capability-based approach, EPALE, 2019 <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/entry-pathways-citizens-curriculum-capability-based-approach>

³³³ Learning and Work Institute <https://learningandwork.org.uk/about-us/>

³³⁴ Learning and Work Institute: About <https://learningandwork.org.uk/about-us/>

³³⁵ European Basic Skills Network: Learning and Work Institute <http://basicskills.eu/current-members/national-institute-of-adult-continuing-education-niace/>

³³⁶ United Kingdom - England: Main types of provision https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToRaiseAchievementInBasicSkills

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/>

³³⁹ Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE), Department of Education, 2018 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/734414/Specification_of_apprenticeship_standards_for_England.pdf

Unionlearn is the learning and skills organisation of the Trades Union Congress (TUC)³⁴⁰ and it works to assist unions in the delivery of learning opportunities for their members, as well as managing the Union Learning Fund (ULF)³⁴¹. Union learning supports people in acquiring skills and qualifications to boost their job prospects and improve their employability. More specifically, it enhances learners' chances to make a positive contribution to the economy through better skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT as well as a wide range of other subjects at all skills levels. Further, unionlearn organises or is involved in a range of campaigns³⁴² to improve learning opportunities for members of trade union³⁴³.

Prison education is offered in a form of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) and managed by the Ministry of Justice. It concerns offender education with mainstream academic and vocational provision. OLASS allows offenders in custody to receive education and training according to individual need³⁴⁴.

Initial and diagnostic assessment

In the UK, bksb³⁴⁵ offer eLearning solutions for Functional skills and GCSE English and Maths.

Skills Forward³⁴⁶ is one of the UK's leading eLearning software and assessment solutions for Functional Skills, GCSEs, apprenticeships and employability skills.

The Excellence Geataway³⁴⁷ is the Education and Training Foundation's resources portal containing resources, and covering a broad range of topics and including guidance, effective practice, teaching materials, research and CPD materials.

Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

A universal approach to validating or recognising non-formal and informal learning in England has not been established yet³⁴⁸.

³⁴⁰ Unionlearn <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/>

³⁴¹ Union Learning Fund <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/union-learning-fund>

³⁴² Campaigns concern apprenticeships in the UK, employer engagement, basic skills, improving equality and diversity, health and wellbeing, supporting the NHS Learning for Life, technician pathways, widening participation, and providing resources to support youth employment and skills

³⁴³ Unionlearn: our work <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/our-work>

³⁴⁴ United Kingdom - England: main types of provision, Eurydice, 2019
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-84_en#ProvisionToRaiseAchievementInBasicSkills

³⁴⁵ <https://www.bksb.co.uk/>

³⁴⁶ Skills Forward <http://www.skillsforward.co.uk/>

³⁴⁷ The Excellence Getaway <https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/import-pdf2648-0>

³⁴⁸ United Kingdom - England: Validation of non-formal and informal learning, Eurydice, 2019
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-84_en

3. Conclusions

As can be inferred from the examples collected in this report, basic skills development has been high on the adult learning policy agenda across Europe. Various initiatives have been launched to improve basic skills provision, encompassing not only literacy and numeracy, but increasingly also digital skills. EU's Upskilling Pathways, which the present report has referred to on several occasions, has been key in raising awareness of the need to advance adults' basic skills. European partnerships, such as the Life Skills for Europe³⁴⁹, InnoVal³⁵⁰ and Upskilling Pathways in AE-PRO³⁵¹, have served a similar purpose, collecting successful practices and approaches that can be implemented transnationally.

Importantly, new policy initiatives, such as the European Skills Agenda³⁵² launched in 2020, take one step further, broadening the focus on (basic) skills also to skills for life. EAEA firmly believes that ambitious objectives set out in EU policy frameworks, which aim at increasing (basic) skills levels and participation rates in adult learning, can only be achieved if partnerships and collaborations, also with civil society, are a key principle of policy-making.

³⁴⁹ Life Skills for Europe <https://eaea.org/project/life-skills-for-europe-lse/>

³⁵⁰ InnoVal <http://inno-val.eu/innoval-project/>

³⁵¹ Upskilling Pathways in AE-PRO <https://eaea.org/project/up-aepro/?pid=11709>

³⁵² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>