



Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills

Full Country Report - Poland

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October - 2017



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Directorate E — Skills

Unit E.3 — VET, Apprenticeship and Adult Learning

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**Independent national experts network in the area
of adult education/adult skills**

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

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1.0 COUNTRY OVERVIEW (STATISTICAL ELEMENT TO BE INSERTED BY ECORYS FROM UPDATED COUNTRY OVERVIEW)

1.1 Trends for the entire population

1.1.1 Employment rate – entire population

Table 1.1: Evolution of employment rate - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	67.9	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70	71	75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment	71
Member State	61.1	58.3	64.3	64.5	64.7	64.9	66.5	67.8	69.3		

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa_ergaed*, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the average employment rate of the population (ISCED all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given Member State over the period 2000-2016 to EU targets and average, including the EU2020 target, national 2020 targets and the average EU employment rate for 2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

The employment rate in Poland was 69.3% in 2016, which is below the EU2020 target of 75%. There is a chance, based on progress across recent years that the EU2020 target will not be met.

-Comparison to National 2020 target

The employment rate of 69.3% in 2016 is close to achieving the National 2020 target rate of 71%.

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The national employment rate as of 2016 is below the EU-28 average of 71% with a gap of just 1.7 percentage points. According to 2016 data, the EU-28 average rate diverges from the EU 2020 target by 4 percentage points and Poland's employment rate diverges from the national target by only 1.7 percentage point.

-Evolution over time

The employment rate in Poland has increased steadily since 2005. Between 2005 and 2016, the rate increased from 58.3% to 69.3%, by 11 percentage points. The growth of the employment rate in Poland improved, especially after 2013, as between 2013 and 2016, the employment rate increased by 4.4 percentage points. Poland is "catching up" with the EU in terms of the employment rate (the gap between Poland and the EU is

narrowing). The gap between Poland and the EU-28 average in 2016 was 1.7 percentage point, while in 2015 it was 2.2 percentage points.

1.1.2 Participation rate – entire population

Table 1.2: Evolution of participation rate in education and training - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	9.6	9.3	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.7	10.8		
Member State	:	4.9	5.2	4.4	4.5	4.3	4	3.5	3.7	15% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL)	10% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL) ¹

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and age (%), Eurostat code *trng_lfse_01*, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 to EU data over the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

The participation rate in education and training is 3.7% for Poland, compared to the EU 2020 target of 15%. Based on the fluctuations in the national rate over recent years, it is unlikely that the EU 2020 target will be met. The gap between EU 2020 target and Poland's lifelong learning participation rate was 11.3 percentage points in 2016. There is 6.3 percentage points between the national 2020 target and the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults in Poland, as of 2016.

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The national data for 2016 (3.7%) is below the EU-28 average of 10.8%.

-Evolution over time

The participation rate in Poland has fluctuated since 2005, with an overall pattern of decline between 2005 and 2016 of 1.2 percentage points. The highest rate seen was in 2010 (5.2%), and the lowest in 2015 (3.5%).

The proportion of adults participating in lifelong learning in Poland is low compared to the EU-28 average. Whilst the number of adults in Poland that took part in lifelong learning in 2016 represents a small increase from the previous year (0.2 percentage points), since 2010, the participation rate in education and training has decreased overall. Therefore, we cannot regard the most recent increase in the rate as a tendency towards growth of the

¹ National target: by 2020, an average of at least 10% of adults should participate in lifelong learning [*Perspektywa uczenia się przez całe życie*, page 47 (Lifelong Learning Perspective)].

participation rate in education and training in Poland, bearing in mind that the 2015 rate was the lowest seen since for 10 years.

Poland diverges distinctly from other countries in the EU with regard to participation of adults in lifelong learning. Admittedly, the gap between EU rate and Poland decreased insignificantly in 2016 (from 7.2 percentage points in 2015 to 7.1 percentage points).

“Adults rarely engage in job relevant learning and every third adult does not see the need for further education or training. [...] Participation is lowest among people who could benefit the most, i.e. those with basic levels of education, those aged over 50 and those who are inactive. The results of the recent initiatives such as the National Qualifications Register and the Database of Development Services remain to be seen”².

1.2 Trends for low qualified adults

1.2.1 Share of low qualified adults

Table Table 1.3: Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	30.6	27.3	26.6	25.8	24.8	24.1	23.5	23
Member State	20.2	15.2	11.5	11.1	10.4	9.9	9.5	9.2	8.7

Source: Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%), Eurostat edat_ifse_03, last updated 25 April 2017

Explanatory note: this table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) in 2016 to the EU-28 average for 2016 and the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The share of low-qualified adults in general population in Poland is much lower than the EU-28 average. The 2016 national rate was 8.7% lower than the EU-28 average of 23% in 2016.

-Evolution over time

The share of low qualified adults has reduced consistently between 2000 and 2016, with a decrease of 11.5 percentage points over this period. The rate of decline has been faster in Poland than the EU-28 average.

In 2016, the gap between Poland and the EU-28 average with regard to the proportion of low qualified adults was 14.3 percentage points and the same in 2015. Between 2010 and 2016, the gap has declined from 15.8 percentage points to 14.3 percentage points.

² Country Report Poland 2017, page 25.

1.2.2 *Employment rate of low skilled adults*

Table 1.4: Employment rates of low skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	55.7	53.8	53.4	52.7	52	52.6	53.2	54.3
Member State	42.7	37.3	39.9	39.7	39.8	38.5	39.3	40.8	40.7

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa_ergaed*, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the EU average over the period 2010-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The employment rate of low skilled adults in Poland was 40.7% in 2016, compared to an EU-28 average of 54.3%.

-Evolution over time

The employment rate of low skilled adults in Poland has overall seen a declining trend. Between 2000 and 2016, the rate decreased by 2 percentage points overall, from 42.7% to 40.7%. However, this decline masks a decrease between 2000 and 2005 (42.7% to 37.3%). Between 2013 and 2015, the national rate increased and then decreased by 0.1 percentage point by 2016.

In 2016, the proportion of low qualified adults in relation to the general population in Poland was significantly lower compared to the EU-28 average (8.7% and 23%, respectively – see Table 1.3). As for the employment rate in this group in Poland, it was significantly smaller (40.7%) than the EU-28 average (54.3%). This is likely to be because:

- Low qualified adults in Poland must compete in the labour market against a group of workers with better qualifications which is larger than the EU on average;
- It is easier to gain qualifications above ISCED levels 0-2 in Poland than it is in other countries in the EU. Thus, we can say that being a low qualified adult in Poland coexists with more serious problems than in the case of other countries in the EU. However, we need to keep in mind that “the OECD PIAAC survey (for Poland) revealed that graduates of basic vocational schools have insufficient literacy and numeracy skills. At the same time, the results for technical secondary schools are considerably better than for basic vocational schools”³.

In the EU as well as in Poland, the situation has improved since 2013. In the last three years the employment rates of low qualified adults has increased by 0.5 percentage points generally across the EU, and by 0.8 percentage points in Poland. Nevertheless, we cannot

³ Country Report Poland 2017, page 25.

regard it as a positive trend towards growth in the employment rates of low qualified adults in Poland; as since 2010, the share of low-qualified adults in employment has declined year-to-year.

1.2.3 Participation rate of low skilled adults

Table 1.5: Participation rate of low skilled adults – EU average in comparison to national average

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	3.7	3.9	4	3.9	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.2
Member State	:	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.9

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and educational attainment (%), Eurostat code and trng_lfse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 with low qualification levels (ISCED levels 0-2) to EU data and over the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The participation rate for low skilled adults was 0.9% in 2016, much lower than the EU-28 average at 4.2%.

-Evolution over time

In general, the participation of low qualified people in lifelong learning is still drastically low in Poland. In 2016, in Poland, low qualified adults took part in LLL 4.11 times less than the general population aged 25-64, whereas across the EU-28 this is 2.57 times less than the general population aged 25-64 (see table 1.2).

In 2016, the gap between Poland and the EU-28 average was 3.3 percentage points, and in 2015 it was even bigger, 3.7 percentage points. It shows that situation has improved in Poland (0.3 percentage point year-to-year). This is the biggest year-to-year improvement in Poland. However, it is too early to claim that there is a tendency towards an increase in the participation of low qualified adults in lifelong learning in Poland.

2.0 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

2.1 Main features and a concise summary of historic development

In Poland, adult education is provided in the form of “adult education and training” (kształcenie i szkolenie dorosłych) and “continuing education” (kształcenie ustawiczne). The latter is defined in the Education Law (Prawo oświatowe) as “education in schools for adults as well as gaining and supplementing knowledge, skills and professional qualifications in extracurricular forms by those who have fulfilled compulsory schooling”. The former, adult education and training, goes beyond the scope of school education and traditional training courses, and includes on-the-job practical training and organised community activities. However, this term has not been formally included in the Polish legislation; it is therefore difficult to describe its scope and main characteristics.

The continuing education system in Poland has undergone important changes in the last few years, resulting from a general change in the approach to vocational education (introduction of a system focused on qualifications and validation of learning outcomes). The Regulation of the Minister of National Education from 11 Jan 2012 introduced a system where adults could gain and supplement their education not only in formal schools, but also in extracurricular forms, including in a non-formal continuing education system. According to the Regulation, these include vocational qualification courses (kwalifikacyjne kursy zawodowe), vocational skills courses (kursy umiejętności zawodowych), general competence courses (kursy kompetencji ogólnych) and theoretical training for young workers (turnus dokształcania teoretycznego młodocianych pracowników)⁴. These courses and training can be provided by public and private schools for adults, Public Employment Services (PES) as well as private companies according to specific rules set up in the Regulation.

When defining adult education and training in Poland, all social and economic activity sectors involved have to be taken into account, including public administration, trade and industry as well as non-governmental organisations. Adult education and training in Poland covers formal and non-formal education. Adult education and training programmes can therefore be implemented in both formal and non-formal education systems. Formal education is provided by public and private schools for those aged 18 and above who have not completed school education, as well as other institutions that offer certified education and training. Adult learning programmes applied in non-formal education are of much wider range due to the diversity of institutions, and the individuals involved⁵. Adult education and training is the most diversified area of education in Poland not only because of its beneficiaries, their age as well as social and professional status, but also because of the institutions that are responsible for its provision⁶.

⁴ KOWEZIU, (2013). Kształcenie zawodowe i ustawiczne – Vademecum. Warszawa.

⁵ Eurypedia,
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Adult_Education_and_Training

⁶ Eurypedia,
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Adult_Education_and_Training

There are four types of public institutions that provide continuing education for adults:

- Continuing education centres (there were 186 in 2015);
- Practical training centres (157 in 2015);
- Further and in-service training centres (368 in 2015); and
- Vocational and continuing education centres (92 in 2015).

Non-public institutions providing training for the unemployed and those looking for a job are supposed to be registered in the biggest directory of training institutions for adults in Poland – the Training Institution Register (TIR). “In 2015, 13,341 training institutions registered in the TIR (total, including local divisions and branches was 13,833) offered 139,331 training courses; 55 percent of these suppliers were those running their own business, and 27 percent were associations, foundations and companies.”⁷ The number of institutions registered in the TIR has only increased slightly since 2013.

According to Eurostat, in 2016, 3.7% of the population aged 25-64, or approximately 1.4 million people, participated in adult education and training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey.⁸ Yearly, that is about a quarter of the overall population.⁹

The number of adults currently participating in formal education and training is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Number of participants in formal education and training by level of education and age

Level of education (i.e. basic, vocational, higher)	Age 20-24	Age 25+	Total
Primary	5	18	23
Lower secondary	10,325	452	10,777
Upper secondary	103,547	57,051	160,598
Post-secondary non-tertiary education		93,119	
Short-cycle tertiary education		983	
Bachelor's or equivalent level		281,758	
Master's or equivalent level		155,946	
Doctoral or equivalent level		40,060	

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat database table “Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ_uoe_enra02)”, accessed 2017.08.21

⁷ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Main_Providers

⁸ Eurostat, Eurostat database table “Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and age (trng_lfse_01)”, accessed on 04.10.2017

⁹ Eurostat, Eurostat database table “Participation rate in education and training by sex (trng_aes_12m0)”, accessed on 04.10.2017

2.2 Provision

The majority of adult learning is provided by different public institutions, and are either under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MoE) or the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoL). The MoE coordinates all schools and vocational training institutes (including schools for adults), while the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has under its jurisdiction PES which focuses on training of the unemployed, alongside the development of competences of employers and their employees. The ministries do so through a variety of programmes and legislative instruments, and with funding combined from both national and EU sources.

Higher education institutions under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MHE) also provide open access courses and run third age universities. Increasingly, however, private organisations are also stepping in to deliver adult learning. They often either offer more specialised courses focused on particular age groups (usually the elderly), or competences (e.g. IT-based).

2.2.1 *Helps adults improve their Basic Skills*

Basic skills education for adults in Poland is provided by public and private schools for adults. In 2015/2016, there were 3 adult primary schools, 189 lower secondary schools and 1 663 general upper secondary schools. Approximately 13, 3,897 and 58,261 graduated from these schools in 2015/16 respectively¹⁰. The MoE offers 'general competence courses' (kursy kompetencji ogólnych) for those who are unwilling or unable to undergo the formal process but still want to gain or improve their competences, The courses consist of 30 hours of classes; however, these do not lead to any formal qualification. There are also courses that either are provided by the PES within the framework of the active labour market policy or are project-based, and organised from EU funds. These include language courses, IT training, entrepreneurship courses and others such as digital skills for the elderly.

2.2.2 *Helps adults achieve a Recognised Qualification*

A recognised qualification can be obtained after the completion of a formal education path as described above. Those that complete 'general competence courses' described in the previous section can proceed to do external exams organised by district education commissions. Non-formal continuing education such as vocational qualification courses (kwalifikacyjne kursy zawodowe), vocational skill courses (kursy umiejętności zawodowych) and theoretical training courses for young workers (turnus dokształcania teoretycznego młodocianych pracowników) also lead to a recognised diploma. Adults can also obtain a recognised qualification by completing e-learning courses overseen by the MoE. The National Centre for Vocational and Continuing Education, for instance, has 169 such courses in its repository. In 2013/2014, there were 1,169 students in basic vocational

¹⁰Central Statistical Office (2016) Education in 2015/2016 School Year.

schools for adults, 2539 in technical upper secondary schools, and 16,934 in supplementary technical upper secondary schools.

2.2.3 Helps adults develop other knowledge and skills, not for vocational purposes

Within the formal education system in Poland, education aimed at acquiring knowledge and skills for purposes other than vocational is largely focused on civic education, which is mandatory at the level of gymnasiums (lower secondary schools, ISCED-2). In addition, various private and public organisations such as culture centres offer a wide range of courses including personal development ones, which help adults acquire additional skills and knowledge for their overall development. Some are specifically tailored for seniors.

2.2.4 Facilitates Transition to the Labour Market for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)

Public Employment Service (PES) are responsible for assisting the unemployed and those at risk of unemployment. They provide training support under different programmes (including within the European Social Funds Operational Programme). Support measures provided by the PES include advice on education and training opportunities, as well as financial assistance, which can be in the form of vouchers for training, internships and work placements for those who are unemployed. Funding is also available for employers who are willing to provide training for the unemployed, with the intention that it will lead to employment (“trójstronne umowy szkoleniowe” or trilateral training agreements). The employers request the funding. In addition, the PES organises courses for unemployed people that aim to develop their skills in active job searching; however, the demand for such courses has decreased drastically over the years to approximately 4,958 beneficiaries in 2015¹¹, compared with, for instance, 19,197 beneficiaries in 2011.¹²

2.2.5 Opens up Higher Education to adults

Mature students constitute a limited proportion of all students at higher education institutions: in 2015/2016 academic year, there were approximately 19,786 students (constituting 4.7% of all students) at university and 14,410 (4.8% of students) in upper technical schools that were 30 years old or above¹³.

There are no special provisions for mature students in Poland, however, there are approximately 110 Third Age universities that focus on retired people. These universities support the social inclusion of the elderly. In the 2014-2015 academic year, there were 96,370 mature students enrolled at Third Age universities in Poland¹⁴.

¹¹ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016) Informacja o Realizacji Usługi Poradnictwo Zawodowe w Urzędach Pracy w roku 2015.

¹² Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2012) Informacja o Realizacji Usługi Poradnictwo Zawodowe w Urzędach Pracy w roku 2011

¹³ Central Statistical Office (2016) Higher Education and their Finances in 2015.

¹⁴ Central Statistical Office (2016). Third-age universities in academic year 2014-2015.

2.2.6 Enables adult employees to develop their work-related skills

National Training Fund (Krajowy Fundusz Szkoleniowy), as a part of the Labour Fund, provides funding for employers who have low-skilled employees (those without full qualifications at the minimum fourth level of the Polish Qualification Framework), and are 45 years old or above, disabled or working in the workplaces undergoing restructuring.

2.2.7 Other (if any)

Poland has benefited from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. This fund was developed to support redundancies caused by the financial crisis, and the transfer of companies to locations where labour costs are lower. The Ministry of Development uses these funds to help the unemployed find new jobs, or undertake training aimed at upgrading their skills. The level of support from the fund provided in each case is approximately 110,000-150,000 euros.

3.0 ADULT LEARNING POLICIES

3.1 Context

3.1.1 Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning

Adult education and training in Poland is a shared responsibility of different central departments, but some of them play a more important role in this area than others, such as Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (MoL), Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MHE). The MoE through its Department of Vocational and Continuing Education is the prime body responsible for activities within the realm of adult continuing education. The responsibilities of the Ministry include:

- Establishing and running public continuing education centres, public practical training centres and in-service training centres;
- Defining the principles underlying the acquisition, complementing and improvement of vocational qualifications;
- Co-ordinating the core curriculum for vocational training; and
- Evaluating the continuing education system, and the accreditation system for education centres.

Other ministries are also involved in the delivery of programmes in this area. MoL is responsible for the education and training of unemployed adults and job seekers. It is also responsible for on-the-job training (through implementation of the National Training Fund, Krajowy Fundusz Szkoleniowy – an instrument to support employers in providing continuing education for its employees). The MoL's role includes cooperation with MoE in determining the objectives and development of vocational education and training, and in implementation of the Integrated Qualifications System.

MHE is involved in the implementation of adult education and training through universities who deliver in this area (even if continuing education is not mentioned as their mandate in the Higher Education Act). The higher education institutions (HEIs) in Poland are also providers of open courses and training for adults, and they run "Third Age universities". The Department of Higher Education of the MHE grants authorization to HEIs to provide non-degree postgraduate programmes, and regulates matters related to these and other training programmes and courses.

Subnational levels of government also play a role in adult education and training. Authorities at regional level run the Training Institution Register (TIR), which is a source of information about the courses and training available for adults in Poland. They are responsible for establishing and overseeing public teacher in-service training centres, educational resources centres (libraries), and regional and supra-regional schools and institutions. Moreover, they appoint heads of regional education authorities (kurator oświaty), who supervise pedagogical approaches in schools and other educational institutions in the region.

District authorities are responsible for establishing, running and financing public upper secondary schools as well as continuing education centres, practical training centres, further and in-service training centres¹⁵, whereas the municipalities are responsible for establishing, administering and financing public primary and lower secondary schools.

3.1.2 Major national socio-economic strategies governing the provision of Adult Learning

The priorities of Polish politics in adult education and skills are specified in two strategic documents: (2013) Lifelong Learning Perspective and (2013) Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020. With respect to objective no. 5 of the Lifelong Learning Perspective: Work environment and social commitment that support adult learning, the following strategic intervention directions have been specified:

1. The promotion of co-ordination of activities for adult learning undertaken by particular ministries.
2. The creation of a system that confirms the outcomes of learning other than formal learning (validation system) as foundations for the modern adult education model.
3. The development of an adult learning model focused on practical learning, including work-based learning or organised forms of activities undertaken by citizens.
4. The promotion of good practices related to adult learning.
5. The development of a support system for enterprises, including namely SME, in terms of teaching and training employees.
6. The development of offers, promotions, and incentives regarding the participation of professionally inactive persons in education.
7. The support of persons with obstructed access to education, the unemployed, and persons looking for work, as well as other groups with disadvantages on the labour market, including the disabled.
8. The promotion of partnership between ministries, self-government territorial units (JST), employers, employees, social organisations for the purpose of educating citizens.
9. The implementation of new organisational forms for adults, including distance learning, with particular focus on persons with obstructed access to education, including those living in rural areas.
10. The support and promotion of an attractive educational offer addressed to seniors and innovative solutions for the purpose of motivating seniors to learn in order to remain active.
11. The promotion of types of financing of adult education and skills by means of market demand.
12. The implementation of media campaigns as modern tools of non-formal education.

¹⁵ Eurypedia,
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Distribution_of_Responsibilities

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The Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020 sets out five strategic objectives for human capital empowerment in Poland, these are to be implemented by 2020 and cover:

1. Employment growth.
2. Extension of the period of professional activity and improvement of the quality of the functioning of seniors.
3. The improvement in the condition of persons and groups vulnerable to social exclusion.
4. The improvement of the health of the population and healthcare systems' efficiency.
5. Growth of qualifications and skills of the population.

As part of the strategic objective no. 1, interventions related to adult education include "providing common access to high-quality education and training that responds to the changing needs of the labour market, as well as creating an effective system for moving from education (education and trainings) to employment". The strategic objective no. 2 involves "promoting both formal and non-formal education of seniors, with particular focus on digital competence; the extension of educational offer addressed to seniors and improving its adjustment to the needs of seniors; continuing education and support of persons over 50." As part of the strategic objective no. 3, the Strategy calls for "the promotion of adult learning, including practical learning (work-based learning in particular) and improving the adjustment of training to the social and economic needs, as well as better availability of continuing education".

Broad references to adult education and training can also be found in the national documents such as:

- Strategia Innowacyjności i Efektywności Gospodarki (Strategy for Economic Innovativeness and Effectiveness) – human capital development within the economy sector; qualification improvement through lifelong learning mechanisms;
- Strategia Rozwoju Regionalnego (National Regional Development Strategy) – human capital development in the regions;
- Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego (Social Capital Development Strategy);
- Strategia Zrównoważonego Rozwoju Wsi, Rolnictwa i Rybactwa (Strategy of Sustainable Development of Rural Areas, Agriculture and Fishery);
- Strategia Rozwoju Kraju 2020 (National Development Strategy 2020).
- Rządowy Program na rzecz Aktywności Społecznej Osób Starszych na lata 2014–2020 (National Programme for Social Participation of Seniors 2014-2020 or ASOS Programme);

Poland does not have a National Adult Learning policy framework in Poland. There exists a strategy, and there are legal Acts (the School Education Act and the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions) that refer partially to adult education and skills.

3.2 Adult learning policy framework

3.2.1 *A summary of major developments/ changes since 2010*

Since 2010, there has been a gradual change in the approach to adult learning in Poland aimed at increasing awareness of adult learning (including its non-formal forms), increasing recognition and improving coordination between the different actors (ministries) involved. As specified in the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020¹⁶ and in The Implementation Document of the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020: Tools for Implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020¹⁷, the main tools used to implement the Strategy include:

1. Tool 44: The promotion of adult learning, in particular its most effective types (work-based learning and social involvement, short courses).

As mentioned in the Section 2.1, the Minister of Education introduced in 2012 new forms of non-formal continuing education in the School Education Act, in particular qualifying vocational courses (kwalifikacyjne kursy zawodowe), vocational skills courses (kursy umiejętności zawodowych), general competence courses (kursy kompetencji ogólnych) and theoretical training for young workers (turnus dokształcania teoretycznego młodocianych pracowników). These courses are aimed at all adults above 18 years old and organised by accredited private and public education institutions. The courses have to be organised according to conditions specified in the Regulation (e.g. regarding the curricula, size of group). The graduates receive a certificate of attendance and may pass the external exam afterwards to have their qualifications formally recognised.

Since 2012, additional legislative changes provided further details on the organisation and quality assurance of these forms of adult learning (e.g. in 2015, vocational qualification courses were further defined in the legislation, as well as organisational changes regarding external examinations were introduced).

In a move to promote adult education and in particular the qualifying vocational courses, in 2014 the MoE developed curricula for these vocational courses using distance learning methods and techniques. A number of publications addressed to organisers and entities providing education in extracurricular forms were published, including the e-learning Guidebook for Vocational Education, and the Guidebook for e-learning course designers. The MoE also conducted training for teachers in vocational education and school directors to encourage them to implement qualifying vocational courses.

Under Priority II of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (OP KED) and under the supervision of the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorstwa, or PARP), fourteen innovative projects in the area of human resources management have been implemented and validated in the last two years. One project is the development of the Development Services Register

¹⁶ Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020.

¹⁷ Sprawozdanie z realizacji "Strategii Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020" za rok 2015 [Report from the implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020 for 2015].

(inwestycjawkadry.pl) later replaced in 2015 by the Development Services Database (DSD) (uslugirozwojowe.parp.gov.pl). Since 2014, the responsible agency, PARP, has been working on this publicly available platform that includes development services such as training, professional courses, counselling, postgraduate studies, mentoring and coaching offered in Poland. The purpose of the platform is to enable every employer or individual adult to easily and quickly access information on services tailored to their individual needs. The register includes services either co-financed or financed by both the European Social Fund and commercial actors. Creating and launching the Development Services Register was one of the elements of the systemic project entitled: "The promotion of trainings and popularisation of the concept of lifelong improvement of professional qualifications" carried as part of the sub-activity 2.1.3 of the Human Capital Operational Programme. The project was co-financed by the European Union as part of the European Social Fund. The future development and functioning of the Development Services Database constitutes one of the activities carried out as part of the OP KED.

2. Tool 45: The development of the Polish Qualifications Frameworks as part of European lifelong learning model and consistent with the European Qualifications Framework.

The development of the framework, which started in 2008, and has intensified since 2010, contributes to Poland's efforts towards developing a national framework of qualifications in line with the European Qualifications Framework. The framework aims to link different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework. Like the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the Polish Qualifications Framework (PRK) consists of eight qualification levels. Each of the PRK levels is described in relation to learning outcomes that a qualification has to provide. In addition, the Integrated Qualifications System (IQS) which included an Integrated Qualification Register (IQR) was developed with the objective of enhancing the qualifications system further, and adopted as law in January 2015. The IQR is a public register that includes all qualifications provided in Poland under the PKR. What distinguishes the IQR from other knowledge banks is that IQR's entries on the provision of qualifications are verified by the public authorities. So far, the register is limited to only full qualifications, i.e. those that are acquired in the education system or higher education. In the near future, however, it will include partial qualifications that can be acquired in a non-formal education system.

3. Tool 46: The development of financial support for adult learning.

In 2014, a National Training Fund (Krajowy Fundusz Szkoleniowy) which aims to support employers in financing the qualifications and skills of their employees was introduced in Poland. Within this measure, resources provided support employers' need assessments on the training required, courses and postgraduate studies realised from the initiative of the employer, validating qualifications, medical examination allowing for entering the labour market and vocational education insurance.

In addition, the MoL has been directing funds for the education of the elderly, one of the priorities laid out in the Strategy, for the Development of Human Capital 2020.

3.2.2 *Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning*

Adult education in Poland is a shared responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy and Ministry of Science and Higher Education; hence, there is no single legislative act that solely regulates its provision. Certain aspects of adult learning are regulated by legislation in the field of education, others – by labour market and higher education acts.

The Education System Act of 1991 (*Ustawa o Systemie Oświaty*), which was subsequently amended in 1998 and 2003, first introduced daily, evening, extramural, distance, and out-of-school learning. It paved the way for the creation of public and non-public adult schools and other institutions in Poland. Importantly, it separated the continuing education centres (CKU) and practical education centres (CKP) from schools, and allowed for the creation of regional and national networks of continuing education institutions.

Equally important in laying the groundwork for adult learning in Poland has been the Act of 21 November 2001 on 'Regulations introducing the reform of school system' which introduced new types of post-gymnasium schools. With the next amendments of the Education System Act, the definition of continuing education was changed to include the non-formal forms of continuing education. From the 1st Sep 2017, issues concerning inter alia external examinations or financing public schools are regulated in the Education System Act of 1991, while general issues concerning the organisation of education system in Poland are from now on regulated by the Education Law (*Ustawa Prawo Oświatowe*).

Adult learning received an additional boost with the introduction of the Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market of 2004. The Act made it possible for institutions offering adult education to provide training to the unemployed. It included special measures for including organisations who provided training for the unemployed. Thus, for instance, research labour market institutions could receive funding from the Labour Fund for the undertaking of such activities. Detailed rules and conditions for the improvement of vocational qualifications and of general education of adults are included in the regulations by the Council of Ministers, and by the ministers of education and of labour.

On 11 July 2014, the most recent amendment of the Act on Higher Education alongside with certain other acts were adopted. The Act established an institution that validates learning outcomes in non-formal and informal education. The objective was to facilitate access to higher education by people with several years of experience in occupation, and who hold a secondary-school leaving certificate. The amended Act came into force on 1 October 2014, and was further refined in 2015. In order to enhance validation processes in education further, academic senates (the self-governing elected bodies of the universities) have been obliged to pass resolutions on the organisation of validation of outcomes in academic learning until 30 June 2015. A vast majority of universities have proceeded to do so successfully by implementing such rules.

The above mentioned amendment also introduced the possibility of dual learning, i.e. a combination of academic courses delivered at a university and apprenticeships conducted in the workplace. According to MoL, this type of learning will be particularly attractive to adults who will be able to combine it with their professional work by going through a part of the learning programme at work, although there is no data available on take-up at this point.

3.2.3 *Main Strategy(-ies)*

As mentioned in the section 3.2.1, Poland does not have a single strategy on adult education. In 2013, 9 integrated strategies and two horizontal ones were developed, there are:

- The National Regional Development Strategy (Krajowa Strategia Rozwoju Regionalnego);
- Strategy for Economic Innovativeness and Effectiveness (Strategia Innowacyjności i Efektywności Gospodarki);
- Strategy of Sustainable Development of Rural Areas, Agriculture and Fishery (Strategia Zrównoważonego Rozwoju Wsi, Rolnictwa i Rybactwa);
- Strategy of Transport Development (Strategia Rozwoju Transportu);
- Strategy of Energy Security and Environment (Strategia Bezpieczeństwo Energetyczne i Środowisko);
- Social Capital Development Strategy (Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego);
- Good Governance Strategy (Strategia Sprawne Państwo); and
- Strategy for Development of Internal Security System (Strategia Rozwoju Systemu Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego).

The horizontal strategies include Long-term National Development Strategy (Długookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju) and short-term National Development Strategy 2020 (Strategia Rozwoju Kraju 2020).

Out of these strategies, the ones that refer to adult education are: National Development Strategy 2020, Social Capital Development Strategy, Strategy for Economic Innovativeness and Effectiveness, National Regional Development Strategy, Strategy of Sustainable Development of Rural Areas, Agriculture and Fishery.

However, two other strategies, which are described in 3.2.1 section), are particularly important for adult education - Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020 (which is currently under revision) and National Lifelong Learning Strategy from 2013, as well as Programme for Social Participation of Seniors 2014-2020 (Rządowy Program na rzecz Aktywności Społecznej Osób Starszych na lata 2014–2020).

3.2.4 *Main implementing act(s)*

The most important implementing acts concerning the continuing education include, first, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education from 11 Jan 2012. This regulation specifies the conditions, organisation and mode of continuing education in extracurricular

forms and types of these forms. These include conditions and procedures of payment for continuing education in extracurricular forms in public establishments and centres, and the role of public facilities and centres. Four specific types of non-school continuing education are mentioned under the regulation: vocational qualification courses (kwalifikacyjne kursy zawodowe), vocational skills courses (kursy umiejętności zawodowych), general competence courses (kursy kompetencji ogólnych) and theoretical training for young workers (turnus dokształcania teoretycznego młodocianych pracowników).

The vocational qualifying courses cover the vocational education curricula for only one part of learning outcomes and specified for certain qualifications, or learning outcomes specific for different vocational qualifications (including management of small teams).

In 2013 a legislative process was initiated to establish a new financing instrument "Krajowy Fundusz Szkoleniowy" (National Training Fund), which was finally adopted in 2014 (Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 14 Mai 2014). The National Training Fund was separated from the Labour Fund, the main Fund financing support to the unemployed from mandatory employers' premiums.

Another financing instrument adopted in 2014 was the amendment to the 'Act on Promotion of Employment' called "trójstronne umowy szkoleniowe" (trilateral training agreements). This is an agreement between employers, training institutions and local authorities to finance the training of the unemployed in accordance with specific needs of the employer.

Finally, adult education and training is also addressed in the EFS Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (OP KED) under 2.14 'Development of tools for lifelong learning', 2.3. 'Providing quality and accessibility of development services for employers and employees', 1.1-1.3 'Promoting inclusion of youth in the labour markets', and 2.4 'Modernization of public and non-public employment services and their better alignment with labour market needs'.

3.3 National quantitative policy targets

The Lifelong Learning Strategy of Poland from 2013 included a policy target on the participation of adults in lifelong learning. In 2020, at least 10% of adults between 25 and 64 years old have to participate in education and training. The initial findings for 2009/2011 indicate that this was as low as 4.5%.

None of the integrated and horizontal strategies described in chapters 3.1.2 and 3.2.3 included any quantitative targets. Some targets related to continuing education are also specified for EFS OP KED. However, they are project-based only (e.g. the number of participants of the programme that received the continuing education offer) and cannot be separated from other ALMP measures.

Table 3.1 Targets linked to Adult Learning in broader economic policies/LLL strategies/framework or implementing act

General information		Progress toward target		
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g. 31/03/2018)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against target
10% of adults between 25 and 64 y.o. having participated in education and training in the last 4 weeks (LLP Strategy of Poland)	10.09.2013	4.5% (2009/2012)	3.7% (Eurostat data, 2016)	Target was based on the findings of the study but no relevant study was identified.

3.4 Quality assurance

There is no single institution in Poland tasked to provide quality assurance of adult education and training. The schools and institutions for adults which are included in the formal education system are subject to the same quality assurance mechanisms as schools for children and youth. The quality assurance of all schools is the responsibility of the Minister of National Education. However, under the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 20 December 2003, institutions that provide continuing education in non-school settings can voluntarily request an accreditation from the REA (Head of Regional Education Authorities). In order to encourage institutions to seek accreditation, the services have been exempted from VAT.

The work to provide a quality assurance system for adult education has been given a new momentum with the development of the Integrated System of Qualifications (Act on Integrated System of Qualifications of 22 Dec 2015). The Act provides inter alia the requirements for institutions to certify and validate qualifications.

3.5 Future policy developments

There are a number of policies in Poland concerning adult learning currently being discussed but have not yet been adopted. These developments can be categorised under the four priority areas of the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning (2011):

- **Governance.** Important changes in the way in which public national investments are made in schools for adults are being considered by the Supreme Chamber of Control. In the current state, funding granted to schools is proportional to the

number of signatures on schools' attendance lists, a measure which is both an insufficient proxy of schools' needs and renders the system prone to misuse, as these lists remain unverified. In 2016, the Supreme Chamber of Commerce issued a statement that national public investments in adult schools will need to be tied to the quality of education provided, rather than the often artificial participation rates. It is expected therefore that these works will improve the overall effectiveness of investments, and improve the quality of the teaching provided.

- **Supply and take up.** Poland has been making progress on the recognition of prior learning undertaken outside of the formal education system i.e. non-formal and informal forms of learning. The purpose of such validation is to produce proof of learning that has been acquired in various contexts, e.g. at home, during work or through voluntary activities, potentially to be exchanged into future learning and/or work. So far this has been done at university level solely and it remains to be implemented in other cases as well. This process will require considerable attention since, as pointed out in the Cedefop European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning highlight, 'this stage [in building an Integrated Qualifications Framework] is crucial as learning outcomes differ from person to person'. In line with the recommendations of the report, it is planned that these changes will be implemented by 2018 in Poland. Closely related to this, in the next year or so, it is planned that partial qualifications which are most frequently achieved in non-formal and informal settings will be included into the IQR. These developments aim to encourage greater supply and take-up of high-quality adult learning provision.
- **Flexibility and access.** Future policy developments related to recognition of prior learning described under the category 'supply and take up' will also certainly improve the flexibility of the Integrated Qualifications System, by including many low qualified adults and providing sufficient second-chance opportunities leading to a recognised EQF qualification for those without EQF level 4 qualifications. Importantly, as the OP KED programme is still on going, it is expected that the MoE will direct more funding to the promotion of e-learning courses towards achieving recognised qualifications. This will significantly improve access to adult learning for those who, for practical reasons, are unable to attend classes in person.
- **Quality.** The main policy development aimed at improving the quality of adult education in Poland has been the announcement of an intended reform of higher education in 2017. According to the changes, the length of evening and extramural studies will be increased to match the quality of qualifications acquired through these studies with those obtained via day, full-time studies. Currently, day studies last up to 7 years, while the evening/extramural studies last 5 years. After the new reform, the latter will last 6 years. The reform at the stage of preparatory work currently and will be pursued in the coming year, according to communication from MoHE.

4.0 INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS

4.1 Total investment in adult learning and change over time

There is no information on the total investment made in adult learning in Poland because of poor coordination between authorities that are responsible for adult education and skills (MoE, MoL and MHE). There are no regular surveys on private expenditure on education, in particular adult education and training, in Poland. Generally, adult education in Poland is financed from three sources: state budget, private funding and EU budget (the ESF). The main programmes implemented as part of the 2007-2013 financial perspective included the Human Capital Operational Programme (Priority I, II and partly III, V, VIII and IX) and the regional operational programmes. The 2014-2020 financial perspective includes the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (OP KED) and regional operational programmes. According to Eurydice, "so far, no solid financial policy of adult education, especially within partnerships with employers, has been developed and implemented."¹⁸

4.2 Public national investment

The public national investment in adult learning is realised through the provision of financial support to adult schools and institutions offering non-formal forms of continuing education (as stated in the Regulation of 11th Jan 2012), co-financing of ESF-funded projects as well as through specific measures to address unemployment (through i.a. National Training Fund).

In 2016, the educational subsidies for public and non-public schools for adults accounted for 1.2 bln PLN (about 270 mln EUR). It is worth noting, however, that the financing of adult learning has increasingly shifted from the State to private organisations, academic institutions and other non-state actors. At present, the majority of places in schools for adults (in terms of upper secondary education, technical upper secondary education, primary education, lower secondary education) are offered by non-public schools. Nevertheless, by granting subsidies to those schools, the State participates in maintaining them. Still, in comparison with schools for children and youth, the State funding is low (and decreasing).

Information relating to the size of public national (and ESF) investment can be found in the yearly implementation reports of the Strategy of for the Development of Human Capital 2020. Thus, until the end of 2015, was reported for activities and legislation aimed at promotion of adult learning (tool 44), a total PLN 15,711,136 (ca. 3,678,520 EUR) were spent from the ESF and PLN 94,744 (ca. 21,905.05 PLN) from the Labour Fund.

Additionally, until the end of 2015, a total of PLN 30,525,179 (7,143,857 EUR) was allocated from the EFS to finance the Integrated Qualification Register. The total budget

¹⁸https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Developments_and_Current_Policy_Priorities

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available for projects supporting the development of the Polish Qualifications Framework (tool 45) amounts to EUR 15.7 million.

In 2014, the budget assigned to the National Training Fund amounted to PLN 20,481 thousand (ca. EUR 4.6m). An amount of PLN 191,388 thousand (ca. EUR 44m) is assigned to the National Training Fund for year 2016. For 2017, the respective amount accounted for PLN 199,588 thousand (ca. EUR 46.4 m).

Until 2015, work related to the preparation of the Development Services Register cost a total of PLN 1,110,810,89 (ca. 258,328.11 EUR).

Table 4.1 Breakdown of public national investment

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Start/ end date
Educational subsidies for adult schools	National budget	PLN 1.2 bln (over EUR 270 mln)	-	-	2016
National Training Fund	Part of Labour Fund	PLN 199 588 thousand (ca. EUR 46.4 m)	-	-	Planned for 2017
Development Services Database	Both national resources (Labour Fund) and EFS	PLN 1,110,810,89 (ca. 258,328.11 EUR)	-	-	Until the end of 2015
Implementation of Tool 44 of the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020	Both national resources and ESF	PLN 15,711,136 (ca. 3,678,520 EUR)	-	-	Until the end of 2015
Implementation of Tool 45 of the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020	Both national resources and ESF	PLN 30,525,179 (7,143,857 EUR)	-	-	Until the end of 2015

4.3 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)

4.3.1 Structural fund support planned as part of 2014-2020 financial framework

According to data on financial support provided to Member States between 2014 and 2020, which was available in July 2016 from the European Commission on Operational Programmes for the European Social Fund (ESF), the planned financial support for the investment priority allocated to adult learning, i.e. Investment priority 10.3 – Enhancing access to lifelong learning, was EUR 440.7 million. While the figure is known to be higher in reality, as funding towards adult learning has also been included under other priorities as well, it represents the vast majority of such investments under the programme.

4.3.2 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of 2007-2013 financial framework

A review of available data (in particular the reports on the implementation of the Operational Programme Human Capital European Social Fund/ESF 2007-2013) shows that reports on the implementation of Structural Funds 2007-2013 do not include details of the costs incurred for the education of adults. The table below presents data on the size of the allocation earmarked for individual Priorities of the Programme in conjunction with the degree of implementation of selected objectives of the Programme in the field of adult education.

PRIORITY I EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME HUMAN CAPITAL

The allocation for Priority I - 402.9 million EUR (including 342.5 million EUR - ESF). Eligible expenditure of nearly PLN 1.6 billion was agreed, including nearly PLN 1.4 billion - ESF; which is 88% of the allocation for 2007-2013.

Information on the material progress in the field of adult education (implementation of selected targets of Priority I)

EMPLOYMENT; Objective 1. Modernisation of the Public Employment Services / PES

As a result of the assistance qualifications 7.5 thousand key PES employees (over 100% of the target), including 6.5 thousand female employees were created. The aim of the training was to develop personal and social competencies and specialist / professional.

SOCIAL INCLUSION; Objective 3. Strengthening of social welfare institutions and building partnerships for social inclusion

Trained more than 12.3 thousand employees of social welfare institutions, including 11.1 thousand women; training related to the use of innovative methods of work (e.g. networking in the community, community standards of overcoming homelessness or personal organisation and the use of volunteering in the activation of socially excluded people).

At the end of the June 2015 participation in projects co-financed by the European Structural Funds 2007-2013 Operational Programme Human Capital 2007-2013 was nearly 9.6 million people (of which 57% or 5.5 million were women). Since the beginning of the Programme more than 8.3 million people (of which 4.7 million women) have been involved in related projects financed by the fund, this represents 87% of all people receiving support from ESF.

4.4 Effectiveness of investment

The effectiveness of investment in adult education and skills in Poland is still limited. The ESF implementation report 'The first decade of European Social Fund in Poland. The effect of implementation of ESF over the period 2004-2014)' provides a critical assessment of ESF's impact on adult education. As stated by the authors of the report:

"The domain, which in spite of considerable financial investments needs further improvement or even a fundamental attitude change, is undoubtedly adult education (...) Unfortunately ESF projects implemented until now have been contributing inadequately and have not been effective in changing Poland's learning structure. Only about 65.4 thousand people aged 25-64 have taken part in lifelong learning financed by the EU. A dominant and fixed model of learning is still an institutional system, which has critical influence on the low level of participation / information in this domain. Therefore the conclusions show the urgent need to create a new culture of learning through an improvement of the quality of education on offer, and to better support its receivers' needs."¹⁹

Moreover, the effectiveness of the formal system of continuing education in Poland has also been subject to considerable criticism, even on the part of national bodies. The recent report of the Supreme Chamber of Control (2017) concluded that the organisation and financing of adult continuing education system in Poland requires a thorough reconstruction. The report stated that effectiveness of continuing education (only 21% of those starting continuing education graduate from these schools, only 8% receive recognised qualifications and only 2% passes external matura exams) is a main issue of concern with regard to the high number of drop-outs, and low number of those that graduate with recognised qualifications.

According to Poland's Supreme Chamber of Control, the effectiveness of investments in continuing education is markedly hampered by the conditions under which schools receive subsidies. In the current state of the system, the amount subsidised depends on the number of course participants rather than the quality of education. The Supreme Chamber of Control states that these conditions have been subject to misuse by multiple schools

¹⁹ (2015) Pierwsza dekada Europejskiego Funduszu Społecznego w Polsce Efekty wdrażania EFS w latach 2004–2014 (*The first decade of European Social Fund in Poland. The effect of implementation of ESF over the period 2004-2014*)

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since participation rates are not verified; it is only unverified attendance lists that are requested by the authorities as proof. ²⁰

²⁰ NIK (2016) . Kształcenie w szkołach dla dorosłych.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY

The following sub-sections assess the existing policy through the lens of the six key success factors for effective adult learning policy that have been identified in a recent study.²¹

5.1 Develop learners' interest in learning

Poland has had no significant success in improving learners' disposition towards learning so far. Stakeholders and policymakers are aware that learners' positive attitude towards learning is crucially important, but it does not have an influence on policy. If a targeted guidance for learners about learning options is provided, this is often a local initiative, and not a government policy.

The involvement of social partners (especially employers) in the planning and providing adult learning services is minimal. Adult education providers in general make a lot of effort to engage employers into adult education but this is in general fruitless due to insufficient policy solutions. The introduction of the National Training Fund, an instrument that is intended to respond to this challenge, may however influence the way employers are engaged.

The promotion of adult learning is also constrained by a lack of a comprehensive definition of adult education and learning in the legislation. The legislation provides for adult continuing education, which is primarily implemented through formal education (forms of non-formal learning were only introduced recently). The lack of a proper ('catchy') translation of the term "lifelong learning" to Polish does also not help to communicate the benefits of lifelong learning to adults.

5.2 Increase employers' investment in learning

The National Training Fund (NTF) provides funding for assisting employers to help them upskill and retrain their workforce. Nevertheless, in respect to this form of education, the scope of educational services is basically limited to formal learning (training courses and postgraduate studies) and focused on selected target groups (e.g. senior workers, with disabilities, etc.).

There is insufficient policy focus on promoting the use of externally accredited qualifications by employers, as well as insufficient focus on work-based learning. Positive developments however have been initiated with the gradual introduction of recognition of

²¹ Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all languages): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>; Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe" by EC (2015): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

prior learning in Poland. The National Training Fund could be used to cover the costs of such recognition.

5.3 Improve equity of access for all

The OP KED in respect to adult education and skills is focused on disadvantaged, difficult-to-engage and socially excluded groups, e.g. inactive, unemployed individuals, elderly people, low qualified adults, ethnic minorities, mothers returning to work after maternity leave. As far as assigning EU funds to learning for disadvantaged groups is identical to awareness of the importance this issue, Polish policy is fully conducive to improving equality of access for all. Unfortunately, "it has been observed that differences between those who are educationally active and those educationally passive are larger than the EU average. Despite official financial incentives to increase participation in adult education, neither public funding of this type of activity produce anticipated effects nor the ESF funds fostered general participation in adult education".²² Some recent activities aimed at promoting online education for adults may, however, positively impact on access to adult education in the near future.

5.4 Deliver learning that is relevant

The Development Services Database is a tool that is used to understand and identify needs and motivations of learners, and to reconcile it with current and future skills needs of employers, and align provision with these. Many projects orientated on identification of current and future skills needs of employers were implemented because of the OP HD. Moreover, such projects are further continued in the OP KED, the most important longitudinal study funded with this programme is "Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego"²³ (Human Capital Study). The study was first conducted in 2010 and is continued for the next 7 years (2016-2023) to measure the gap between the education system supply of qualifications and labour market demand.

The OP KED places even more emphasis on innovative solutions in the delivery of adult learning than the OP HD by providing financing to the social innovations in this field. Polish policy is sufficient in terms of its awareness and recognition of the importance of assigning EU funds to promote innovation and flexibility in the delivery of adult learning.

It is too early to claim that the IQR provides progression pathways for learners across the national qualifications framework. The IQR is a fully developed tool but time will tell if it is widely used. There are experts who forecast that unresolved copyright issues might prevent institutions from registering their qualifications.

²² Eurypedia, https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Main_Types_of_Provision

²³ <https://bkl.parp.gov.pl/> (accessed on 27.09.2017)

5.5 Deliver learning that is of high quality

There is no quality control framework for the monitoring and evaluation of adult learning programmes in Poland now, neither is there a coherent system of development for skilled adult education providers through initial teacher training and continuous professional development. Using the Development Services Database can be considered a way of increasing the quality of adult learning but its influence (if any) can be only indirect. More impact could be achieved with the full implementation of Integrated Quality System in Poland.

5.6 Ensure coherent policy

There is no coordination of lifelong learning policy in Poland both internally and across other national policies for improving knowledge, skills and competences of adults. The policy attention to co-ordinating adult learning policy with other national policies for improving knowledge, skills and competences of adults is not sufficient, despite being recognised as one of the important challenges that need to be tackled in the Poland's Lifelong Learning Strategy. Mechanisms for policy alignment at local and regional levels are, however, not yet in place. Evidence based adult learning is at a very early stage in Poland with a recent increase in the number of initiatives to address this (e.g. Study of Human Capital 2016-2023 or ESF OP KED priority 2.12 devoted to increasing the knowledge of labour market needs).

6.0 STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

6.1 Strengths

Interventions implemented in the last few years in Poland aimed at addressing the key challenges with regard to increasing adult education in Poland. However, the implementation of these solutions is still in progress, and it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness. Nevertheless, some strengths of the adult education system, which are partly due to the latest reforms are as follows:

Strength 1 – Recognition of Prior Learning.

Validation of learning outcomes in non-formal and informal education is related to mechanisms applied in formal education. In Poland, intensive planning on changes in these areas have been implemented for several years. Within planned changes, the system of validation, certification and streaming of learning outcomes and, consequently, qualifications is to be developed, and also terminology in this domain is to be rearranged and standardised²⁴.

The Act on Integrated Qualification System of 22nd Dec 2015 provided the terminology and main set-up as well as opened a way to the recognition of prior learning. Now, the recognition of non-formal and informal education for the purpose of entering higher education in Poland is being successfully implemented by the Polish universities.

Strength 2 – Modernization of the qualification system.

When changes in vocational education were introduced in 2012, the Integrated Qualification Register (IQR) opened to various educational forms. Non-formal education is heading towards the acquisition of qualifications not registered in the IQR. However, any programmes apart from those within formal school and higher education, can be validated, accumulated and transferred in line with relevant procedures²⁵. The Integrated Qualification Register (IQR) was launched on 15th July 2016.

Strength 3 – Diversification of an education offer.

The market of institutions and companies offering training in Poland is very diverse. "Adult education and training is the most diversified area of education in Poland not only due to its beneficiaries, their age as well as social and professional status, but also due to the institutions that are responsible for its provision"²⁶. There are four types of public institutions providing continuing education for adults and plurality of non-public providers.

²⁴ Eurypedia,
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Validation_of_Non-formal_and_Informal_Learning

²⁵ Eurypedia,
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Validation_of_Non-formal_and_Informal_Learning

²⁶ Eurypedia,
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Adult_Education_and_Training

Unfortunately, no uniform directory including information on all the training courses for adults offered on the market has been developed and run to date (some attempts were made with introduction of Development Services Database and IQR). However, despite this, Poles can benefit from a wide formal and non-formal education offer (including those offered free of charge).

6.2 Weaknesses

Weaknesses in the adult education system in Poland are caused mainly by a strong orientation towards learning in formal education. Domination of formal education by non-formal and informal education means that the adult education system in Poland does not satisfy the needs of learners (who prefer work-based learning).

Weakness 1 – Low level of adult participation in lifelong learning

Poland lags behind other peer countries on adult participation in lifelong learning. The rate of adult participation in lifelong learning in Poland decreased to 4.0 % in 2014 and further to 3.7 % in 2016. This is below the EU average of 10.7 % in 2014 and 10.8 % in 2016, and below the EU2020 target of 15 %. Invariably, participation tends to be lowest among people who most need to upgrade their skills: those with basic levels of education; those over 50 years old; and those who are inactive on the labour market.

Weakness 2 – Low skills level of adults

According to the PIAAC survey results, the skills of adults in Poland were on average lower than OECD peers in all tested categories. In particular, the assessment of problem-solving skills in technology-rich environments revealed that the proportion of adults attaining higher proficiency levels is significantly smaller in Poland than in any other country participating in the survey. The issue of the employability of people who are currently out of work is evident in the rising proportion of employers finding it difficult to attract employees with the required skills (up to 80% in 2014). In 2014, 43 % of employers declared that their employees needed upskilling [PARP and Jagiellonian University, 2015, Study of Human Capital in Poland].

Weakness 3 – Lack of coordination of lifelong learning policy

Despite a plurality of initiatives and interventions in the realm of adult education and skills that are being initiated by the main responsible institutions – MoE, MoL and MHE and that accurately addressed many of the challenges in this field, there is still no coordination of lifelong learning policy in Poland²⁷. It is important to notice that addressing the problem of the lack of coordination between the different authorities engaged was already mentioned as one of objectives of the LLP. This objective that has yet not been achieved.

²⁷ Country Report Poland 2016, p. 23.

7.0 FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED

Poland needs to follow key additional future policy reforms and orientations with regard to major challenges in the following education-related areas:

- Greater use of needs assessment in adult education and skills. It is necessary to recognise learners' and payer' (e.g. employers') needs, if the education offer is supposed to be tailored and eligible. A needs assessment should be broadly promoted as a necessary stage when developing educational programmes. The Study of Human Capital (Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego, BKL) is now the major tool for monitoring labour market needs (which although it is funded project-based, is going to be continued up to 2023). Its findings however, should be further used for evidence-based adult learning.
- That would be an answer to the challenge "Better adjusting of education and training to labour market needs" ("National Reform Programme 2020" (update 2016/2017, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 26 April 2016).
- Integration of adult education and skill services and broader introduction of expert services accompanying adult education such as coaching, vocational guidance or mentoring which help people to choose an educational path. It would be easier to disseminate an integrated adult education service, instead services, which are divided as they are currently. It could also be a step towards improving education quality, better work organisation and creating a new culture of learning. These changes have so far only been introduced in the OP KED with regard to the support for unemployed and should be further expanded.
- That would be an answer to the challenge "Education policy based on comprehensive and coherent strategy of lifelong learning, with particular focus on improvement in the scope of dissemination of adults learning" ("National Reform Programme 2020" (update 2016/2017, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 26 April 2016).
- Reinforcement of the cooperation between all government ministries in order to coordinate lifelong learning policy. Each individual Polish ministry has an obligation to participate in human capital development by indicating which of their own actions could serve lifelong learning. However, the ministries' involvement in it vary; not all ministries have an understanding of the importance of lifelong learning and their own role in supporting it. A common, balanced effort should be made to reinforce cooperation, because it could be a next step to creating coordinated lifelong learning policy in Poland.
- That would be an answer to the challenge "Coordination of lifelong learning policy, or even better, coherent system of lifelong learning / adult education" ("National Reform Programme 2020" (update 2016/2017, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 26 April 2016).
- The financial policy of adult education. The National Training Fund, trilateral training agreements, and training coupons have been developed and launched; financial resources reserved for the NTF are significant. The problem is that there is no comprehensive, coherent, solid financing system of adult education.

8.0 SUMMARY

In the last years, a lot of effort in Poland was committed to promoting the adult learning. These efforts included:

- Providing funding incentives (e.g. National Training Fund, training vouchers, trilateral training agreements, ESF OP KED projects);
- Introducing measures to increase access to adult education for all (e.g. by developing online courses);
- Increasing the recognition of qualifications (including those acquired in the non-formal and informal ways); and
- Improving the education quality (e.g. through implementation of the Integrated Qualification System).

However, these efforts have not yet resulted in a significant increase in the participation of the adults in learning. The number of adult Poles that took part in learning in the last few years is in decline, which means that Poland is drifting away from its lifelong learning participation objective, instead of progressing towards it. The distance between Poland and other EU countries is increasing. Poland is less likely to achieve the EU target, even though its national target is lower than the ET 2020 benchmark in lifelong learning. Two out of the four major challenges indicated in Poland's NRP are related to adult education and skills ("better adjusting of education and training to labour market needs" and "education policy based on comprehensive and coherent strategy of lifelong learning, with a particular focus on improvement in the scope of dissemination of adult learning"). The fact that the NRF has indicated the same implemented challenges for the past three years means that reforms in this respect have not been successful. The significant problem behind these numbers lies in the superiority of formal education in the school system granting diplomas and certificates, together with all historical and political factors²⁸. The changes in this field and introducing out-of-school adult education (in particular new forms of non-school continuing education introduced with the Regulation of 2012) as well as efforts to increase of recognition of non-formal and informal qualifications are steps in the right direction, and could positively affect the adult participation rates in Poland in the nearest future.

Despite many positive changes, challenges in the education area remain the same as they were several years ago. The stated objectives (e.g. the elaboration of the Polish Qualification Framework, the launch of the Development Services Database, the recognition of learning outcomes in non-formal and informal education) have been gradually continued but are still not fully operational (e.g. recognition of non-formal education is only limited to recognition for the purpose of university's entrance).

²⁸ Eurypedia,
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Developments_and_Current_Policy_Priorities

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One of the biggest problems that has already been pointed out in previous reports, is the limited cooperation between different authorities with responsibilities in the adult education field – MoE, MoL and MHE.

Unfortunately, adult education is a domain, which despite considerable financial investments needs further improvement or even a fundamental attitude change. ESF projects implemented until now have been contributing inadequately to changing the Polish learning structure²⁹. Better cooperation of departments in this area is currently anticipated through the promotion of adult learning and the development of a learning outcomes validation system. Activities within this domain would connect formal and non-formal education and popularise training at all stages of life³⁰.

²⁹ (2015) Pierwsza dekada Europejskiego Funduszu Społecznego w Polsce Efekty wdrażania EFS w latach 2004–2014 (The first decade of European Social Fund in Poland. The effect of implementation of ESF over the period 2004-2014)

³⁰ Eurypedia,

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Developments_and_Current_Policy_Priorities

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
Schools Education Act (Prawo oświatowe)	14.12.2016 (last amendment)	Provides definition of continuing education.
Education System Act (Prawo o systemie oświaty)	7.09.1991 (amended in 2003)	First introduced daily, evening, extramural, distance, or out-of-school learning. It paved the way for the creation of public and non-public adult schools and other institutions in Poland.
Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market of 2004	20.04.2004	Provides basics for adults' education and training for work. Recent amendments introduced financial instruments for unemployed such as National Training Fund, trilateral training agreements and training coupons.
Higher Education Act	27.07.2005	Regulates adult learning in the field of higher education.
Regulation of the Minister of National Education from 11 Jan 2012 on non-formal continuing education	11 Jan 2012	Provides four forms on non-formal continuing education: qualifying vocational courses (kwalifikacyjne kursy zawodowe), vocational skills courses (kursy umiejętności zawodowych), general competence courses (kursy kompetencji ogólnych) and theoretical trainings for young workers (turnus dokształcania teoretycznego młodocianych pracowników).
Lifelong Learning Perspective	10.09.2013	Provides strategic directions for further development of LLP in Poland.
Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2020	7.08.2013	Includes several priorities and implementing tools with regard to adult education and training.

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Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions

Name of intervention	Source (with hyperlink)	Budget	Outputs	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity etc.)
				Fosters learners' interest in learning	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
Development Services Database	https://uslugirozwojowe.parp.gov.pl /			X		X				
Integrated Qualification Register	https://rejestr.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/			X	X	X		X		
National Training Fund	http://psz.praca.gov.pl/-/55453-krajowy-fundusz-szkoleniowy			X	X					
Training coupons	https://psz.praca.gov.pl/dla-pracodawcow-i-przedsiębiorców/podnoszenie-kompetencji-i-kwalifikacji-			X	X					

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	pracownikow-i-kandydatow-do-pracy/szkolenia-i-bony-szkoleniowe									
Trilateral training agreements	https://psz.praca.gov.pl/dla-pracodawcow-i-przedsiębiorców/podnoszenie-kompetencji-i-kwalifikacji-pracownikow-i-kandydatow-do-pracy/trojstronne-umowy-szkoleniowe			x	x					
Non-formal continuing education forms	https://men.gov.pl/pl/ksztalcenie-zawodowe/ksztalcenie-doroslych			x		x	x			
Study of Human Capital	https://bkl.parp.gov.pl/						x			

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