



**DIMA 2.0 Transnational Report for
developing strategies for adult education
providers and adult educators**



To reference this document, use the following statement:

DIMA 2.0 project (2020). Transnational Report for Developing Strategies for Adult Education Providers and Adult Educators. Date accessed online [e.g. 18/06/2020] from www.project-dima.eu.

Drafting and final editing:

Charalambos Vrasidas, Ph.D. – [Centre for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology \(CARDET\)](#)

Contributors to this report are:

Aleksandra Kozyra – [European Association for the Education of Adults](#)

Andreas Georgiou – [INNOVADE LI Ltd](#)

Demos Michael – [CARDET](#)

Justyna Król – [Future in Perspective Ltd](#)

Maria Rubio Gragera – [Fundación Coremsa](#)

Marios Zittis – [CARDET](#)

Martina Fleischli – [Swiss Federation for Adult Learning SVEB](#)

Nicoletta Ioannou – [The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth in Cyprus](#)



Contents

Introduction	6
National Reports.....	9
Cyprus.....	9
Country profile	9
Strategies and policies on Adult Education.....	10
Status of the Adult Education providers.....	11
Quality Assurance and assessment	12
Main programmes	13
Low-skilled adults	15
Challenges & critique	17
Interviews with stakeholders.....	20
Recommendations.....	24
Spain.....	26
Country profile	26
Strategies and policies on Adult Education.....	27
Status of the Adult Education providers.....	30
Quality Assurance and assessment	31
Main programmes	31
Low-skilled adults	32
Challenges & critique	35
Interviews with stakeholders.....	36
Recommendations.....	40
Switzerland.....	41
Country profile	41
Strategies and policies on Adult Education.....	42
Status of the Adult Education providers.....	43
Quality Assurance and assessment	44



Main programmes	44
Challenges & critique	45
Recommendations.....	46
Ireland.....	47
Country profile	47
Strategies and policies on Adult Education.....	48
Status of the Adult Education providers.....	50
Quality Assurance and assessment	51
Main programmes	52
Low-skilled adults	53
Challenges & critique	58
Interviews with stakeholders.....	58
Recommendations.....	62
Europe.....	63
Regional profile	63
Strategies and policies on Adult Education.....	63
Status of the Adult Education providers.....	65
Quality Assurance and assessment	69
Main programmes	70
Low-skilled adults	73
Challenges & critique	74
Interviews with stakeholders.....	75
Recommendations.....	76
Survey research analysis	78
Conclusion	89
Recommendations.....	93
References	94
Annexes	101

Annex 1: Questionnaire for adult learners.....	101
Annex 2: Interview protocol for adult educators	105



Introduction

The present report aims to provide the theoretical framework for developing strategies for adult education providers and adult educators. The following report has been prepared within the context of the DIMA 2.0 project. The project is co-funded by the EU Erasmus+ programme and is being implemented by a consortium of six partner organisations and one associate partner from five countries (Spain, Cyprus, Belgium, Ireland and Switzerland).

The project objectives are fully aligned with the EU priorities and are the following:

1. Support adult education providers to design, implement, and monitor effective strategies for reaching out low skilled adults and facilitate their access to upskilling pathways;
2. Build the competences of adult education providers and adult educators to design more effective programs for low-skilled or low-qualified adults;
3. Improve the supply of high-quality learning opportunities tailored to the needs of low-skilled or low-qualified adults;
4. Improve the digital competencies of Adult educators to better serve adult learners;
5. Enhance synergies and complementarities among adult education providers, public authorities, and the labour market.

The high number of adults with low basic skills is a significant challenge for Europe. European countries are still experiencing problems in harmonising and coordinating different sectors of Education and Training. Participation in adult education varies significantly across the Member States and regions in Europe. The Commission notes that there is a wide disparity among member states in policymaking, programming, synergies among public bodies and adult education providers. These disparities reflect wider socio-economic, national differences within Europe in terms of factors including employment, social inclusion, economic stability, and growth. The ET2020 working group on Adult Education (2016) identifies the importance of boosting adult education across Europe. Too few adults have access to adult learning, and there is a strong need for “better outreach and collaboration” among all stakeholders (including public and private adult education providers) to achieve the 15% benchmark by 2020.

The DIMA 2.0 builds on the existing knowledge developed by partners and aims at supporting the professional development of Adult education providers to improve and extend the supply of high-quality learning opportunities, tailored to the needs of low-skilled/ low qualified individuals. The primary target groups for this project include Adult



education providers, adult educators working with low-skilled/low qualified adult learners, and adult learners. The primary outcomes of the project will be:

- *A Toolkit for developing Strategies for adult education providers (O1)*: The objective of this output is the development of a practical and innovative toolkit that is expected to support Adult education providers in order to develop, design, implement and monitor effective strategies for reaching out to adult learners, with a focus on low skilled and low qualified adults.
- *Training Modules for adult education providers and educators (O2)*: The Curriculum and training material will be focused on training adult education providers to design strategies for their institution and programs, to serve local and national needs and priorities.
- *eLearning space and OERs (O3)*: The collection of tools will include online modules, digital resources, training material and guidelines for adult education providers to use. This eLearning space will also be used during the implementations with adult educators working with low-skilled and low qualified adults.

The research analysis presented at this report was conducted to facilitate the development of a practical and innovative toolkit (O1) that is expected to support adult education providers in developing, designing, implementing and monitoring effective strategies. These strategies are expected to reach out to adult learners and provide them with effecting learning opportunities tailored to their needs. This research allowed the partnership to gain a better understanding of the current situation in each partner country. It also encapsulates an assessment of current strategies and programmes from partner countries, adult learners' needs and conclusions with new solutions and ideas.

Each partner organisation has carried out activities to collect reliable and evidence-based data from target group members to identify current needs, critical challenges in the field of adult education, and to examine innovative methods for adult education strategy development. This procedure was accompanied with critical reviews of the current strategies, policies and programmes as well as fundamental principles, best practices and methods supporting the adult education sector. In general, this report was progressed in four stages:

- a. *Desk research* gave an overview of the state-of-the-art in adult education in each partner country. It contained necessary information about country's profile, key statistics about the participation of adults in teaching and learning, the current strategies and policies on adult education provision, main actors and stakeholders, quality assurance procedures, national validation systems and framework, some



successful examples, the main challenges, critique and recommendations for improvement.

- b. *Survey research:* Questionnaires were distributed to adult learners online through Google forms from all partner organisations. The data was retrieved and analysed on its whole. The key results are presented with charts and graphics for a better understanding of the relevant chapter. The results generally include adult learners' opinions on education and training, and previous and future participation, reflecting their current needs and beliefs.
- c. *Field research:* In-depth interviews were conducted with experienced adult education providers who provided rich data about their current practices and challenges. The interviews with those key stakeholders aimed to map the needs and gaps related to the education of adults, with a focus on low skilled and low qualified adults. Partners have conducted 5 interviews in each of the partners' countries with persons in key positions operating in public authorities, academic institutions, VET centres and other private adult education organisations.
- d. *National Analysis Reports* were based on the data gathered from the desk research outlining the common points and differences between partner countries.

In the following chapters, an extensive description of the context of adult education in each partner country with some critical views, are furtherly presented. The countries include Cyprus, Spain, Switzerland, Ireland and the region of Europe on its whole, held by the Belgium partner organisation that operates in European level and is considered a trans-European association.

This research includes main strategies and policies in each country, information about the professional status of adult education providers, quality assurance systems in operation, some noteworthy and influential programmes, and specific information for the target group of low-skilled adults.

Moreover, the main points resulted from the interviews held by each partner, are presented, drafting the main challenges and needs from the eye view of adult education providers. Each country report apposes recommendations that concern their context. Moreover, the results retrieved from the analysis of the survey research are presented, reflecting the viewpoints and needs of adult learners.

Finally, the main conclusions are outlined along with the recommendations, which will lead to the definition of the main sections of the toolkit for developing strategies by education providers.



National Reports

Cyprus¹

Country profile

Cyprus is the largest island in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, falling within a geographical cross-point between Europe, the Middle East (Asia) and Northeast Africa. The total area of the island is 9.251 km² of which 37% is under Turkish control (occupied territory), 1.8% of the buffer zone and 5% of UK sovereign bases (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020; Conference on Cyprus, 1959). Regarding the demographics of the country, according to the National Statistical Service (2019), the population of the Government-controlled area for 2018 was estimated at 875.900, of which 155.600 are residents of foreign citizenship. In addition, the Turkish Cypriot community that is not included in the above data is expected to comprise another 91.800 people. Cyprus' GDP for the year 2019 is estimated at €21.9 billion, followed by rather stable growth of recent years (Ministry of Finance, Cyprus, 2020). According to data of the National Statistical Service (2020a), in March 2020, the unemployment rate was 6.3%, and the youth unemployment rate was 15.2%.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth (MECSY) is the responsible stakeholder for developing and implementing the educational policy. The public education system is centralised, and it aims to offer free and accessible basic education to all pupils without prejudice. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI) is responsible for labour and social policy. The Directorate-General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development (DGEPD) operates on handling European Funds and Programmes and coordinate government work as well as on lifelong learning, research and development. The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) is a semi-government organisation, which is focused on creating infrastructures of training and development for the human capital. These authorities are the main stakeholders involved in adult education in Cyprus. Adult education activities can be divided by type in three main categories: formal, non-formal and informal learning.

According to Eurostat (2020), the participation in education and training of adults aged 25-64 years in Cyprus was 6.2% in 2019, a percentage that is significantly lower than the EU average (10.7%). It is noticeable that participation in adult education is constantly

¹ All data and figures do not include illegal settlers from Turkey neither occupied area operation



decreasing during the last decade in Cyprus, while is increasing in EU. According to the same data, the participation of women is consistently quite higher than men in Cyprus.

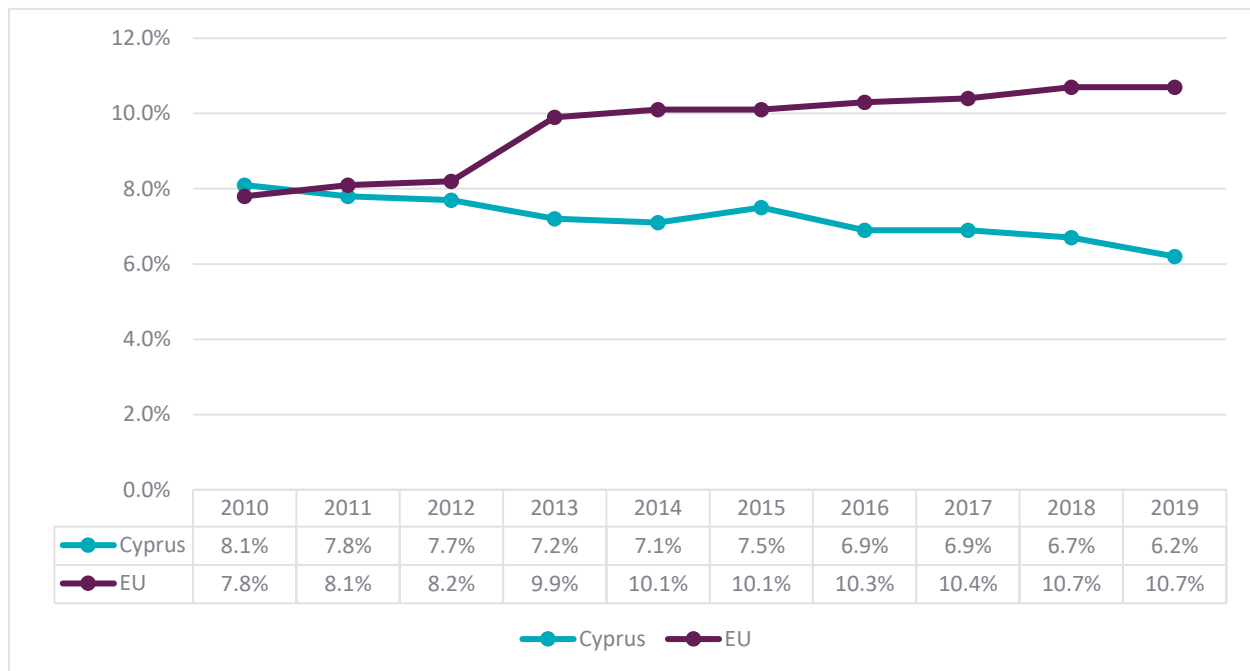


Figure 1. Participation rate in education (last 4 weeks) for adults (25-64 years) (Eurostat, 2020)

Strategies and policies on Adult Education

In Cyprus, there is no comprehensive strategy referring to Adult Education as a term; thus, no definition or policies are completely fit with it. However, other programs are moderately linked with adult education, referring to similar concepts. In 2014, Cyprus proceeded in a collective effort of creating a national strategic plan, the National Strategy 2014-2020 for Life Long Learning (CyLLS 2014-2020) upon European guidelines. The strategic goals were set in four priority axes that would define the actions and activities promoted:

- i. Enhancement of Access and Participation of all citizens in Lifelong Learning and Recognition of its learning outcomes,
- ii. Improvement of Quality and Effectiveness of education and training,
- iii. Promotion of Research and Development for the support of Lifelong Learning,
- iv. Enhancement of Employability (promoting integration/reintegration into the labour market)

Until recently, no mechanisms and frameworks were developed regarding the recognition and validation of skills and qualifications in Cyprus. However, last years the development

of a National Qualification Framework (NQF) became a priority, as it has been included under the first goal axis of the CyLLS 2014-2020. These efforts focused on introducing the relevant EU tools and aligning them with the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (GF/EHEHA) standards. In 2012, the implementation of Cyprus Qualification Framework (CyQF) was approved, and it is based on the same 8 level system of the EQF. The objectives and targets of the CyQF are (Korelli et al., 2019): (a) the recognition and validation of qualifications, (b) mobility, (c) quality assurance of education and training programmes, and (d) promotion of lifelong learning.

HRDA, which has a key role in vocational education and training provision, has developed the System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) towards the validation of learners' skills. Established and implemented in 2007, the SVQ is embodied in the CyQF and includes three main functions (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b): (a) the development of Standards of Vocational Qualifications (StVQs), (b) the assessment and certification of candidates and (c) the enhancement of recognition and validation of prior learning.

There are no comprehensive data regarding the public expenditure in Adult Education because it is not treated as a concrete segment, so it is difficult to estimate the total public funding. Different bodies offer programmes and activities under various public authorities. Generally, there are three main sources of funding for formal and non-formal education and training for adults: public funding, funding from employers and fees paid by learners. However, most vocational training programs are run by semi-government organisations or private companies, and they involve fees.

Employers' funding on human resource development are tax-deductible through the social insurance mechanism. All Cypriot private companies and semi-governmental organisations are obliged to contribute a small share of their payroll costs (0.5%) to a training fund to maintain the right to receive contributions to their training costs in return (Human Resource Development Levy). This consists of the primary source of income of HRDA. By this way, it is estimated that about 20-25% of total human resources development expenditure in the private sector is borne by the state (Eurydice, 2019a). In addition, there are several other incentives of financial support provided to certain groups of adults (e.g. of disadvantaged background) regarding public education and training programmes.

Status of the Adult Education providers

The key actors that are legally responsible for monitoring adult education provision are the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth (MECSY) and Human Resource



Development Authority (HRDA). However, in general, there is no comprehensive legal framework for Adult Education providers and organisations participating in adult education provision. Nonetheless, last years, certain strategies with the form of incentives to ensure the quality of trainers and their programmes have been developed. For example, training providers who wish to provide training programmes in cooperation with HRDA, must apply for certification and be assessed in three domains (centres, facilities, and trainers). Moreover, for the profession of VET trainer, there were developed Standards of Vocational Qualifications (StVQs) that corresponds to the level 5, as part of the CyQF.

Trainers of Adult Education do not have any prescribed professional pathway, and their qualifications and specialisation usually derive from their degrees' subject knowledge and relevant experience. While they constitute a very mixed group with a wide variety of qualities, no official qualifications or background for delivering education is required to become an adult education trainer. It is actually up to their choice if they will dedicate time and money to enhance their educating skills.

The absence of a regulatory framework for Ault Education leads to a lower degree of professionalisation and institutionalisation, giving little emphasis on the professional development and occupational conditions of adult educators.

Only a few programmes of study are offered from Cypriot Institutions specifically for Adult Education provision at the moment: "Med in Adult Education" from the Frederick University, "Med in Education of Adult Educators and Vocational Education and Training Trainers" from the University of Nicosia and "Med in Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning" from the Open University of Cyprus. The Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus also provides small-scaled programmes to adult educators, but not regularly.

Quality Assurance and assessment

Regarding quality assurance and recognition in Higher or Tertiary Education, Institutions involved are being monitored by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) of the MECSY and the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. The MECSY is also responsible for the quality assurance of Evening Schools, Adult Education Centres, and the State Institutes for Further Education.

Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) has a key role in quality assurance in Adult Education and Training of the private sector. HRDA has developed a quality assurance system for the Assessment and Certification of Training Providers. AxioPistoSyn is a tool used to ensure the quality and effectiveness of vocational training provided by



the relevant stakeholders. Through AxioPistoSyn training providers are assessed and certified in three domains: centres (administrative infrastructure), facilities (specifications and relevant experience) and training staff (human resources). Training Providers should apply for certification, followed by an assessment process from qualified, experienced experts. This system is computerised and fully active since 2015, determining that only certified Training Providers are eligible to provide training programmes cooperated with HRDA.

As noted above, the National Qualifications Authority aims to enhance the quality assurance systems in education and training. Mainly, its activities involve monitoring the CyQF for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, regulate accordingly relevant certificates, diplomas and Europass documents, and develop the legal aspect and registry of CyQF. Programmes of education and training to be officially recognised and certified through the CyQF, they should meet a specific set of criteria for achieving predefined levels of learning outcomes. Quality assurance principles include underpinning all levels of the CyQF, regular evaluation of Institutions and their programmes, external monitoring of bodies and agencies carrying out quality assurance, examining context, input, process and specifically product/output dimensions (CIPP), verifying certain instructing elements (e.g. objectives, guidelines, resources, evaluation methods, feedback mechanisms and accessibility of results) and ensuring coordination, coherence and synergy within quality assurance procedures (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b).

Main programmes

As adult education is not treated as a particular segment, there is no clear and collective national direction related to the type of programmes, and initiatives are found scattered from the various stakeholders.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth (MECSY) apart from the monitoring of higher education, is responsible for providing opportunities to adults for completing their basic education and/or retaining the ability to attend tertiary institutions of formal education. Three programmes are focused on this purpose: New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA), Evening Gymnasias and Evening Technical Schools and Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (MIEEK).

Regarding formal tertiary education, there exist three public (the University of Cyprus, Open University of Cyprus, Cyprus University of Technology) and five private (European University, Frederick University, Neapolis University, University of Central Lancashire Cyprus and University of Nicosia) recognised and accredited universities in Cyprus that offer studies in various areas. Moreover, 39 more private higher institutions offer tertiary



education titles and certificates, along with five public ones that offered titles in specific domains (culinary studies, forestry, tourist guides title, police academy and management studies).

Last, a few more public initiatives and a large body of private companies and NGOs offer a wide variety of courses, seminars, and other types of VET programmes, under the umbrella of non-formal education.

For the development of basic skills that adults may lack, programmes of secondary and post-secondary education offered by the MECSY as presented above, may apply. These programmes mostly focus on basic literacy and math skills, while they also provide a concentration on technical subjects. Moreover, the programmes of non-formal education provided by MECSY may offer broader learning opportunities to low-skilled adults, while the programmes of HRDA are targeted for their employability by gaining substantial knowledge and hands-on training experience.

However, no collective efforts were implemented to engage low-skilled adults in continuous education and learning. The data released by the European Commission (2017) presented that participation of low-skilled adults in education is alarmingly low (1.0%).

According to a study of the National Statistical Service (2018) that refers to data of 2016, the two main reasons that do not allow adults to sufficiently participate in learning activities are (a) the lack of time due to family obligations and (b) the lack of financial ability. The first reason was significantly more critical for women. The next most popular reason for not participating is (c) time conflict due to work obligations, which was considerably higher for men.

Reason/Obstacles	Total	Male	Female
lack of time due to family obligations	37.9%	23.7%	48.7%
the limitation of financial resources	21.0%	22.6%	19.9%
time conflict due to work obligations	16.3%	22.6%	11.6%
Not suitable activity found	9.0%	13.0%	5.9%
Personal reasons	6.4%	8.0%	5.2%
Health issues	3.6%	3.5%	3.6%
No activities offered at a convenient distance	3.0%	2.6%	3.4%
Other	2.7%	4.0%	1.8%

Figure 2 Main reasons that did not allow the sufficient participation in formal or non-formal education by gender (Statistical Service, 2018)

As mentioned in a previous chapter, employers are obliged to contribute a 0.5% share of their payroll costs as training fund to HRDA, to secure the right of receiving financial aid for their training costs in return, which is subsidised by HRDA. Training schemes such as *in-company training programmes, individualised training of the unemployed in enterprises or job placement of unemployed in enterprises* are funded by HRDA, which is an essential incentive for companies to professionally train new or existing employees.

In the private sector according to data of 2015, 69.5% of Cypriot companies reported that they provide vocational training opportunities to their staff, however, only 33.2% of their employees participated in these activities (European Commission, 2018). Civil servants have the facility of both paid and non-paid 'study or training leave'.

Low-skilled adults

According to accumulated PIAAC data of three years (2012, 2015, 2018; OECD, 2019a), Cypriot² adults aged 15-65 years old scored slightly above the international average mean in literacy and numeracy skills (from the 24 countries that took part in the survey). From the analysis of the 2012 survey, the majority of adults (75-80%) are classified among the levels 2 and 3 that refers to skills of handling typical and common situations. Only a small percentage (6-8%) has advanced skills that involve analysing complex information, evaluating information critically and drawing conclusions, which classify them at levels 4 and 5 (CERE & Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2013). According to the definition of OECD, 12-19% of adults in Cyprus could be considered low-skilled, i.e. level 1 and below (the corresponding average in OECD countries is 22%; OECD, 2019b).

Based on demographic data, Cyprus belongs to the group of countries with the smallest variation among the socioeconomic levels and age groups for those skills. Nevertheless, younger age groups (16-24 and 25-34) in Cyprus had a weaker score than older age groups (45-54 and 55-65) in comparison with the European and International averages. In contrary to European and national standards, women in Cyprus scored slightly better than men in literacy skills. Moreover, the geographical districts that scored better in literacy and numeracy skills were found to be Paphos, Limassol and urban Nicosia. At the same time, less strong were appeared to be Famagusta, Larnaca and rural Nicosia. The results of that survey also revealed that adults born in other countries than Cyprus scored less than locals, however much higher than the European and international average (i.e. adults than live but not born in the participating country). As expected, the higher educational level of adults corresponds with the higher scores in literacy and numeracy

² All data refer to the population of the island in non-occupied areas that are



skills. Interestingly, Cypriot adults that completed only primary or secondary education presented higher scores than EU and international average (CERE & Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2013).

In digital skills, one out of four adults (22%) does not have any experience or knowledge of basic competences in using a computer, against the 11% average of EU countries. These adults usually have a low educational level, and they mostly belong to the age group of 46-65 years old (78%). Less digital competent districts are appeared to be Famagusta (40%) and Larnaca (25%; CERE & Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2013).

Although Cyprus has one of the highest attainment levels in tertiary education among the ages 25-34, it also has one of the highest percentages without secondary education completed among the ages 55-65 years old (in comparison with the PIAAC countries average; OECD, 2019a). In general, PIAAC survey results showed that Cyprus is at a satisfactory level of certain skills in comparison with the other countries that took part in the survey. Still, particular groups were found more vulnerable within the country: habitants that were not born in Cyprus, people with a low educational level, older ages regarding digital skills and residents of the eastern area of the island (Famagusta and Larnaca). However, the small variations of achievement based on different demographic characteristics (gender, socioeconomic status, age groups, origin) reveal some level of equality among Cyprus population (CERE & Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2013).

The data released by the European Commission (2018) presented that participation of low-skilled adults in education in 2017 was alarmingly low (1.0%). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth (MECSY) has established pathways to adults for completing their basic education (secondary level) a long time ago, but they seem too standardised and unmodernised. These programmes include Evening Gymnasias, Evening Technical Schools and New Modern Apprenticeship (for younger ages). The MECSY also runs two non-formal education programmes: Adult Education Centres that provide courses with no official certification in various and generic areas, and State Institutes of Further Education that provide courses mainly in ICT, accounting, languages as preparatory lessons for the official examinations of external stakeholders (e.g. IELTS or IGCSE of Cambridge, ECDL or ICT Europe for Computers etc.).

Programmes addressing specifically the needs of low-skilled adults	
Pathways for completing basic education:	
1	Evening Gymnasias
2	Evening Technical Schools
3	New Modern Apprenticeship
Non-formal education programmes:	



4	Adult Education Centres
5	State Institutes of Further Education
Training and employment:	
6	Human Resource Development Authority

Figure 3. Programmes addressing specifically the needs of low-skilled adults

However, the most significant impact during the last decade has been ascribed to the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA). HRDA runs several schemes targeted to unemployed, facilitating their integration to the market, as well as employed providing opportunities for further lifelong learning and development. Those programmes are carried out by subsidising programmes for enterprises and employers to train new and existing staff. In 2018, the amount of expenditure reached €15.7M, helping more than 45.000 trainees. However, the amount of funding and the number of trainees is significantly lower for those who need it more (unemployed and inactive). Furthermore, it is known that learning opportunities for workers are given mostly to those with a higher salary and position in the companies (HRDA, 2018).

Cyprus did not define low-skilled adults; neither has developed strategies targeted to them. Their needs are not clearly identified, so no programmes are addressing them explicitly. PIAAC data helps us to map some groups that might be characterised as low-skilled and low qualified; however, quick conclusions might be naive. For example, some adults may have low literacy and numeracy levels. However, still, they might possess a range of other valuable skills in other domains, such as professional drivers, caring workers, customer service professionals or sale representatives. Their long work-experience might equip them with skills equivalent to formal qualifications, and they might not be vulnerable at all.

Challenges & critique

Adults' participation in education in Cyprus (6.2%) remains below EU average (10.7%) following a stable decrease during the last years, while even more concerning is the participation of low-skilled adults (1.0%). The same time, only 50% of adults 25-64 reported to have basic or above basic digital skills (EU average: 60%; European Commission, 2018).

Besides the past and existing government efforts, there are more to be done while many challenges should be considered at the same time:

- The coordination, monitoring and reporting procedures regarding the development of participation of adults in education and training treating it as a segment.



- The acceleration and promotion of the National Qualification Framework for the recognition and validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through adult education and training or work experience, to enhance the transparency of qualification, transition and mobility of adults.
- The facilitation of adult participation in education and training (i.e. supporting structures, career guidance, providing opportunities), especially of low-skilled adults.
- The contribution of tertiary education institution either by developing short-term programmes of study for adults or initiating research to investigate this sector.
- The adjustment of programmes to new economic activity streams that will derive from the current changing period (COVID-19) and other modern developmental perspectives i.e. greener economy, renewable energy sources, rationalisation of consumption and waste and reduction of carbon emissions.
- The improvement of the quality and effectiveness of education and training, maintaining its relevance and usefulness for adults and their employability.
- The modernisation of education and training provision and the exploitation of innovative learning strategies and means, considering the main obstacles for participation that adult may face.

Last years, several governmental efforts were taken to face existing and upcoming challenges, i.e. the high unemployment rates. For example, HRDA during the recent years subsidised programmes and involved around 45.000-55.000 unemployed and employed individuals in learning and training activities per year. Moreover, the effort on certifying private training providers and connecting them with business and individuals is also profitable. The National Qualifications Authority has made the first steps on initialising the validation systems for informal and non-formal learning and developing the first professional standards. The MECSY has attempted to strengthen the capacity of PSIVET and second-chance schools to help in upgrading basic skills among adults. However, participation in adult education remains at low levels.

First, the lack of a common, national definition regarding adult education complicates its understanding as a sector and the identification of its needs and challenges, as well as management of programmes. Adult education it is not treated as a segment and it is hardly separated from other concepts such as lifelong learning, VET training or non-formal and informal education.



There is no single authority responsible for adult education and training. Instead, several ministries are involved, which are responsible for the operation of the institutions that fall on their jurisdiction. This affects the coordination of both public and private programmes provided, making it difficult to search around numerous sources and find the most

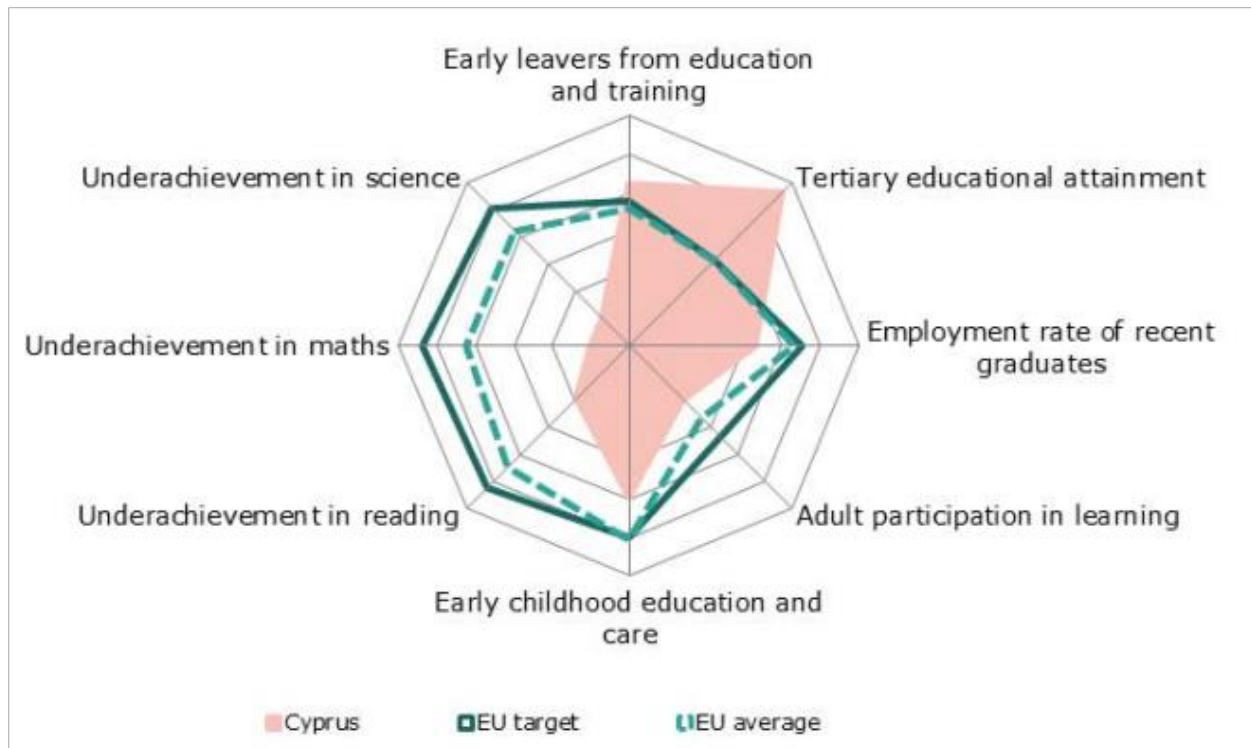


Figure 4 Position of Cyprus to strongest (outer ring) and weakest performers (center) (European Commission, 2018)

suitable, either for companies or individuals.

There is a definite need for a collective national effort in organising, designing, and promoting targeted programmes, especially to low-skilled adults. According to the Forecasts of Employments Needs in the Cyprus Economy 2017-2027 (HRDA, 2017), labour demand will continue to grow in the tertiary sector employing 8 out of 10 workers, where basic digital skills are essential. The identification and support of adults with low skills who are vulnerable to the upcoming changes of the working world is crucial for inclusion and national productivity.

Interviews with stakeholders

Challenges and needs

The first section of the interview included questions related to the challenges and needs related to Adult Education in Cyprus. The most common answers from the interviewees included:

- the lack of incentives for adults to participate in adult education programmes
- the programmes need to reflect the needs and interest of the persons
- there is a need for better-trained trainers/educators
- the funds on adult education programmes is not sufficient

Some of the answers also pointed out the need for the professionalisation and provision of more opportunities for the professional development of the trainers/educators. Additionally, the absence of a coherent national strategy and policy for Adult Education and the need for an essential role of the Lifelong Learning Unit were also among the answers pointed out by the interviewees.

The second question asked about the main challenges with regards to teaching to low-skilled and low-qualified adults. The most popular answer to this question was the challenge to provide learning opportunities based on the knowledge and experiences of the learners. Additionally, the interviewees highlighted the lack of defining low-skilled adults, the lack of programmes designed especially for them, the big diversity of the students' characteristics within a class. An interviewee also mentioned that in some programmes participants do not even have the basic knowledge to participate and that the low-skilled learners believe that they should seek for a job right away.

In the third question, interviewees were asked about the tools and methods they use to identify the needs for programmes. In many of the programmes, lessons are provided based on the learners' demand. Some interviewees stated that satisfaction questionnaires filled by participants to give feedback on already existing programmes. In many cases, coordination takes place, either with local organisations and institutions like prisons, refugee accommodation centres, nursing homes and others.

Most of the interviewees answered that no needs analysis takes place before the design or initiation of their programmes and lessons. Some of the answers highlighted the need for a needs analysis to be introduced, for the programmes to address the needs of learners, and that needs analysis should map obstacles for the participation of adults as well.



Interviewees were then asked about the tools/methods that they use in the development of your learning programmes. Among the answers, some of the interviewees stated that programmes should be developed based on pre-identified needs. Feedback from existing programmes is often used to improve the programmes. In some cases, scientific committees are being set up to discuss the development of a programme or the upgrade of an existing one. Such a committee was created for the new framework of the Evening Schools of the Ministry of Education of Cyprus. In some cases, because some programmes include many lessons from different areas, methods and tools are selected in coordination with the inspectors of specific subjects. Good practices from other countries are also taken into consideration.

Following the previous question, interviewees were asked about tools that would help them improve the learning offers but are not available because of price/location. Some of the interviewees said that there are tools, best practices and other examples from other countries that could be used, but there is a budget limitation in acquiring them. Some of these examples have to do with language learning.

Participation of adults

In the second section of the interview, participants answered questions related to the participation of adults to Adult Education programmes in Cyprus.

In the first question, participants were asked about the main challenges regarding adult participation. Most of the interviewees agreed that participation is low. Some interviewees stated that one of the reasons is because in many cases, the lessons do not meet their needs and that there is a lack of motivation among adult learners. Additional answers included the difference in levels of knowledge, skills, age and what learners want to learn within a class, that many learners leave the lessons before their completion, the difficulty to offer classes in small villages, or the difficulty to break them into different levels due to low participation, and the lack of recognition of non-formal and informal learning by employers. Also, the fact that most of the adults are working is a big obstacle for their participation in adult education programmes.

Afterwards, participants were asked on how participation in adult education and training can be further enhanced at the local, regional, and national level. The majority of interviewees noted the importance of mapping the needs of adult learners and offer programmes and lessons based on these needs. Among the most popular answers were also the need for a bigger budget in the field of adult education, more emphasis on the recognition and certification of programmes, and more emphasis on the training and development of adult educators.



In the third question of the second section, participants were asked whether the learning needs of all adults are met, and what kind of resources should be developed in case they are not. The majority of the interviewees answered that the needs of adults already participating in the programmes are met. For the rest of the adults there are no sufficient data to answer this. Some interviewees noted the need for more money invested in adult education and the need for tools to map the needs in the field, in order to develop appropriate programmes.

Regarding ensuring equal access and participation of adults in adult education and training (e.g. migrants, elderly people, low skilled adults etc.), some of the interviewees said that there are lessons that are free or have a discount for certain groups of learners. These include the provision of free language lessons for migrants, no tuition fees for adults with low income, recipients of public assistance and persons with disabilities in some cases, discount on tuition for people 65+ and free lessons in institutions like prisons, refugee accommodation centres and others. Some of the good practices for equal access recommended by the participants include more information campaigns for adults with fewer opportunities to know about the programmes, approach the use of diagnostic tools to develop specialised programmes, and the development of programmes based on certain needs to address special groups of people with fewer opportunities.

In the question “What motivates adult learners?” the most popular answer was that a strong motive is when a lesson meets their needs. Additional answers included the lessons being of reasonable level and quality and that their learning will be recognised and certified, and that they will be able to apply their knowledge in their workplace.

Regarding the barriers of adults to learning, most of the interviewees stated the lack of personal time due to either family or professional responsibilities. Other answers included that the lessons might be far from their area of accommodation, financial obstacles, and the lack of culture for learning.

On the things which could encourage adults to learn in the future, the different answers included empowering and motivating adults by strengthening the idea of adult education in a lifelong perspective, mapping their needs and getting in touch with them before designing programmes, the recognition of their learning by the employers, as well the internal desire of learners for personal development.

In the last question of the interviews’ second section, the interviewees were asked about the factors that would make adult learning more attractive. The provision of quality



programmes and lessons and the factor of the educator and their connection with the learner were the most common answers of the interviewees.

Other issues

In the third section of the interview, the interviewees were questioned about the quality of the lessons, the financing of programmes and the cooperation within the field of adult education.

In the first question, the interviewees were asked how the quality of the field can be ensured. Some of the interviewees focused on the training and certification of the educators, which would result in programmes of higher quality. The introduction of quality indicators or the utilisation of quality assurance tools from other sectors were also some of the suggestions of the interviewees. Additional answers included the establishment of a quality assurance body for adult education, better staffing of the programmes, and better facilities for the lessons to take place.

In the second question, participants were asked whether the financing of the sector (either public or private) is effectively managed or further actions should be taken to increase its efficiency. Although two out of five interviewees answered that the financing is sufficient, the majority of them noted that more funding would be better, and more things could be done.

The interviewees were then asked whether the cooperation among the several stakeholders of the field is satisfactory. All interviewees agreed that greater cooperation is needed, while two of them added that sometimes there is no cooperation even within the same organisation. Two of the participants also emphasised on the need of a unit with an essential role of coordinating adult education.

Policy priorities

In the interview's last section, participants were asked on their knowledge of policies, programmes, or other initiatives related to adult education and training. Participants mentioned the Lifelong Learning Unit of the Ministry of Education and the National Lifelong Learning Strategy.

Regarding statistical data and information useful in addressing these policy priorities, the participants mentioned the collection of data from programmes provided by the Republic of Cyprus for adults and low-skilled adults, including the number of participants and the bodies providing them. Additionally, mapping the people's needs and the reason adult learners choose to participate in the programmes they participate in.



Recommendations

Since there is no comprehensive legislative framework for Adult Education and training in Cyprus and provisions are applied by the various authorities involved, there is a need for a systematic mechanism to record and monitor general education of adults and continuous professional training. Adult education programmes are offered in different forms by a blend of providers, and there are no comprehensive data available regarding performance and quality assurance indicators, such as participation rates or customer satisfaction.

In addition, infrastructures for efficient organisation, communication and promotion of public and private efforts are needed, in order to make programmes and opportunities accessible to all. Adult education should be communicated in target groups because it consists of a very broad range of population (i.e. low-skilled, unemployed, profession-based, young adults, etc.). Also, efforts for arousing the engagement of adults in lifelong learning and thus the creation of a culture of continuous development, are imperative.

Private efforts need to be furtherly monitored and coordinated. Private training providers offer the main pool of programmes in adult education and enhance the national capacity of learning. They can provide useful, practical information (i.e. data, labour market demands or learners' needs) and ideas, while they might offer other solutions, i.e. the provision of specialised education and training. The development of effective communication channels both vertically (with adult learners) and horizontally (between them) can facilitate the collaboration, as well as the promotion of their work and eventually the participation of adults.

A report of OECD (2019) regarding the engagement of low-skilled adults in learning, highlights seven action points to create more and better-learning opportunities for them:

- Reach out potential learners through awareness campaigns or new, creative, and direct ways.
- Provide personalised advice and guidance services, tailored to the training needs and situation of each adult individually and discover the most appropriate programmes. In addition, information on how to tackle any barriers to participation is also needed.
- Provide interesting and relevant learning opportunities ensuring that they will be equipped with useful and transferable skills for the labour market. Learning provision needs to be hands-on and problem-solving oriented linked to the context/workplace of the learner, taking into account how adults learn.
- Recognise existing skills and informal learning through validation and certification procedures. Processes and methods need to be representative to the national



practices, promoted and accompanied with support and guidance. Recognition of skills may benefit individuals (increase motivation), employers (indications for matching roles for productivity) and economy (improve labour market functioning).

- Create modular learning opportunities to enable adults to monitor their learning outcomes, learn in their own time and shape their learning path, adding credits or part-qualifications to their learning portfolio.
- Offer education and training plans to employees, as time, either for work or family obligations, was the most important reason for not participating in learning. Protective measures regulating paid, partially paid, or unpaid work leaves, by legislation or other collective agreements, are suggested.
- Provide targeted financial support and incentives for education and training, as limitation of financial resources is also one of the main obstacles in participation. It is obvious that people with higher wages have even higher participation levels, so assisting low-waged adult contributes to more equitable learning systems.



Spain

Country profile

There are more than 47 million people living in Spain which is slowly increasing since 2018. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Spain grew 2% in 2019. The GDP figure in 2019 was \$1,393,505 million. Spain spends 3.1% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on primary and secondary education, compared to 3.5% for the OECD average. Total expenditure per full-time student relative to GDP per capita is on a par with the OECD and EU23 averages of 23%.

Crucial to the system of education in Spain is that educational powers have been decentralised and transferred to the governments of the different Autonomous Communities or Regions. Their duties include the development and the application of the respective regulations with regard to adult education.

According to the EAEA Country Report on Adult Education in Spain (2011), Spain has a special framework for adult training based on its educational legislation. Nevertheless, there are other programmes which are also significant such as the Programmes of Initial Vocational Training (Programas de Cualificación Profesional Inicial), oriented towards young adults who have failed their compulsory education. This then aims to enable them to gain a basic professional degree or other qualifications within programmes developed on the framework of Occupational and Ongoing Training (Formación Ocupacional y Continua) managed by the Labour Administration.

Adult education in Spain is regulated by the Education Acts (LOGSE, LOCE and LOE). These Acts aim to recognise the increasing importance of lifelong learning as a means towards social cohesion and social development. The overall participation rate in adult learning in Spain is still five percentage points below the 20%-target of the EU2020 agenda.

From the viewpoint of adult education and lifelong learning, there is 43.4% of the adult population in Spain that has a level of education less than or equal to ISCED2 level. More worrying is the fact that there is a 14% that has not even completed the final year of compulsory education (ESO), which makes them have no access to upper-secondary education (intermediate level vocational education or high school). Those who do not wish to complete compulsory education at a later stage in their lives, they remain with no other choice apart from opting alternative recognitions of competences such as the *certificados de profesionalidad*.

The skill levels of Spanish workers are comparatively low at all levels of education when we compare workers with the same level of education (INEE, 2013). Spain performs equally



poorly in other core competences such as the command of foreign languages or digital literacy. Accordingly, the Statistics Information Society of Eurostat indicated that by 2014, 42% of the Spanish population aged 25 to 64 had never used a computer or did not know how to perform basic ICT operations. The participation of the adult population aged 25 to 64 in lifelong learning reached 10.5% however, the EU target for 2020 is to have an average of at least 15%.

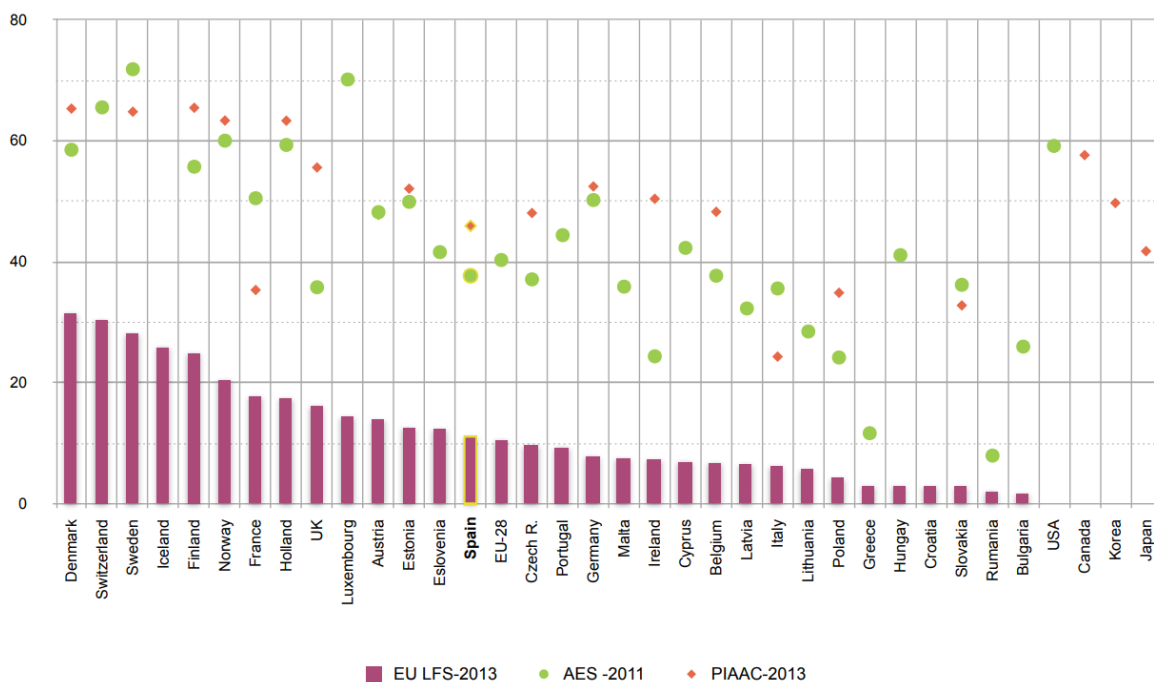


Figure 5. Participation rate in education and training (25-64) (Eurostat and OECD)

Strategies and policies on Adult Education

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

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

Following the Eurydice report (2015), programs aimed at the acquisition of basic skills can be divided at least into three main groups:

1. Programs within regular/formal education that allow participants to complete lower secondary education (ISCED 2).
2. Programs outside regular/formal education aimed at acquiring basic skills including reading comprehension, literacy, mathematics, and ICT.
3. Programs to gain access to higher educational levels and the acquisition of basic skills during work (vocational training, active labour market policies) and others such as popular education.

In Spain, 80% of non-formal learning is job training (*formación para el empleo*), either meant for the person's current job or for a future job. The system of job training in Spain consists of 3 subsystems:

1. The so-called *formación de demanda o bonificada* (training on demand) that is made up of the training programs offered by companies.
2. The second subsystem is the so-called *formación de oferta o subvencionada* (supply-side training). This type of training courses, open to both employed and unemployed persons, are offered for free by employers' organisations, trade unions, third-sector organisations, and appropriately registered and accredited training centres.
3. Finally, the *formación en alternancia con el empleo* comprise the training provided to workers as part of an apprenticeship or trainee contract and the public training programs that allow participants to combine training and the acquisition of work experience in the workplace.

The MECD developed its Strategic Plan for Lifelong Learning (Plan Estratégico de Aprendizaje a lo Largo de la Vida) in 2014 in collaboration with the autonomous communities, prioritising distance learning, free tests for obtaining upper secondary credentials and expanded online resources. MECD has sought to strengthen adult education in concert and also as part of with its broader reforms to the VET system, including within the 2015 reform of the Training for Employment Subsystem (Subsistema de Formación para el Empleo).

According to the official website of the European Union, in 2009, the Spanish Government entrusted the Ministry of Education with the drawing up of the Spanish Qualifications Framework. In 2011, the Sustainable Economy Act demanded the creation of this framework in order to encourage and increase the mobility of students and workers.



The Spanish Qualifications Framework aims to correlate and coordinate the different subsystems of education and training and include the qualifications obtained in compulsory, post-secondary and higher education, as well as integrate the validation of non-formal and informal learning (qualifications obtained outside the education system through in-service training, work activity, collaboration with NGOs, etc.). The eight levels of the framework cover all types of qualifications in Spain. Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences.

Spain spends even more public funding than other European countries. However, there are marked differences in the way the available funds are distributed between the participants, the firms, and the training providers. Some reforms have been done in the system of job training to guarantee the individual rights to training for workers and firms. These are 3 of the most significant changes:

- Firstly, the supply of training programs is determined on a competitive basis, forcing training providers to compete for the available funds. The competitive allocation of funding makes an end to the existing monopoly of social partners.
- Secondly, workers are assigned an individual training account that summarises the training the worker has received along with his or her entire working career. In addition, the government plans to introduce a system of training vouchers for the unemployed, allowing them to fund training programs of their own choice. The implementation of these training vouchers will be a competence of the regional governments.
- Last but not least, the training programs will be evaluated continuously to measure the quality of the impact of these programs on participants.

Spain has implemented a host of measures to lower the cost of participation in education and training. For example, Spain grants workers with lower levels of educational attainment preferential access to allowances for paid training leave, and to officially recognised training activities that lead to an official qualification under the Individual Training Permit (Permiso Individual de Formación, 2017), although participants require employer's authorisation.

Co-funding measures also target groups such as adults with disabilities, unemployed women and victims of gender-based violence, and the unemployed can also access financial support for skills development, such as maintained unemployment benefits while in training or funds to help defray training costs. Additionally, various recent reforms have sought to strengthen training and learning contracts, which allow employers to deduct all or part of the cost of training from social security contributions. Since 2012, conditions



for firms to provide training have eased, notably by permitting training to focus only on professional content, allowing the accreditation of training, and temporarily extending eligibility from the traditional 16-24 age bracket up to 29 – for those who lack a formal credential or vocational qualification or become employed in a new sector. A further 2015 reform required that all training under these contracts lead to a certification. The total number of training contracts more than doubled from 60 000 in 2012 to 140 000 in 2014, and reached 175 000 in 2015, before falling back to 46 384 in 2016. Importantly, the share of training contracts used for low-skilled workers increased from under 15% before 2012 to over one-third by 2015.

Status of the Adult Education providers

Adult training can be provided in public educational institutions or private organisations/companies, but a specific license and guidance from the Ministry of Education is required. According to Eurydice (2020), the evaluation of the educational system in Spain aims at contributing to the quality and equity improvement in education, orienting educational policies, increasing the transparency and efficiency of the educational system, which has two differentiated pathways: educational inspection and evaluation.

On the one hand, the first one is conducted on elements and aspects of the education system in order to ensure compliance with the law, guarantee rights and duties of those participating in the teaching and learning processes, the improvement of the system as well as the quality and equity of education. The Educational inspection is organised into two levels: the Educational Inspectorate and the educational inspection of non-university education. On the other hand, educational evaluation is a tool that contributes to the knowledge of the education system and guides decision-making by the different institutions related to education. This is considered an essential element in order to improve the transparency of the Spanish education system.

In 2016/17, there were 112 private adult education institutions, as opposed to 2.261 public institutions. Private institutions organising adult education provision can be classified into 3 main categories:

1. Private non-profit institutions: they receive public funding from different administrations and are characterised by a high degree of social intervention, and by organising a wide variety of cultural activities, together with education provision.
2. Private profit institutions are organising in-class provision: they mainly offer non-formal education related to professional and language training, as well as formal



training leading to official qualifications. They are self-governing institutions, and their income is obtained from students' contributions.

3. Private profit institutions organising distance provision: they mainly offer language and vocational training programmes they are private, self-managing institutions, and are financed with students' contributions. Most of them are integrated in the National Association of Distance Education Centres.

Quality Assurance and assessment

In Spain, there are different responsible bodies for the quality assessment: the Public State Employment Service (SEPE); the Tripartite Foundation for Training in Employment and the competent bodies in the different autonomous communities.

Different mechanisms are placed to evaluate adult education in the fields of adult education within the education system and vocational training for employment (formal and non-formal).

Spain participates in the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) which assesses the competencies of adults aged 16 to 65 in essential information-processing skills. The skills that are evaluated in Spain were literacy, numeracy and reading components.

Main programmes

In Spain, the education authorities provide an opportunity to study basic education for adults, which comprises initial education, secondary education for adults, vocational secondary education for adults (basic vocational training) and language education.

Secondary education for adults is intended to help young people and adults who dropped out from the education system, to obtain the Lower Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate. It also seeks to facilitate the acquisition of the basic skills that are necessary to foster their personal development and promote their social integration, the continuation of their studies and their integration into the labour market or promotion.

The Initial Teaching of Basic Education for People of Adult Age (Enseñanzas Iniciales de Educación Básica para Personas en Edad Adulta, 2006) offers the qualifications to access lower secondary education through institutions targeting adults alone, regular primary and secondary schools, and other private operators. While modifying the legal framework for basic adult education to place a greater emphasis on skills for entrepreneurship, the LOMCE created a legal basis for (lower) Secondary Education for Adults (Educación Secundaria para Personas Adultas), targeting participants who have passed the sixth grade of primary education, Initial Teaching of Basic Education for People of Adult Age,



or an entrance examination. These programmes are typically offered at regular secondary schools during evenings, under the authority of autonomous communities (which was clarified further in 2014).

Adults can also obtain an upper secondary education diploma through evening and distance classes and access a preparatory programme for entrance examinations, basic and intermediate vocational training, and vocational training for employment. All these programmes are open free of charge to eligible adults over the age of 18, or for people as young as 16 whose employment hours conflict with regular schooling. University access exams are also open to learners over ages 25, 40 and 45 free of charge. Additionally, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security finances Spanish language training and employment support programmes for immigrants. Distance learning is prevalent, while modular programmes, credit-based qualifications, flexible pathways and assessment and recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning are other key facets of adult learning

Vocational secondary education allows the acquisition of professional, social, personal, and long-life learning skills. In accordance with the 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, the education authorities may establish training programmes leading to the award of the Basic Vocational Training Certificate for those aged over 17.

Finally, language education is organised into three levels: basic, intermediate, and advanced. The skills of the different levels correspond to levels A2, B1 and B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, respectively.

The education authorities may cooperate with other public authorities with powers in the field of adult education and, in particular, with employment authorities, as well as with local governments and social agents.

Low-skilled adults

In Spain, during the past decades, the level of competences related to adult education and training has had three important limits:

- 1) Educational delays: Spain has one of the highest rates (43.3%) of low skilled adults (that means with an ISCED 2 level or lower).
- 2) Early school leaving: The main reason of this educational delay is the successive waves of young people who have dropped out the educational system early. In Spain, 10% of young people between 18 and 24 years old have dropped out of school without obtaining a Secondary Education degree.



3) Fewer basic skills of the adult population: Spain has one of the lowest rates in two basic skills: reading (27.5%) and mathematical skills (30.6%). Those percentages reveal that Spanish adults between 16 and 65 years old are placed in level 1 or lower within the PIAAC scale.

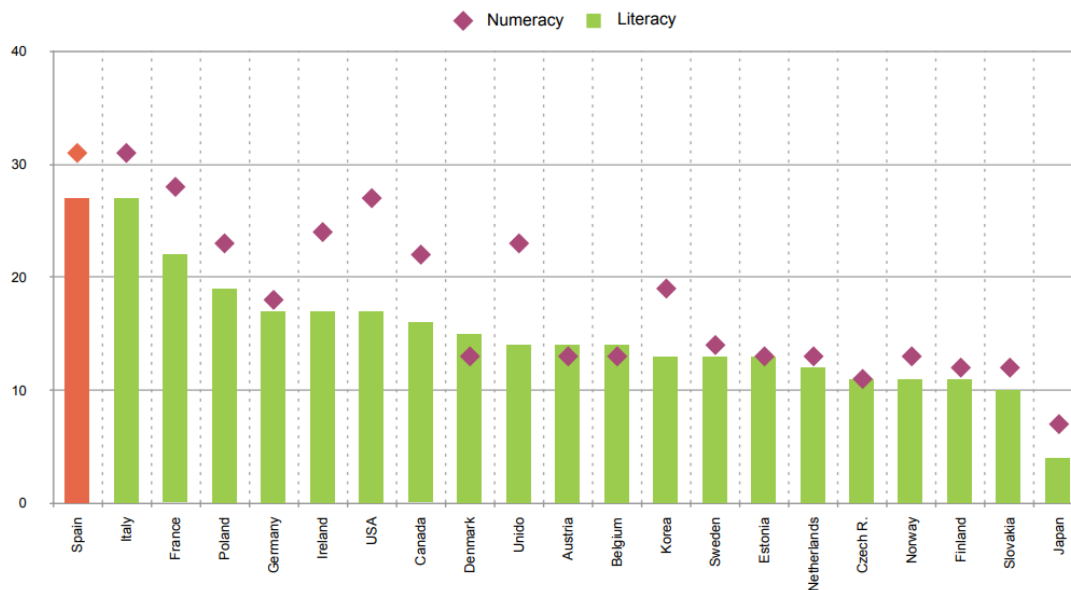


Figure 6. Adult population with low proficiency levels in numeracy and literacy (PIAAC, OECD)

As a result of this trend that has created the picture of the situation in Spain during the last decades, there is a work deterioration suffered by low-skilled adults who represent more than 50% of unemployment and 38% of the active population, and even more among long-term unemployed adults (longer than 2 years).

This group of people requires specific training programmes for their labour reinsertion. Only through education and training, the limits described above can be removed, and high unemployment rates among the adult population can be fought.

But one of the most significant challenges is the adaptation of the training offers to the personal, social and labour needs of adult learners. From the Ministry of Education, they take into account the following principles to reach this adaptation:

- The construction of meaningful learning. This construction must be implemented based on previous knowledge, which in the case of adults, is of vital importance.
- The learning functionality. It is essential for adults who have dropped initial training and are encouraged to get back because of a clear functional necessity that, if it is not met, makes them drop out the system again.

- The intense activity by the person who is learning, which contributes in a way much more significant to the learning process than just a responsive attitude.
- The participatory methodology is essential in order to design educational actions aimed for low skilled adults.
- Cooperative learning. This kind of learning supports adults, mostly low-skilled ones who usually live their learning process with certain anxiety.
- The use of previous knowledge and acquired skills which makes the learning process easier.
- The horizontalism understood as an equal treatment among adults, either if they are learners or educators, without tending to consider the educator as the only owner of a knowledge that transfers the responsive adult learner. The idea is that both, learners and educators, work together on the learning process.

Based on what has been exposed above, designing the training offer of adults can have some difficulties. In Spain, the choice has been adapting the school as much as possible to the adult's needs, and all this has resulted as the design and carry out of the educational offer for adults, whose general features are the following:

- Reduction of working hours. Actually, the primary education for adults leading to the Secondary Education Degree is, logically, much shorter than Primary and Secondary Education for children; while High School Diploma can last one more year than the common offer. There are no differences in the field of the Official Vocation, Education and Training programs, except the e-learning offer.
- Face to face and online learning methods are used, that also offer a different organisation structure itself.
- The distribution of teaching-learning contents in some programs. In the basic education for adults, for example, contents are organised in fields of knowledge. Those fields of knowledge are part of the different areas that compose Secondary Education.
- It allows flexible use of the educational paths, regarding the admission or the incorporation according to the level accredited by each person, the partial follow-up of the curriculum, and the reiterated permanence within the educational levels regarding personal circumstances.
- It means a distinctive learning methodology.

In Spain, the Ministry of Education aims to support all low skilled learners to attend lessons and finish their study programmes. For this, this group must know the different learning options and existing paths to organise and focus the learning experience maximising timing and efforts.



In the Ministry of Education website, it is available for low-skilled adults an online tool to know which option and learning methods fit better to their personal, family and professional reality. Also, there is a collection of materials and resources to support their learning process that can also be used by families, professionals and any other person related to training and education. The tool is called "inFórmate", and it is designed to support adult learners in the counselling process to show the variety of the existing training paths. Through this tool, low-skilled adults can access most of the personal, family and professional situations of this group of population. The inFórmate tool makes filters initially the situation of the adult person who submits a query through the following questionnaire:

1. Date of birth
2. An educational system where the person has studied
3. Learning method the person is interested in: face-to-face/ e-learning / both
4. Type of learning: official degree/ certificate of achievement/ both

All available programmes across the country can be found here:
<http://www.educacion.gob.es/informate/primeraNavigate.action>

Challenges & critique

Approximately 10 million adults have low levels of literacy or numeracy in Spain, meaning they have difficulties working with simple written information, and/or conducting basic quantitative reasoning. This is equal to 37% of the population aged 25-64, compared to the OECD average of 23%. Approximately one-in-five adults with low literacy skills are immigrants. Low-skilled adults aged 25-64 are 1.5 times more likely than more skilled counterparts to be unemployed and three times more likely to be out of the labour force but not studying.

The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Spain is among the highest in the OECD, and NEET rates are significant as well. The main reason for the large persisting share of poorly qualified adults that the early school-leaving rate from secondary education remains too high. Despite recent improvements, the OECD has identified persistently high rates of early school leaving (18.3% in 2017). This has implications for skills, employment outcomes, and the efficiency of education spending.

However, Spanish low-skilled adults are among the least likely in the OECD to receive job-related training, with only 19% participating in formal or non-formal adult education or training in 2012 compared to the OECD average of 31%. Among those employed, only



33% participated in job-related education and training, and employers sponsored the training of just 51% of those who participated, compared to the OECD average of 56%. The association between insecure tenure and lower investment by workers and employers in skills to improve current job performance may partly explain limited training activity among low-skilled workers in Spain, as these workers are more likely to have temporary contracts. Also, a large share of employment in Spain (55%) is in micro and small enterprises, and substantial evidence indicates smaller firms are less likely to invest in worker skill development – only 26% of Spanish micro-firms train their workers, compared to 93% of large firms.

Spain has approved some national reforms in adult learning as the Agreement on the First Strategic Plan of the Educational System for Vocational Training 2019 - 2022. It has been drawn up with the support of the Ministries of Economy and Entrepreneurship; Industry, Trade and Tourism; Ecological Transition and Labour Migration and Social Security.

The aim is to improve employability and meet the needs of the labour market, as well as to consolidate the flexibility of these studies, which in turn will allow reaching a higher qualification. The plan incorporates the Sustainable Development Objectives of the European Commission's 2030 Agenda and the New Capabilities Agenda for Europe, which includes actions to ensure that EU citizens benefit from adequate training, skills, and support. The plan is based on 9 axes and 16 strategic objectives. Axis 6 is the acknowledgement of basic and professional skills, with two main actions:

- Revision of the regulations for the accreditation of professional competences, in order to speed up and intensify the accreditation process.
- Creation of a procedure to accredit basic skills (linguistic, mathematical, and digital) for 20,000 adults per year.

The strategic objective number 11 is to develop a procedure for the accreditation of basic -non-professional- competences for adults.

Interviews with stakeholders

Fundación Coremsa carried out five interviews with different providers of Adult Education programmes in Spain. Due to the current Covid-19 situation, interviews were not implemented face-to-face as it was initially planned, but through a written questionnaire by Google Forms (in Spanish) and a post-phone call by the interviewer to gather further information in order to transcript the interviews in English for the DIMA2.0 project.



Challenges and needs

Regarding the main challenges with regards to adult education programmes in Spain, the common idea is about the employability, especially for adults over 45 who have also an increased fear of changes in general. The current trend to business internationalization and digitalization makes their employment a critical challenge. Also, there is the challenge that AE programmes must be not only theoretical but also practical to implement acquired knowledge to their professional and personal life. There is a real need to adapt learning offers to the reality of the national labour market. The proposal should be focused on the most requested profiles, and admission processes for learning programmes should be linked to the market.

In terms of teaching low skilled adults, the main challenges mentioned were the need to link learning programmes to the labour market. This is something that all interviewees consider essential for the success of the AE programmes. That would also help to approach another main challenge, which is a lack of motivation. Among other barriers that were mentioned, were the lack of time to get involved in a learning programme and the existing digital gap among adult generations in Spain. That leads to the conclusion that 100% online learning programmes might not succeed.

Concerning the tools/methods to identify the appropriate programmes in Spain, interviewed experts consider that research of training needs at a national level is essential. For this research, there must be a dialogue between training centres and companies better to identify the demands of the current labour market. For this purpose, tools such as surveys and questionnaires directly addressed to potential participants are needed to meet with their profiles, interests and expectations and create customised learning programmes.

Regarding the tools/methods they used for the development of their learning programmes, traditional methods are still being used, such as master classes, PPT presentations and so on. Online learning is implemented at a low extent as it is inadequately supported by the official authorities (FUNDAE, employment services at local and regional level, etc.). Nevertheless, online learning is more regulated and provides the facilitator a detailed knowledge about each learner progress. In other cases, the training offer is 100% online, so basically, the used tools are computer programmes and software, Moodle platforms and different kinds of e-learning materials. Another interesting contribution was the use of a holistic framework methodology. In this approach, the learner acts as the main actor of its learning process, while self-knowledge is considered the starting point of it. This might facilitate the acquisition of hard skills related to the



training subject, while other aspects, such as motivation, work in a transversal way. That will help the learner to discover some personal competences and add value to their professional profile.

All interviewees agreed that resources to improve learning opportunities exist, but they are not always available because of their price/location. Similar tools would be a great solution to support online learning. An interviewee stated that the company had developed several tools internally to support different learning actions. However, the overall impression is that there is a great training offer in Spain, but the social-financial reality of the majority part of the population is not considered.

Participation of adults

Concerning the main challenges faced regarding adult participation, the participants mentioned that adult workers are not very aware of the importance of lifelong learning for improving their professional careers. One of the main challenges regarding participation is motivation. Keeping learners motivated is essential, so they will not give up or get frustrated during the training programme. Lack of time, fear to change or digital literacy are some additional particularly challenging questions.

About how adults' participation in adult education and training can be further enhanced at the local, regional and national level, interviewees proposed an official request to companies to provide training to its workers. Also, a warning should be given to those learners who quit the training action without a justified reason. Another suggestion is that training programmes should be compulsory for unemployed people enrolled in public employment services. The digital adaptation of those specific programmes for its target group was also mentioned, as well as the adaptation of teaching-learning processes to the different target groups.

Participants were also asked if they believe that the learning needs of adults are met. In general terms, the answer was negative. From their point of view, there is a lack of support to adult education programmes, especially regarding digitalization and their individual special needs for career development.

In order to ensure equal access and participation of adults in education and training, our adult education providers agree that there should be certain quotas to meet for the most vulnerable/disadvantaged groups. They also think that a blended methodology would be to ensure this participation, as well as providing free access to the digital tools needed for attending the learning programme.



Other issues

To the questions what specifically motivates adult learners, our experts agree that the primary motivation of a learning programme is that this must be linked somehow to employment or to an improvement of their professional careers. For these reasons, they think that a motivational methodology from the very beginning is the key to make adult learners understand that a learning programme is an added value for them and not an extra workload.

Regarding the barriers to learning, interviewees think that the vast bureaucracy that must be handled by both learners and learning providers is deterrent, at least for the financially funded programmes. Also, another barrier is digital literacy and a lack of time. The high competitiveness level with the new generations with higher educational levels, as well as the age itself, are also barriers for adults.

In opposition, while reflecting on what might encourage adults to learn in the future, the answer is clear: having a professional future. For this reason, the on-job training modules are quite attracting potential participants in AE programmes.

Regarding the factors that would make adult learning more attractive, they think that learning programmes should directly tackle unemployment, so the only way is to design them as tailored as possible to the market needs. Programmes must be updated and aligned with labour and social needs.

When they were asked to reflect on how quality assurance of the field can be ensured, answers were focused on the quality of the training process itself. The key is on the relations among learners and trainers. From their point of view, within the online modality the interaction with the content itself can also improve the quality of the process. There are several methods and tools that can assess quality from the perspective of the learner such as questionnaires and follow-up interviews with them.

When asked if financing (either public or private) is effectively managed, in general terms, they think that Spain performs better than other countries. However, still, there is a vast room for improvement, and the public budget for this should be increased.

Asked if the level of cooperation among the several stakeholders of the field is satisfactory, they answered that it is not enough at all and efforts should be made in order to unify systems.



Policy priorities

Lastly, they were asked if they are aware of policy priorities, programmes and other initiatives related to adult education and training. Three of them answered positively, stating that they always try to be as much updated as possible because of their work position. They usually acquire statistical data and information about these policy priorities given by public organizations. Two of them stated that they are not aware about policy priorities.

Recommendations

The main national strategies in Spain that support the DIMA 2.0 purpose and objectives are:

- Vocational training distance provision for the whole population, through the portal "*Vocational Training through the Internet*".
- *ACREDITA*: information and guidance platform for the accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience or non-formal training models.
- *Todo FP*: portal on vocational information and guidance aiming at improving the access to information and vocational training for all the citizens.
- *Specialist Guidance Group*: aimed at improving coordination between the State and regional authorities regarding education.
- Vocational guidance tools and resources for guidance teachers, students, and citizens in general.
- Lifelong learning aimed at guidance professionals.
- Drawing up of a map of vocational guidance resources at State level.
- *Aprinde a lo largo de la vida*: web portal with information and guidance on lifelong learning.



Switzerland

Country profile

More than 8.4 million people are living in Switzerland, the number tending to rise. The population density is 219 per km². The unemployment rate in Switzerland averaged 2.6% in 2018. Youth unemployment (15-24 years) was 2.3%. Education spending fluctuates strongly from canton to canton (regional entities). In 2014 Switzerland spent 5.6% of its GDP on education.

In Switzerland, there is a comprehensive, diverse offer of adult education and training programs. This includes courses and seminars, as well as learning options outside of course structures, e-learning, blended learning, work-based learning or learning in self-organised groups.

Formal education (excluding compulsory education) in Switzerland includes upper secondary education (initial vocational education and training (IVET) and general education) and tertiary education (including general higher education and higher VET). According to Cedefop, Switzerland has higher levels of participation in IVET than the EU average. The share of upper secondary students enrolled in IVET programs is 65.3%, higher than the EU average of 47.3% (data for 2015). Combined work- and school-based programs account for 90.4% of students in upper secondary IVET, much higher than the EU average of 28.4%. A relatively large share (41.0%) of young VET graduates in Switzerland is in further education and training, as compared with the EU (at 32.8%).

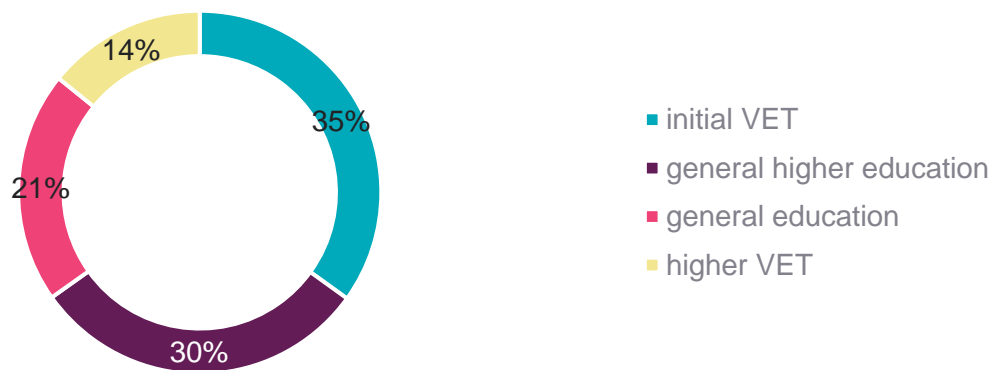


Figure 7. Share of educational qualifications (BFS, 2017)

Participation in learning of adults (25-64 years old) is according to Eurostat 31.7%, almost three times as much as the EU-average of 11.2% (2019). When non-formal learning is

considered, adult participation rate is 67.8% according to Swiss statistics (BFS, 2016). Older people in Switzerland are more likely to participate in lifelong learning (28.3% versus 7.0% in the EU), as are adults with low levels of educational attainment (10.5% versus 4.2% in the EU), and the unemployed (26.5% versus 9.6% in the EU). Participation rate in informal learning is 42.9% (Eurostat, 2016). With the introduction of the WeBiG, the concept of non-formal education is gradually gaining in importance.

SVEB is the Swiss national umbrella organization for adult education and operates as a professional association and advocacy organization. The 750 SVEB members represent private and state institutions for adult education, associations, in-house training departments and individuals. SVEB manages the national training-of-trainers system and is responsible for eduQua, the national quality label for adult learning providers.

Strategies and policies on Adult Education

As of January 2017, the first national law on adult education entered into force (Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training, WeBiG). This framework act defines goals, principles, and responsibilities for the promotion of adult education in Switzerland. The Federal Act foresees two funding possibilities: adult basic skills promotion and contributions to national organizations for services on the system level.

The five principles of the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training are: the responsibility of the individuals, employers and the public sector; quality assurance and development; validation of prior learning; improvement of equality of opportunity and prevention of competitive distortions by public funding. Moreover, in addition to the funding by the Federal Act, in November 2017 the national government has decided to allocate 13 million CHF to the promotion of basic skills at the workplace until 2020 (for 3 years).

Moreover, the beginning of 2018, a vision and basic principles on “vocational education and training 2030” have been adopted by the government, social partners, and civil society representatives. In a lifelong learning perspective, VET shall be increasingly promoted also for adults.

Adult education in Switzerland is mostly financed by private means. Apart from the participants themselves, companies also make a significant contribution to co-financing training for their employees. In Switzerland, 5.3 billion francs are spent on adult education each year. However, it is difficult for a large part of the adult population to finance their own training themselves. Very time-consuming and costly adult education programs are hardly possible without financial support. Apart from the co-financing by employers,



virtually no other support possibilities exist. Employers, however, tend to support especially their well-qualified full-time employees in senior positions.

Therefore, equal access to adult education is not guaranteed. There is a clear need for action and a demand for funding models which are geared to the needs of adults. This means that financial support must directly benefit the people who want to continue their education. This is not the case with subsidizing the providers of adult education – as has traditionally been done.

In Switzerland, there are two National Qualification Frameworks: one for VET and one for tertiary education. They are not directly comparable neither with each other nor with the European Qualification Framework. The main purpose of the NQF in VET is to valorise and position Swiss initial and higher VET abroad.

Validation of prior learning is, as mentioned above, a principle of the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training. However, in the context of this act, little effort has been made so far. As to validation of informal learning and pre-vocational training, there is a broad offer of sector certificates, which are provided by sector organizations, varying vastly from one canton to the other.

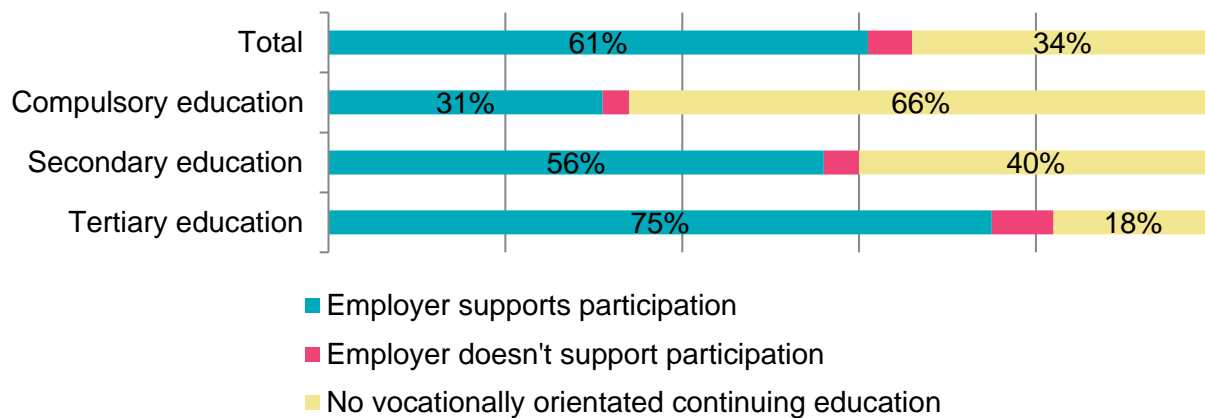


Figure 8. Funding of vocational adult education (BFS, 2017)

Status of the Adult Education providers

On the national level, there is the above-mentioned Federal Act (WeBiG), which has little influence, so far, on the AE offer. As to publicly financed offers of AE (e.g. concerning labour market integration or language courses for refugees), there exist a variety of national and cantonal laws regulating the funding of these offers. Accordingly, the responsibilities for funding of the various offers lie in the responsibility in a number of

national and cantonal bodies. Therefore, the support, collaboration and status of AE providers vary according to their location and field of activity.

The Swiss AE market being very heterogeneous and highly privatised, the professional status of adult educators varies accordingly. As to the education of adult educators, around 69% of the employers (adult educating providers) expect an andragogic background of their employed adult educators. The most common and widely recognised andragogic education is the modular Training of Trainers (ToT) system run by SVEB and offered by over 120 education providers throughout Switzerland. The entry-level is the SVEB Trainer Certificate, currently held by more than 40,000 trainers. Over 10,000 experts now hold a Federal Diploma in Adult Education and Training (the second level), and around 100 managers have graduated with an Advanced Federal Diploma in Adult Education and Training (the third level).

Quality Assurance and assessment

Quality management plays a significant role in AE. Many AE providers have themselves accredited with a quality label. In addition to the main reason for accreditation, namely, to improve quality, quality labels also grant access to public funding. There is a variety of quality labels for AE providers, such as eduQua, IN-Qualis or ISO 29990:2010. EduQua being the only recognised Swiss quality label specifically tailored to providers of AE, it is also the most common and recognised quality label in AE. More than 40% of the AE providers are certified with the eduQua label. The Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (SVEB) is the holder of the label. In the field of basic skills, there is a quality label – the fide-Label – for courses of the national languages for foreigners. Despite its official recognition, there are only few courses accredited, yet.

Main programmes

As mentioned above, adult education is diverse regarding the topics of education offers. The main issues of non-formal adult education courses are economical and job-related, science and engineering as well as health (followed by sports, art, IT, social competences, languages, and others).

The spectrum of providers of AE ranges from small private schools to large enterprises financed privately, from public providers, associations, or trade unions to microenterprises, learning studios and independent trainers. In absolute figures, private providers clearly dominate the picture: they provide around 80% of the total number of course hours, whereas public providers – above all universities, universities of applied sciences and VET schools – offer about 20% of AE hours. According to estimates, there are between 2,500 and 3,000 training providers throughout Switzerland.



The reason for participation in AE can be professional or nonprofessional. More than half of the 62% of the Swiss population who are active in AE are continuing their education for purely professional reasons. A quarter of the population active in AE attends activities is motivated by both professional and non-professional reasons.

A national survey showed several reasons for not participating in AE (BFS, 2016). By far the most frequently cited obstacle to participation was lack of time (65%), followed by high costs (34%), unfavourable times and family demands (31% each). In the case of older persons, health reasons are cited as the second most frequent reason for not taking part in AE and training after a lack of time rather than too high costs. Even when analysing separately according to gender, migration status, disability status, labour market status or educational level, there is hardly any change in the three most important reasons for foregoing AE and training.

Challenges & critique

The main challenge in Swiss adult education remains the access to and the participation in lifelong learning and therefore, equity. Participation is heavily depending on qualification, employment status, age, and migration/social background. People with a tertiary degree participate twice as much (80%) in adult education as graduates of upper secondary education (40%). The Swiss adult education market being highly privatised and competitive, the state and the cantons intervene little in order to e.g. promote education offers with spill over effects for society. Public initiatives are necessary to tackle this challenge.

Another challenge in the market of adult education provision is the assurance and development of quality of the education offers. Providers of further education are also challenged to keep up to the newest trends, such as digitalization, and adapt their offers accordingly.

In the field of basic skills promotion, regulated by the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training, the challenge consists in a nationwide implementation of the act. The regional governments, the cantons, are challenged to develop specific programs to promote basic skills of adults. Currently, the policies implemented in the cantons vary vastly: Some cantons adopted comprehensive measures to promote adults' basic skills in a lifelong perspective, others have not foreseen any change in policy at all.

Another challenge consists in generating data concerning adult education in Switzerland. In order to assure a data-based policy, it would be important to know more about key



figures in adult education: who participates, who finances, and which offers exist already?
General data is available, but detail information is missing.

Recommendations

The best trainers for the least qualified: Professional adult educators and quality teaching are essential for fruitful adult education. Especially for the promotion of a target group with a little educational background, a solid andragogic education of the adult educators is fundamental. The Swiss ToT qualifications, which are independent of the subjects thought, are a solid basis for professional adult educators. In the field of basic skills promotion, there are various initiatives by SVEB to promote adult educators' competences.

A major challenge consists in promoting participation in basic skills education. Even though the political will to support these education offers has increased recently, reaching the target group remains a challenge. Information campaigns could help to reveal the benefit and need of basic skills education not only to the target group but also to the employers and the wider public.

In Switzerland, adult education is often reduced to education for employability and job market integration. Adult education is thus the economy's "right-hand man". However, promoting active citizenship or intercultural awareness is just as well a public duty.



Ireland

Country profile

The population of Ireland is 4.83 million people (2018). Economic conditions place the republic amongst the wealthiest countries in the world in terms of GDP per capita. The economy of Ireland is primarily knowledge-based. It focuses on services into high-tech, life sciences, financial services, and agribusinesses.

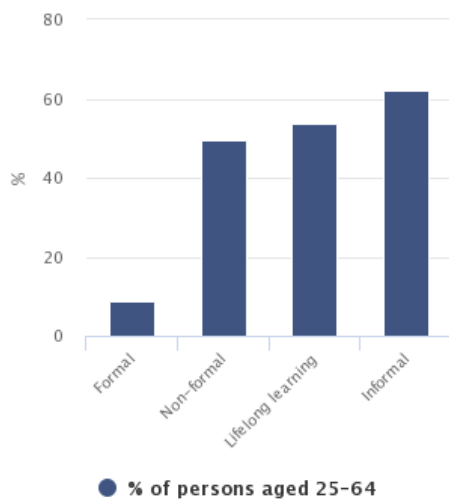
Education system in Ireland is organised on three levels – primary, secondary, and higher education with further complementary education (adult education) distinct from the higher education offered in universities and other academic institutions. The further education provides awards, certificates, diplomas, and other vocational, competency-based qualifications as well as apprenticeship opportunities. It is available to students over 16 at colleges of Further Education, through work-based learning, or adult and community learning institutions

The Department of Education and Skills with a nominated Minister is in overall control of policy, funding and directions related to the education system in Republic of Ireland. It is supported by National Qualifications Authority and the Higher Education Authority on the national level, and Education and Training Boards on the regional level. Additionally, there are other statutory and non-statutory bodies that have a role in the education system, offering free and paid adult education opportunities. There are also adult

education providers offering variety of learning opportunities in a private sector, however their participation in adult education market is secondary.

In general, the further education sector is much diversified which brings both benefits as well as limitations related to challenges in navigation between different opportunities available for adult learners.

According to the Eurostat, the level of participation in adult education and life-long learning programmes in Ireland is 12.5 %. It positions Ireland on the tenth place among EU countries (2018), with the adult education participation rates



Source: CSO Ireland

Central Statistics Office, 2018

Figure 9. Adult education participation (% of persons aged 25-64)



higher than estimated average for Member States being 11.1 % (2018) but below the EU 2020 targets of 15 %.

According to the Adult Education Survey conducted in 2017 by the Central Statistics Office, over 53 per cent of adults in Ireland have at least once in their life participated in some form of life-long learning, in any of the formal or non-formal settings. Younger adults were more likely to participate than older adults in learning, and female were more likely to participate than men. The statistics gathered by the CSO, shows that almost 50 per cent of adults chose non-formal education opportunities. Additionally, unemployed adults were proved to prefer formal education and those in employment would more likely choose non-formal adult education opportunities.

Strategies and policies on Adult Education

The structure and functionality of the adult education sector in Ireland is based on the Further Education and Training Act signed in 2013 by the Irish government. The Act obligates SOLAS, as a central body managing the financing of the adult education sector, to regularly provide a five-year strategy for the provision of adult education and training in Ireland. Together with Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work - government initiatives addressing unemployment crisis, the Strategy reflects priorities, directions, and key objectives for development of adult education system in Ireland.

Multiple Government Departments, statutory agencies, community organizations and private organizations participate and cooperate in providing services in the area of adult education. The White Paper on Adult Education "Learning for Life" accepted in Ireland in 2000 sets out the structure and subjects of adult education in Ireland and indicates following core objectives of the system:

- supporting re-entry by adults to Further Education;
- supporting re-entry by adults to third level education;
- supporting continuing education and training and professional development of people in the workforce, or re-entering the workforce;
- providing community education;
- supporting other systematic learning undertaken by adults in a variety of settings and contexts, both formal and informal.

The key priorities for the adult education system in Ireland include:

- Addressing the unemployment challenge and provide programmes that will support jobseekers in re-skilling and up-skilling for areas where sustainable employment possibilities are emerging;



- Modernizing and expanding apprenticeship system;
- Implementing new structures to adult education to safeguard delivery of high quality, flexible and responsive programmes.

The Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) is responsible for developing, promoting, and maintaining the Irish National Qualification Framework (NQF) which constitutes a basis for mapping all the educational opportunities in formal and non-formal settings in Ireland.

The NQF is a system created in 2003 that consists of ten levels. It is based on standards of knowledge, skills and competences and describes the qualifications on an education system, including further education and training, and how they interlink. It involves awards achieved after completing different levels of learning. The awards foreseen in the framework are marked 1-10, which represents standard of learning and describes the purpose, volume and progression opportunities achieved after completion of each of the education levels. All the qualifications included in the framework are quality assured which guarantees that they will be recognised in Ireland as well as abroad. Additionally, the NQF guarantees recognition of foreign qualification. Irish National Qualification Framework has been designed in collaboration with other countries and based on the European Qualification Framework.

The NQF was designed to be used by:

- learners to support their choices in education and training;
- employers and institutions to understand qualifications;
- providers of education and training to guarantee the quality of programmes and courses offered.

The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for financing adult and community education in Ireland. Funds are provided to the Further Education Authority, SOLAS, established in 2013 as a central body responsible for distributing funds and monitoring adult education programmes in Ireland. SOLAS allocates grants channelled by the Department of Education and Skills to the 16 regional Education and Training Boards (ETBs) that use it for funding services for adult and vocational schools, designed specialist further education colleges, training centres, other adult and community education settings, contracted out services to community or private providers.



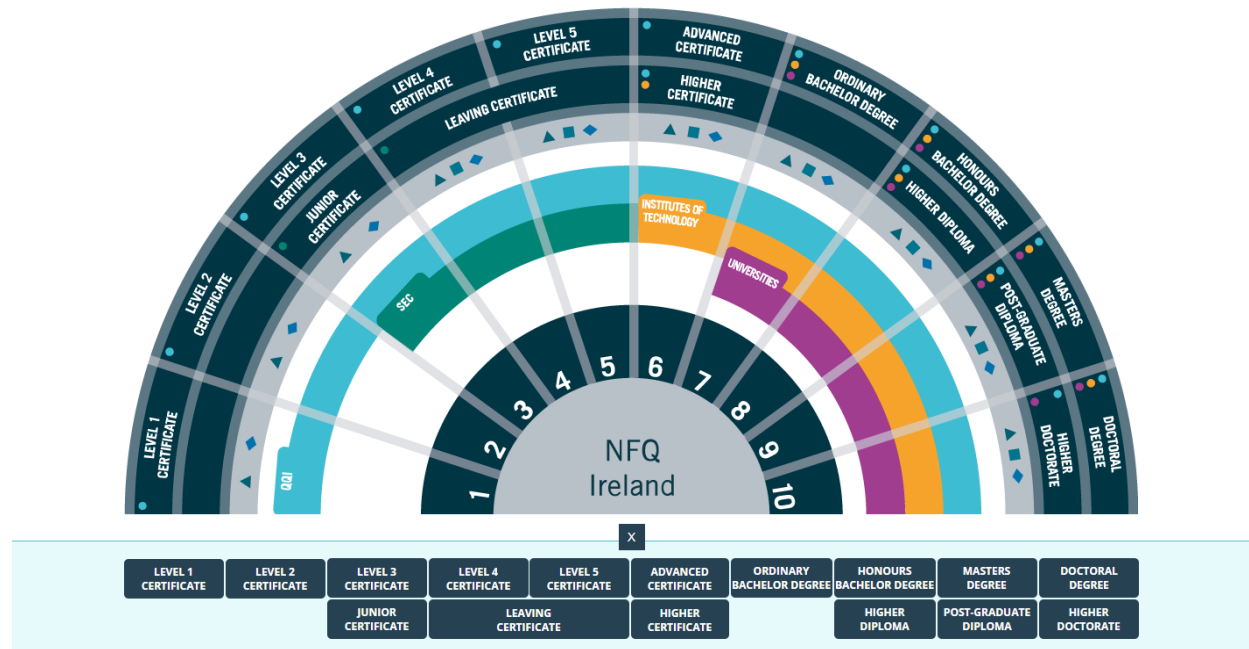


Figure 10 Irish National Qualification Framework (Quality and Qualification Ireland, 2003)

The funding is allocated to the ETBs, only after SOLAS approves the education and training plan developed and can be dedicated only to activities that were approved. The majority of programmes offered under the agenda of Further Education and Training are provided free of charge to adult learners (with the exception of Post Leaving Certificate courses). The Student Support Schemes are put in place to support adult learners if they satisfy the criteria.

Non-EU/EEA adult learners are required to pay the full fee for the education programmes taken unless they are asylum seekers participating a minimum of 5 years in the education system in Ireland.

Status of the Adult Education providers

A number of education and training providers are involved in Adult Education sector in Ireland:

- Education and Training Boards (ETBs) - The ETBs are responsible for delivering primary, post primary and further education. They are the main provider of further and adult education in Ireland. There are 16 ETBs. They were established in 2013 based on the Education and Training Boards Act.
- SOLAS – cooperates with the ETBs to support the development and provision of further education and training programmes. Additionally, SOLAS is sourcing of community and adult education and training programmes from the private, public,

and not-for-profit sector. SOLAS was established in 2013, based on the Further Education and Training Act.

- Non-formal learning providers - there are many different providers of evening and part time courses, including secondary schools or community groups, community and voluntary organizations and institutions e.g. libraries. These organizations are usually supported by government departments and are linked to communities (e.g. traveller groups, refugee groups), voluntary groups (e.g. people with disabilities) and local interest groups (e.g. art groups).
- Non-Governmental Organizations – there are various NGOs functioning in Ireland that support adult learners in accessing learning opportunities and enabling them to participate in economic, social, civic, and cultural spheres of the society. Examples of such organizations are: AONTAS, AEGIS and NALA.
- Vocational Institutions
- Private Adult Education providers
- Adult Education providers offering e-learning and distance learning opportunities – e.g. National Distance Education Centre (OSCAL), The Open University in Ireland.

Quality Assurance and assessment

Certification in the Adult Education Sector is usually in line with the National Qualification Framework. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is a national agency assuring quality of institutions, organizations, and programmes of further and adult education. QQI validates educational programmes and awards grades to learners. In general, each adult education provider is responsible for putting in place quality systems to guarantee the quality of the programmes they offer. There are common approaches, principles and guidelines developed by the QQI available for providers, however every provider can develop a system that is most appropriate to their offer and learners' needs.

The following mechanisms and tools have been put in place in order to ensure the appropriate quality standards in Adult Education institutions and organizations: general quality assurance guidelines, regular evaluations on the effectiveness of their quality systems, standards for qualifications, trainings to Adult Education providers, validation programme (QQI Award).

Tools have been also developed for the recognition and validation of learners competences and skills and include the QQI Award (awarded to learners who complete a course at any of the 10 levels of the National Qualification Framework), the Higher Education Links Scheme (which allows for learners having QQI level 5 or 6 major award to apply for a higher education course), the National Framework of Qualifications,



recognition of foreign learners' qualifications (NARIC) and recognition of local learners' qualifications obtained abroad (National Reference Point Office).

Main programmes

Among the main full-time adult education programmes offered in Ireland there are:

- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Courses: PLC courses are addressed to school-leavers and adult learners, offering a mix of practical work, academic work, and work experience.
- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS): This scheme offers an opportunity to return to full-time education to unemployed adults. Courses are designed to meet the education and training needs of unemployed people and are primarily addressed to adults who have been out of school system for long time.
- Youthreach: This programme is especially addressed to young adults, aged between 15 and 20 years old, who have left school without any formal qualifications. Youthreach provides young adults with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training, and work experience.

Amongst the main part-time programmes addressed to adult learners, there are:

- Back To Education Initiative (BTEI): BTEI provides an opportunity to return to part-time or full-time education while continuing to get income supports or social welfare payment.
- Adult Literacy: The Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning addressed to adults who need support in returning to education to improve reading, writing and numeracy skills.
- Community Education: It is a programme of adult education and learning, generally outside the formal education sector. The goals of the community education include individual development, community advancement, especially in marginalised groups and communities. A key feature is that the programme provides guidance, mentoring, continuous feedback, and childcare.

According to the Survey by the Central Statistic Office (2017), the following topics were the most popular among the formal learning opportunities provided in adult education in Ireland, in order of preference: business, administration and law, health and welfare, engineering, manufacturing and construction, information and communication technologies, education, natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary and other generic programmes and qualifications. In the non-formal learning opportunities provided in adult education in Ireland, the most popular were in order of preference: health and welfare, business, administration and law,



information and communication technologies, engineering, manufacturing and construction, education, services and other generic programmes and qualifications.

The motivation for participation in adult education opportunities among adult learners can be both personal and professional. Amongst the most popular professional-related reasons for participating in the adult education opportunities, the participants of adult education programmes have indicated the following: to improve career prospects, to increase possibilities of getting/changing job and to improve productivity of current job. Accordingly, the most personal-related reasons were: to increase knowledge/skills in a subject of interest, to obtain certification and to get knowledge/skills useful in everyday life.

On the other hand, the interviewees have indicated the following obstacles to participation in adult education courses and programmes: lack of time due to family responsibilities, conflicted training schedule with work and/or inconvenient time, the high cost of the training and health or age issues.

Low-skilled adults

At the outset, it is important to note that the data regarding the overall characteristic, needs, and educational barriers of marginalised and low-skilled adults in Ireland is difficult to obtain due to the lack of systematic, comprehensive and up-to-date research addressing those issues from the national perspective.

There are various reports and researches conducted by regional ETBs, or sectoral organisations, however strong diversification of the marginalised groups of adult learners in different regions of Ireland makes it impossible to make generalisations.

There are multiple national research reports conducted in relation to the general needs of adult learners in Ireland however, there is little overall data about the specific needs of low-skilled and marginalised adult learners.

Various organisations and institutions operating in the field of adult education in Ireland, such as Department of Education and Skills and AONTAS (the Irish National Association of Adult Education), have in the past identified multiple groups that are characterised by the high risk of educational under-performance and marginalisation in terms of accessibility to education. Those groups include (AONTAS, 2018):

- Travellers;
- Lone parents and women engaged in home duties;
- Homeless;



- Men (particularly older men) in employment;
- Farmers, construction workers, drivers;
- Unemployed.

Additionally, the data available through other organisations (e.g. AnCosan, Irish Penal Reform Trust, SOLAS etc.) indicate additional groups of adult learners that can be considered as marginalised, including early-school leavers, prisoners and former prisoners, disabled, sexual minorities, migrants and refugees (especially non-English speakers) etc.

Due to the diversified characteristics of all the identified groups, the reasons for low educational attainment are also very diversified and multidisciplinary. The needs of low-skilled adult learners are strongly related to the challenges and barriers that they face.

In its opening words, the Report of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills in the topic of Education Inequality and Disadvantage and Barriers to Education, developed in May 2019 (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019) states that the general socio-economic factors such as homelessness, addiction, unemployment, poverty and poor health play an essential role in the low educational-performance of marginalized learners in Ireland. Additionally, the report underlines the correlation of living in areas of deprivation or poor accessibility to education, with low educational achievements of learners.

The above-mentioned report presents the data indicating high rates of early school leavers on the primary and secondary levels of education, collected nation-wide in 2003, to show the big demand for basic literacy and numeracy adult education programmes, VET education programmes and youth work programmes supporting acquisition of professional competences by youth and adults who finished their education before obtaining basic qualifications and certification (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019).

The report indicates that learners from marginalized backgrounds often struggle with motivation to continue or undertake adult learning opportunities. Low levels of motivation can be related to different factors e.g. cultural or social pressure from the closest environment that does not value education, fear of failure resulting from the backlogs of knowledge, or poor and negative prior educational experiences etc. (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019).

The TEACH Report, developed in 2010 to examine the effects and the participation in adult education of members of the Traveller communities in Ireland (Niamh and Campbel, 2010) states that when entering the work and education environments, adult members of



the community faced barriers resulting from traditional nomadic life-style, accepted gender roles, family obligations, fear of prejudice and of weakening relations with own community.

On the other hand, the report underlines that teaching adults soft and personal skills such as literacy, numeracy and personal development is essential for their integration with the general Irish society (Niamh and Campbel, 2010).

The national statistics suggest that Travellers are 33 times more likely to leave school without the Leaving Certificate than non-Travellers in the same age group. Traveller women, despite higher education attainment than traveller men are under higher pressure of marriage and establishing a family at a young age (AONTAS, 2018).

Support needed by this group is related to the provision of adequate child-care for young families, flexible training opportunities on a local level for middle-aged adult learners and early school leavers; and high-level quality training opportunities for senior Travellers (AONTAS, 2018).

Another aspect related to the motivation levels of marginalized adult learners in Ireland is the separation of the adult education offer from the world of employment. Adult learners often do not see the possibilities of using their skills and competences acquired through training to directly improve their current position on the labour market (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019).

Further on, the report also underlines the needs of marginalized adult learners in terms of financial support related to the costs of education, lack of public transportation and poor institutional access in some parts of the country (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019).

Additionally, the support in the form of on-site and off-site childcare, mostly for female adult learners, lone parents, and young families in Roma and migrant communities is underlined (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019).

According to the national data, lone parents are predominantly female (84%). The statistics show that families of one adult and at least two children under 18 years old, are in the highest risk of deprivation (over 50%, compared to 21% for the general population). Additionally, the majority of adult learners in this group have less than upper secondary education and many of them are early school leavers which results in fewer employment opportunities and lower salaries achieved (AONTAS, 2018).



Support recommended to lone parents and women engaged in home duties includes one-to-one educational support, mentoring and counselling support, and on-site child-care (AONTAS, 2018).

The attention needs to be also paid to the educational needs of low-skilled adult learners among prisoners and ex-prisoners in Ireland. According to data presented by the Irish Penal Reform Trust (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019), over 80% of adults in Irish prisons have finished their education without a Leaving Certificate. Lack of current marketable skills and low levels of overall education pose important barriers to their successful transition to society.

Adult learners among the homeless, except from facing problems related to low or lack of formal qualifications and marketable skills often are faced also with mental health and addictions (AONTAS, 2018).

Another barrier for low-skilled adult learners to participate and succeed in adult education is an overall low-level of digital competences among adults in Ireland. According to data presented by Eurostat in 2019, over 50% of the Irish adult population has a low or basic level of digital competences (Eurostat, 2019). This situation looks even worse from the perspective of marginalized communities, where poor digital competences are accompanied by low Internet connectivity and limited access to digital devices. These barriers are going to have a serious impact on the participation and performance of low-skilled adults in educational opportunities especially in current circumstances when the move towards digital learning is more real and important than ever (Social Justice Ireland, 2020).

The research shows that there are several programmes coordinated on the national level that aim specifically to address the needs of the groups of low-skilled adult learners. In most cases however, the marginalised and low-skilled adults are encouraged to use the programmes addressed in general for the adult education sector such as Back to Education Initiative, Community Education, Evening classes, Vocational Training Opportunities, third level education courses etc. providing that they satisfy the entering conditions (Citizensinformation.ie, 2019).

Most of the existing nation-wide programmes supporting specifically the needs of low-skilled and marginalised adult learners are facilitated through the regional ETBs – Education and Training Boards, AONTAS – the Irish National Association of Adult Education, and NALA – National Adult Literacy Agency (Citizensinformation.ie, 2019).



Additionally, on the regional level there are other non-formal support programmes for low-skilled adults available through e.g. non-governmental organisations operating in the sector of adult education.

The main support programmes addressed specifically at low-skilled adult learners as well as general adult education programmes available nation-wide that incorporate the needs of low-skilled adults are presented below (Citizensinformation.ie, 2019):

- Adult Literacy (provided through ETBs)

The programme concentrates on providing support to low skilled adults who require developing their basic skills in areas of reading, writing, math and digital skills. The classes are organized on a one-to-one basis, where each learner works with an individual tutor. The programme of the learning course is individually agreed with the learner depending on their learning needs. Classes are usually held in the Adult Literacy Service Centre and last around two hours per week.

- Distance Learning Service (provided by National Adult Literacy Agency)

The Distance Learning Service is a free service where adult learners work with tutors remotely to help improve their reading, writing, math or digital skills.

- Helpmykidlearn.ie (provided by National Adult Literacy Agency)

Helpmykidlearn.ie is a free service addressed to low-skilled adults who are not able to support their children in homework and home learning. The service is addressed to parents and provides learning activities for primary school children.

- One Step Up website (provided by AONTAS)

The One Step Up website is addressed at adults to help enhance their learning by promoting access to learning opportunities. The website provides a free telephone helpline, answers and recommendations to popular questions, testimonials of adults who returned to education and information about local and regional adult learning events.

- Courses for the Leaving Certificate (provided through ETBs)

Those courses are addressed to early school-leavers and adult learners who finished their education without achieving the Leaving Certificate. Achieving this certificate opens the door for adult learners to the offer of Post Leaving Certificate Courses and third-level courses provided through ETBs.

- Community Education programmes (provided through ETBs)

Community Education is an adult education support scheme run through the ETBs. The programme is based on providing more flexible and personalised learning opportunities



that can be adjusted to the specific needs of local communities. One of the key goals of the Community Education programme is supporting the individual development and community advancement in marginalised communities.

- Back to Education Initiative (provided through ETBs)

Back To Education Initiative provides part-time courses for adults and young people aged over 16 years who have finished their education with no qualifications. The programme aims to provide an opportunity for adults to return to education through combining learning with family, work and other responsibilities. It also allows to people continue getting income supports or social welfare payments.

- Youthreach

This programme is especially addressed at young adults, aged between 15 and 20 years old, who have left school without any formal qualifications. Youthreach provides young adults with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience.

Challenges & critique

One of the biggest challenges of the adult education provision in Ireland is low participation rate of adult learners. The actions need to be taken in order to develop strategies of motivating learners to participate in adult education programmes, especially adult learners being members of marginalised groups.

Another challenge is a quality and flexibility of the courses and programmes offered. According to the above-mentioned Adult Education Survey (2017), more than one in three adults that participated in a life-long learning programme stated that their educational demand was not met during the course.

Interviews with stakeholders

Five professionals, trainers and/or adult education providers participated in interviews conducted in Ireland as part of the DIMA 2.0 project. All the interviewees have a broad experience in working with adult learners including marginalised or low-skilled adults.

Challenges and needs

According to the adult education professionals participating in the interviews, the availability of adult education programmes in Ireland is on a low level, and there is a visible lack of programmes that specifically address the needs of low-skilled adults. Interviewees have stressed that existing adult education programmes dedicated to low-skilled and marginalised adults are often under-resourced and rarely provide certification, which is of considerable value on the labour market. Emma Golesworthy from Meath Volunteer



Centre additionally stated that “there is a real need to recognise the skills developed informally through volunteering and to provide accreditation to the individual volunteers, so that they can have their skills recognised”.

The interviewees stressed that the adult education programmes are not always able to respond to the diverse needs of adult learners. Soft skills like communication, time management, responsibility, work-readiness and diversity training are often not included in adult education programmes despite being among the competences that low-skilled adult learners need. “They [adult education providers] have literacy supports, back-to-work schemes but nothing that addresses the soft skills that adults who have been out of work and education for a while require”, stated Emma Golesworthy. Another challenge mentioned by the participants of the interviews was related to difficulties in motivating adult learners to engage in learning. Adult educators also identified insufficient time and/or resources, lack of flexibility of adult education programmes, and the need for support in confidence building and identifying learners own personal barriers.

Interviewees presented various tools and methods used to identify the learning needs of adult learners, including: individual pre-assessment activities, monitoring performance of volunteers in placement environments and identifying existing skills gaps, training needs analysis processes, interest-interviews with potential learners, taster classes and open days, learning festivals including short-workshops aimed at identifying learners’ needs, developing learner’s profiles, suggestion boxes, feedback forms etc.

Adult education professionals also identified various tools and methods that they use in their learning programmes, such as career mentoring, personal development and work-place readiness training used in Meath Volunteering Centre. Jennifer Nolan said that the results of EU projects, especially the learning resources developed, act as a foundation for the new learning programmes in Meath Partnership. Additionally, she said “we explore and borrow best practice examples from Ireland and other EU countries; we respond to the needs of our learners and develop courses; we buy off-the-shelf programmes for external providers and finally we develop learning programmes using the guidelines and course outlines provided by QQI (especially when accreditation is sought)”. In addition, other professionals mentioned such tools and approaches as e.g. Moodle, open e-learning materials, artistic interventions and creative solutions.

Lack of funding and difficulties in accessing training centres were indicated by interviewed professionals as factors strongly impacting the attractiveness of their learning offer. Additionally, educators mentioned that access to a greater range of online materials and



accredited online courses as well as more one to one support would be helpful to improve their learning offer.

Participation of adults

Among the challenges related to working with adult learners, adult education professionals mentioned the lack of motivation among adult learners, pressure of their family responsibilities, cost, accessibility of the training venue, health condition, or age of learners and other personal barriers such as lack of self-confidence. Some of the interviewees also stated that the challenges are related to communicating with learners and effectively marketing training offers.

Among the strategies that could enhance the participation in adult education and training, adult educators and trainers suggested e.g. flexible learning models and more online training and support programmes, continuous professional development of educators, greater sharing of educational resources and materials, creating experiential learning opportunities for adult learners, more community-based facilities and educators, and providing accredited training programmes in the communities where people live.

Interviewees stated that there are areas where the needs of adult learners are not met. They were able to identify some of the needs of low-skilled and marginalised adult learners that are not being widely satisfied through available learning offers e.g. conversational English for migrants, or basic Irish for migrant families so that parents can help their children with homework and other basic skills. Online courses, resources and programmes were suggested as tools that could support meeting these needs.

Based on their experiences, the interviewees believed that it is impossible to fully guarantee the equal access of adult learners to education opportunities, however they identified some methods and tools that they used to reach low-skilled and marginalised adult learners. Those tools include: online promotion and communication – through social media and websites, individual meetings and consultations, satisfying basic literacy needs of adults that might stop them from participating in learning, engaging stakeholder and local working groups, communicating through local media e.g. community newspaper, advertising learning programmes in local public spaces.

The possibility of future employment was indicated as one of the strongest motivation factors for adult learners, especially low skilled adults. Interviewees underlined also that personal motivation such as learning new skills or interest-learning also play an important role.



Among the barriers for learning that adults face, most of the interviewees identified work and family commitments. Additionally, factors such as fear, bad previous learning experiences, lack of course flexibility, cost, poor accessibility and lack of free time for learning were mentioned.

Adult education professionals interviewed in Ireland believed, that seeing real-life benefits from learning at personal and professional levels and more flexible learning opportunities such as accredited online courses could be extremely motivating for adult learners who hesitate to engage in training or education. Kim Doherty who specialises in art therapies suggested that “goal driven workshops, perhaps with a sharing showcase finale with potential employers, and portfolio work” could be motivating for adult learners.

Other issues

Overall, adult education professionals emphasize the need for adult education providers to follow clear quality measures. Understanding that the adult education sector is very fragmented in Ireland, adult education professionals indicated a need for a ‘code of good practices’ among adult education providers that would be co-ordinated at a national level. On the other hand, Noeleen Land from The Rural Hub noticed that in some instances, quality of the programmes offered in community learning can be assured by educators and facilitators themselves, and providing a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for learning can help to attract adult learners who have been absent from the classroom for many years.

The interviewees believed that there is a need for additional funding into the adult education sector in Ireland, especially for programmes directed to low skilled and marginalised adult learners, as well as for training opportunities provided in rural communities.

Asked about their opinion about the cooperation among the stakeholders of the adult education sector in Ireland, the interviewees indicated that there is a need for improvements in this area giving as an example a need for the establishment of a regional network of adult education providers from both public and private sectors.

Policy priorities

Of the 5 educators who participated in the interviews, only three were aware of current policies and programmes related to adult education and training in Ireland. From those responses, the priority areas that were identified which they felt should be addressed by national policy include:

- “Measuring the impact of learning beyond the achievement of the learning outcome.” – our researchers have interpreted this to mean that there is a need for policy directives to focus on the holistic learning undertaken by adult learners and the impact that this learning has had on their personal, professional and civic lives.
- “Illiteracy and innumerate numbers per capita.” – this should address the persistent low levels of literacy and numeracy among adult learners in Ireland today.
- “Industries are at risk of being disrupted through changes in technology” – our researchers identified the need for adult learners upskill to deal with the changing environment.

Recommendations

Based on the research conducted the following recommendations can be drawn:

The approach to the adult education programmes at a local level should provide more flexibility to trainers and adult learners to adapt the shape and format of the training courses to the specific needs of learner group, regional specifics etc. and not being limited by the state curriculum and general guidelines and indicators.

The adult education programmes place a lot of focus on vocational programmes, when the importance of supporting development of civic, cultural, integrational, and social skills should play equally important role for adult education.

Various pieces of research conducted in Ireland suggest that a digital competence is going to play a crucial role in job retention, job changes and job losses. The most endangered are the low-skilled positions, for this reason the consequence is going to be felt mostly by people with lower levels of education. Digital competence training should be addressed to people both in-employment and outside of employment to prepare them for possible job transitions. The quality of education opportunities needs to be an element of highest concern, and the quality assurance structures existing should be implemented and closely monitored.



Europe

Regional profile

Europe as a continent is rich and diverse, with different traditions for adult education, which includes liberal adult education, popular adult education, and further education. This report will refer to “non-formal adult learning and education”, defined as learning that takes place outside of the formal sector but is nevertheless purposeful and organised.

Adults have different reasons to enrol into learning, it could be for professional development, personal development, or to obtain certain skills. Adult learning contributes to every individual life, it improves social cohesion and promotes active citizenship as well. For the adults that decide to do it for professional development, it helps them to remain competitive on the labour market. It also helps them to obtain new skills and are required nowadays, highlighting here the digital skills.

The average participation in adult education in the EU is 11.1% (European Commission, 2019). The rate has increased gradually since 2015, when it was 10.7%.

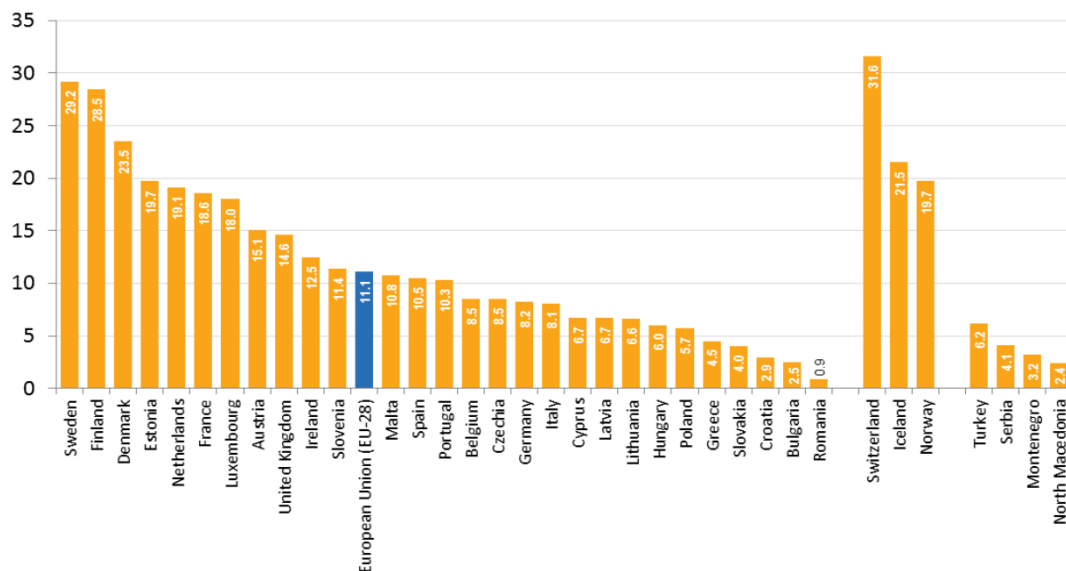


Figure 11 Adult participation in learning in 2018 (% of population aged 25-64) (Eurostat, 2020b)

Strategies and policies on Adult Education

The EU can support both institutions and individuals, as facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences between the different countries. The countries, associations and individuals working with adult education or adult learning receive impact from the EU and its different international policies. The Council adopted a Resolution on a renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning. This Resolution shows that the participation of

adults in formal, non-formal and informal learning should be increased, for any reason that they decide, to acquire work skills, for active citizenship or for personal development and fulfilment. In this agenda, we can find the different priorities for the years 2015-2020:

- Improve governance through better coordination between policy areas.
- Significantly increase the supply and demand for high-quality provision.
- Ensure effective outreach, guidance, and motivation strategies to reach and assist adult learners.
- Offer more flexible opportunities for adults to learn and improved access through more learning at the workplace, the use of ICT and so-called "second chance" qualification programmes.
- Enhance the quality of adult learning by monitoring the impact of policies and improving the training provided to adult educators.

At the European level, there is the Education and Training 2020 framework, that it is a strategic framework for European cooperation in Education and training. The ET2020 framework wants to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality, as well as improve the quality and efficiency of education and training, among other objectives. The benchmarks related to adult education are the following:

- At least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education.
- At least 15% of adults should participate in learning.

The new Skills Agenda for Europe that was adopted by the Commission on 10th of June 2016 launched ten actions to make the right training, skills and support available to people in the EU. These actions are the following:

- Upskilling pathways
- European Qualifications Framework
- Digital skills and jobs coalition
- Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills
- EU skills profile tool for third country nationals
- Vocational education and training
- Key competences
- Europass
- Graduate tracking
- Analysing and sharing of best practice on brain focus.



Upskilling Pathways is an initiative that came up, as almost one fifth of European adults' struggle with basic reading and writing, calculation, and using digital tools in everyday life. The European Council adopted the Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways in 2016. Its aim is to help adults so they can acquire some minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills, as well as to get a set of skills so they can progress towards an upper secondary qualification or equivalent. The target group are adults that have a low level of skills, they can be either in employment or not, but the main characteristic is that they have a need to strengthen basic skills. The EU supports the Member States with the Upskilling Pathways in the following way:

- Mutual learning: capacity building events to support Member States in the implementation of the programme.
- Implementation of Upskilling Pathways – EaSI calls
- Structural Reform Support Programme: Member States have the chance to submit projects for structural reforms that need to be in accordance with the Upskilling Pathways.
- European Pillar of Social Rights: The Upskilling Pathways initiative is a key piece of the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- The skills agenda: As education and training is an important component of the Commission's long-term strategy, Upskilling pathways is the main proposal for the agenda.
- Growing together: The Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) is a multilingual open membership community for adult learning professionals in Europe. EPALE hosts communities of practice – online groups where people with similar interests from the adult learning sector can get together to make a difference by building a common space for exchanging information, opinions, and good companies.

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is the common European reference framework whose purpose is to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems. Cedefop, together with the European Commission, is providing all the coordination and analytical support for its implementation. In each country we can find the already established National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This NQF is based on the EQF, and the EQF makes possible to match the different NQFs to one common framework.

Status of the Adult Education providers

Across EU member states, adult education policy is in most cases the responsibility of the Ministry of Education; this includes definition of legal frameworks, as well as designing, implementing and monitoring adult education strategies at the national level. EU policy



frameworks, such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning and Upskilling Pathways, are taken into account, albeit to a different extent. Some of the priorities of the European Agenda, such as improving the quality and efficiency of education and training or promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning, are visible also in national strategies; an increasing focus on basic skills, which is the main focus of Upskilling Pathways, is also reported (EAEA, 2019).

In keeping with EU and global policy frameworks in adult education, in some member states policymaking in adult education is a shared task between different governmental actors to ensure horizontal and vertical policy coherence. This means, on the one hand, that several ministries will be involved in adult education policy-making; such is the case, for example, in Slovenia, where the Master Plan for Adult Education includes seven ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry of Environment. Similarly, a recent strategy that aimed in improving literacy across the Netherlands, Count on Skills, was led by three ministries: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

On the other hand, there is an increasing tendency towards decentralisation of adult education governance. This is reported for example in the United Kingdom, where the devolution of the Adult Education Budget is intended to “shape adult education provision in their area in a way that best suits the needs of their residents and the local economy⁸”. Also in Ireland, the establishment of Education and Training Boards (ETBs) across the country is a result of a decentralization process.

In some countries, adult education planning is both a top-down and bottom-up process; such is the case in Ireland (UIL, 2019). While the sixteen Education and Training Boards are tasked with implementing the priorities defined on the national level, a consultation process with learners and providers is decentralised, to ensure that adult learning provision fits local needs. AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Association in Ireland, who is responsible for implementing the European Agenda for Adult Learning, has a key role in collecting and analysing learners’ views to inform adult learning policy. In addition to the annual National Learners’ Forum, AONTAS also holds regional events, which offer learners a platform to voice their opinions and recommendations on adult learning provision.

Stakeholder consultation is another principle that is advocated on the European and global level. Some EU member states have established a comprehensive consultation process. Such is the case in Finland, where the Liberal Adult Education Cooperation Group includes representatives of different stakeholders in adult education: the Ministry of



Education and Culture, the National Board of Education, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and Finish Adult Education (Kozyra et al, 2017). Nevertheless, according to the reports of EAEA members, consultation remains ad-hoc; adult education stakeholders, including providers, tend to be consulted at the needs analysis stage, but rarely participate in the design or monitoring of adult education strategies (DIMA, 2016).

While the question of quality is a recurrent one in European strategies (one of the priorities of both ET2020 framework and the European Agenda for Adult Learning), research shows that quality assurance remains fragmented across the EU. According to the report commissioned in 2013 for the ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning from Panteia (Broek and Buiskool), in some countries, quality assurance systems exist on a macro level for both formal and non-formal adult learning; these are also reported to have higher participation levels in adult learning (for example in Austria, Denmark and Sweden). In other countries, quality assurance systems are well developed for formal adult learning but are fragmented for non-formal adult learning (for example in Germany, Slovenia, and the Netherlands). There are also cases of countries where no quality systems for non-formal adult learning exist.

The study defines several components of educational quality, which are described as often being “in conflict with each other”. The components are as follows:

- “Equity – equitable access to and participation in education and training
- Relevance – provision must represent an effective route to and support, persistence in adult learning to the achievement of individual and societal goals
- Effectiveness – means end relationship in terms of educational outcomes for learners. Completion rates and achievement levels are hard indicators of effectiveness
- Sustainability – results of learning should be sustainable in the long term and should not harm the environment or society at large” (Broek and Buiskool, 2013, p.12).

The study also differentiates between frameworks, systems, and instruments for quality assurance. A quality framework is described as “an overarching reference for recommended quality concepts, models, criteria and indicators” which “could be embedded in legislation” (p. 15). Quality systems are defined as more concrete and refer to the actual implementation on national, regional, or local level, and might include accreditation systems or quality labels. Quality instruments refer to processes or methodologies implemented on system as well as providers’ level, such as self-evaluation or external evaluation.



As described in the study, as well as by EAEA members, quality assurance systems might be bottom-up – for example, initiated by (a network of) providers – or top-down, and state-established. Different frameworks, systems and mechanisms are reported. Austria, for example, has an accreditation system for adult learning provision, a quality label O-Cert; it serves as a quality standard for granting funds and awards as well as an instrument of professionalization. An example of a voluntary quality assurance framework is Women’s Community Education Quality Assurance Framework, set up by AONTAS with its community education members, and visualised in the form of a flower (AONTAS, 2009).

In Sweden, non-formal adult education provision is reviewed but not accredited. This task is carried out by the Swedish National Council for Adult Education, who is also responsible for the distribution of state grants. While the purposes of governmental grants are set out by the state, the objectives of non-formal (liberal) adult education provision are established independently by the providers.

Importantly, quality assurance systems might have different objectives. The three key objectives defined in the Panteia study are: setting minimum quality requirements for providers, improving the transparency of the adult learning sector, and assuring the accountability of public funding.

An interesting mechanism is that of a European Peer Review Process. Recently tested in Erasmus+ projects for quality of non-formal adult education providers (Praline project, 2014-2017) and validation of informal and non-formal learning (Peer Review VNFIL extended, 2015-2018), it can be implemented nationally or transnationally. The process consists of a series of peer visits and assessment against a set of jointly defined criteria. As the Praline project results demonstrates, it allows organisations to improve their provision while focusing on the areas that they defined as most important, therefore allowing for greater flexibility and autonomy. At the same time, the peer review process can be easily embedded in the existing accreditation systems, for example by allowing providers to prepare for an external evaluation.

The professional status of AE providers, trainers and staff is also diverse. The field is that of “multiple identities” (Bron and Jarvis, 2008), with adult education professionals linked to a variety of fields, be that the discipline itself (e.g. teaching adults), or the community where it is exercised. This means that adult educators not only have to be knowledgeable in their subject matter, but also to possess a wide range of interpersonal skills, an ability to adapt to different environments and new developments (such as digitalization), as well to the development of the field itself, such as the growing need for flexible learner pathways. At the same time, an adult education professional is no longer restricted to



being a teacher or educator; it is generally recognised that the field has evolved and includes also programme planners, project managers or “media use positions” (Research voor Beleid, 2008, p. 70).

In many countries, there is no uniform way to enter the profession; adult educators might have hugely different profiles and life stories, frequently turning to adult education later in their career. While in some countries there is a nationally recognised certification for adult education professionals (e.g. in Switzerland), in others the situation is more fragmented. Aspiring adult educators might decide to enrol in a graduate or post-graduate degree at a university, to attend a course organised by an adult education institution, or to follow an online in-service course (Przybylska, 2008).

Generally speaking, professional conditions in the adult education sector remain inadequate across Europe. Adult education professionals frequently work part-time or are self-employed; for example, an estimated 70% adult education professionals in Germany are self-employed, 78% of them describe their life situation as “precarious” in at least one dimension (DIE, 2016). According to the new Global Report on Adult Learning and Education, released in December 2019, only 25% of countries in North America and Western Europe report that employment conditions for adult education professionals have improved (UIL, 2019).

Quality Assurance and assessment

As discussed in the previous chapter, assessment procedures applied in adult education provision vary to a great extent, depending on the system that is put in place. Carried out by the responsible body, they might include, for example, “validating the application form, on-site visit, expert consultation”. In the case of the Austrian Ö-Cert, the provider will be assessed against several criteria, the most important one being an existence of external audits. The Ö -Cert agency and external experts will assess the application by going through a checklist.

In Switzerland, accreditation is attributed following an examination of the dossier and an on-site visit. The certification procedure is based on six eduQua-quality criteria and might lead to granting unconditional certification, certification under certain conditions or to no certification.

In some quality assurance systems, monitoring visits are also carried out; the accreditation might also be valid only for a certain amount of time and will have to be renewed.

Another point where quality assessment diverges across Europe is the profile of accrediting institutions. While in some countries these are public bodies/agencies, whose



key task is quality control – for example the Ö-Cert office in Austria, or EduQua agency in Switzerland –in other cases they are public or private bodies who are also involved in other activities.

A good example that we can find at the European Level is the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) Work Programme. This Reference Framework is designed to promote better vocational education and training by providing authorities with common tools for the management of quality. It is, however, aimed at VET providers as opposed to non-formal adult learning providers.

Main programmes

Adult education provision is very diverse across the continent; aims and objectives might reflect the aims and objectives of adult education strategies implemented nationally (as discussed above) but can also be much broader. While some adult education providers might implement mainly programmes that might aim at, for example, improving basic skills (currently a priority in many European countries), they will also frequently provide courses that go beyond the scope of what is seen as a priority at the national level. Courses that aim at improving health and well-being (such as healthy eating or yoga classes), at bringing a community together and exploring a common topic of interest, or an increasing environmental awareness, are all part of non-formal adult learning provision.

The diversity of adult learning provision is also reflected in the diversity of stakeholders. In the case of non-formal learning, these will include a myriad of providers, both public and private. Depending on how adult education is organised in a given country, adult learning provision might be delivered by public adult education centres, folk high schools, study centres, community education centres, non-governmental organisations or other providers. In many countries, and especially in the case of basic skills provision or second chance education, programmes are developed against a specific curriculum set by the state. Depending on the adult education system put in place, some providers might enjoy complete freedom in the development of their programmes. Such is the case, for example, in Denmark, where liberal adult education providers have no obligation to follow pre-defined curricula. This means that the providers can involve learners themselves in the design of an adult education programme, thus aligning it with their specific needs.

It is also important to mention the role of adult education associations and umbrella organisations working on the national or regional level, who might coordinate joint initiatives or develop programmes and tools that aim to support their members in programme development. A case in point is the Citizens' Curriculum, developed by



Learning and Work Institute in the UK, which aims to provide a flexible approach to adult learning. Alongside a learning framework, it offers a set of resources that can be used to develop an adult learning programme that follows the principles of the Citizens' Curriculum, that is, to be designed and delivered with an active participation of learners.

Support for programme development might also happen transnationally. Many Erasmus+ partnerships are implemented with the overall objective to improve the design and delivery of adult learning programmes in a particular area, for example media literacy or environmental awareness. The Life Skills for Europe (LSE) Erasmus+ project, coordinated by EAEA, can serve as an example of a partnership that worked on improving the provision of life skills, by defining, among others, a common life skills framework (LSE, 2018).

As discussed in the previous chapter, in-service training of adult educators is in some cases delivered by adult education providers; there are also countries where such training is provided by other stakeholders. The new GRALE reports that in Cyprus, training programmes are delivered by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, supporting adult educators in improving their competences in teaching adults. In some cases, in-service training is organised in the framework of projects. For example, in Croatia, a number of activities have been organised to improve competences of adult educators, including workshops and events on professionalization, with the support of the European Social Fund programme (UIL, 2019).

In line with the Upskilling Pathways initiative, many providers have rolled out programmes that aim to improve basic skills among adults. For example, Qualifica centres in Portugal, established before Upskilling Pathways was launched, aim to give adults an opportunity to get their competences assessed and validated. Many of them progress to further education or find gainful employment.

Another example is Skills to Advance, a national initiative in Ireland, which aims to "equip employees with the skills they need to progress in their current role or to adapt to the changing job market", targeting specifically employees in entry-level and lower level jobs.

Also in Germany, workplace learning has been high on the agenda in terms of improving basic skills. EAEA member Arbeit und Leben has been implementing BasisKomPlus project, which offers a nation-wide infrastructure offering support for employers to introduce tailor-made basic skills trainings.

More examples of such programmes and the uptake of Upskilling Pathways can be found in EAEA's annual country reports (EAEA, 2019).



At the EU level, two different surveys are carried out regularly to measure participation levels. The Labour Force survey is done quarterly and asks about learning activities from the past four weeks. The Adult Education Survey, on the other hand, takes place only every five years, but aims to provide a more comprehensive picture: the interviewees are asked about their participation in formal, non-formal and informal learning in the past twelve months, as well as about the obstacles they face that hinder their participation or the reasons for not participating. According to the results of the last Adult Education Survey, conducted in 2016, 19.6% of the EU-27 population wanted to participate but encountered difficulties: 7.1% for personal reasons, 10.8% for reasons other than personal; an overwhelming majority – 79.7% - did not want to participate. Interestingly, these numbers are similar regardless of the level of educational attainment. The willingness to learn seems to decrease with age, with 87.3% of the respondents aged 55-64 stating they “do not want” to participate in education and training, comparing to 73.2% of those aged 25-34.

Those who do not want to participate explain this mainly by the lack of need (77.8%). Among those who want to participate, different obstacles are reported, the main one being scheduling reasons (24%), followed by family reasons (18.9%) and costs (17.9%).

Financing adult learning is one of the most pressing challenges in the field. European research continues to show that the (perceived) cost of learning remains an important determinant of participation (Cabus et al, to be published). Regrettably, there is no comprehensive data on financing adult learning at the European level, frequently also the national level (Schuller and Watson, 2009; cf. FiBS and DIE, 2013). One of the reasons why it is difficult to quantify spending on adult learning is the fact that adult education programmes tend to be financed from multiple sources (European Commission, EACEA and Eurydice, 2013). These might include public sources, either at the national or European level, as well as with local, regional, or communal origins. Many adult education providers rely on external donors (Kozyra et al, 2017).

The diversity of national traditions in adult education and structures lead to a diversity of instruments that are used for its financing. A recent project coordinated by EAEA, Financing Adult Learning in Europe (FinALE, Erasmus+ KA2, 2015-2018), has identified 11 different funding tools used in non-formal adult learning on the supply side (funding of providers) and the demand side (funding of learners and employers). According to the results of the survey carried out in the FinALE project, programme funding remains the most important one, followed by learners’ fees and project funding.



Low-skilled adults

According to EAEA's desk research, feedback from members and interviews with experts, the needs of low-skilled adults might depend on many factors: their personal and professional circumstances, their previous experiences with learning, and many other factors. This is why EAEA strongly believes that flexibility is one of the main needs that should be respected when designing programmes for low-skilled adults. This might mean, for example, shifting the venues or schedules according to learners' needs.

The need for flexibility is also closely linked with the need for more learner-centred approaches. Low-skilled adults often have negative experiences with formal education, which includes frontal teaching, regular exams and a one-size-fit-all approach. Non-formal education allows for more attention to the specific needs of each learner, asking them to contribute to the delivery and the design of the course, encouraging participation at all levels.

Many adults are also discouraged from attending adult education courses unless they see them as directly relevant for their professional or everyday lives. This is why EAEA has been advocating a holistic approach to learning, building bridges to everyday lives of learners, focusing not only on numeracy, but also for financial literacy in managing household budgets; combining literacy with media literacy or health literacy. Experiments such as the Learning and Work Institute's Citizen's Curriculum, piloted in the UK and now also tested abroad, show that such an approach is appreciated by learners.

Adult education providers across Europe also report more need for outreach – many learners who are low skilled come from disadvantaged communities, are socially and consequently also digitally excluded. They might not be aware of the existing adult education programmes, or might not see themselves as potential learners. More outreach in learners' communities, for example by organizing events in the community, or engaging former learners as learning ambassadors, has a key role in getting learners through the door.

Last but not least, accessibility of programmes might also be an issue for many learners: either because of inadequate infrastructure or due to financial barriers. Identifying and removing such barriers is an important step.

Low-skilled adults have been high on the agenda in most EU member countries; in some of them this is directly linked to the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative, in others, a focus on basic skills has been present for years (e.g. Germany or Austria). The European Commission (2019) estimates that over 60 million people in Europe struggle



with numeracy, literacy or digital skills; according to OECD, “the most disadvantaged are least likely to train, with low-skilled adults three times less likely to undertake training than the high-skilled (20% vs 58%)” (OECD, 2019).

Thanks to the Upskilling Pathways initiative, most EU Member States have now identified their target groups and have prepared – and started to implement – an Action Plan, that allows learners to assess their skills, get a tailor-made learning offer and progress to certification, addressing gaps in literacy, numeracy and basic skills. The implementation report published by the European Commission in February 2019 estimated that 60 programmes / initiatives across Europe have been listed by Member States as measures to implement Upskilling Pathways.

In terms of target groups, they vary greatly depending on the country. According to CEDEFOP (2020), older adults (55-64) present the highest risk of being low-skilled in the EU-28. The unemployed and adults out of labour also score high. Unsurprisingly, some countries have rolled out programmes specifically targeting these groups. This has been the case, for example, in Belgium, France, Portugal, Poland and Estonia, where NEETs or long-term unemployed have been targeted. Older workers, both employed and unemployed, have also been targeted in programmes rolled out in Germany, Spain, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia; in some instances – for example in Poland – such programmes also include elements of sport and health education.

Non-EU migrants including refugees remain an important target group in some countries, most notably in Austria, Belgium, Croatia and Italy.

Many of the initiatives do follow the three-step approach promoted in Upskilling Pathways. According to the EC report, “the assessment of all three basic skills is mentioned explicitly in the cases of Austria, Greece, Croatia and Italy” (EC, 2019). Flexibility of learning provision is ensured for example through modularization of certain programmes or offering blended learning opportunities. Validation of non-formal and informal learning has also become increasingly important, for example in Portugal, where a network of Qualifica centres allows all citizens to have their skills assessed and validated.

Challenges & critique

There is a myriad of challenges faced by adult education providers across the continent. Financial insecurity remains an important one. With many countries moving towards project-based funding, adult education providers struggle to make long-term plans, or to provide decent working conditions for their staff. This is frequently linked with the lack of recognition of what non-formal adult education can achieve, and especially long-term



societal and economic benefits that go beyond the immediate effect of finding a job. Measurability is increasingly becoming a new paradigm, which unfortunately does not necessarily translate into more funding to research the benefits of adult learning.

The effectiveness of adult education programmes is frequently measured against easily retrievable data, which do not reflect the complexity of the field. The most common ones are completion rates of adult education programmes, progress towards achieving further qualifications or finding employment. Financial effectiveness is another indicator. According to the results of the FinALE project, the return on investment amounts to 3€ on every euro invested; the benefits include “positive effects on income and employability, health, civic commitment, reduced criminal activity, among others” (FinALE, 2017).

As discussed earlier in this report, there are several barriers that prevent adults from participating in adult learning, some of which might be linked to the policy level or the larger ecosystem surrounding adult education providers, such as availability of affordable childcare or support of employers (Schuller and Watson, 2009). That said, some steps can be taken by providers themselves to facilitate access to adult learning and to improve their teaching practice. The requirement to achieve a level of formal education to participate in some programmes remains a barrier in the case of some providers. More outreach activities are also needed to ensure that adults who need it most are informed of the existing learning opportunities.

At the same time, many adult education programmes are designed to correspond to a range of formal criteria, and to provide a certificate at the end of the course. While this might be a result of funding conditions, it also has an effect on the enrolment or completion rates. The experience of EAEA members shows that adult education programmes are most successful and beneficial for learners when they are designed and implemented with an active participation of learners. Many adult education programmes remain very formal and teacher-centred, which sometimes stems from the lack of training opportunities for adult learning staff, who might have been initially trained to work as teachers in formal settings and/or with other target groups.

Interviews with stakeholders

The conducted interviews aid to identify some important key points concerning Adult Education providers around the region of Europe and are presented below.

Challenges at the sectorial/policy level:



- Low level of financing, adult education remains undervalued at the policy level. In the words of one of the experts, “adult education needs to be planned locally, but understood nationally”.
- Outreach is needed but no funding earmarked for it.
- Insufficient research on learners, their needs and pathways – research tends to be fragmented.
- Insufficient opportunities for in-service training for adult educators.

Challenges highlighted by most experts at the organizational level/barriers for low-skilled learners:

- Low-skilled learners might be hesitant to sign up for a course because of the bureaucracy that comes with it, or the need to disclose personal information.
- Some low-skilled learners suffer from low self-confidence – they do not think they have a chance for success. It is important to highlight positive stories and to encourage a comfortable atmosphere, also when signing up for the course.
- Many low-skilled adults are digitally excluded, and therefore unlikely to know about the existing opportunities, or to try them out (e.g. in the case of blended learning or e-learning).
- Access remains unequal. According to our Austrian expert, low-skilled learners are unlikely to attend an adult education course if it takes place further than 20km from their home. Adult education programmes need to be more flexible, e.g. by offering classes in public spaces (such as in the case of the German in the park course in Vienna).
- Some target groups are left behind, their needs are misunderstood – e.g. the elderly, families, women from migrant communities...
- Low-skilled learners need to see a short-term result: modularization of programmes might help.

Recommendations

More learner-centred approaches are needed. While adult education providers might work in a specific context, frequently obliged to follow pre-set curricula, there are different ways to ensure that learner voices are taken into account. Some providers involve learners in the design of the course; others go as far as to include them in the management of the school or in the recruitment of new learners. EAEA strongly believes that learning can only be successful if it is relevant to the lives of adults; and adults’ active participation throughout the course planning, delivery and evaluation will increase their ownership of the course.



More data is needed. To better understand the needs of (potential) learners, a variety of information is needed, including their profiles, obstacles they might face, learning needs. Understanding how they progress after they complete the course is also crucial to analyse how adult education provision can be beneficial, and what has to be improved. Comprehensive data collection is also helpful for advocacy work, as it can support evidence-based policymaking.

Cooperation at different levels are important. Adult education providers cannot act in isolation. Whether it is to analyse the needs on the ground, to develop a good outreach strategy or to make a case for adult learning on the policy level, partnerships are needed. These can include cooperating with social partners, such as trade unions; with employment or health services, with local municipalities, and more.

Representation is key – and there are different ways to achieve it. While some adult education providers are themselves actively engaged in advocacy, for example at the local level, others prefer to become members of an association representing their interest at the regional, national, or European level. Non-formal adult education lacks recognition in many countries, and is thus under-funded; advocacy campaigns, events and meetings and policymakers can make a lasting impact.

From local to European – and from European to local. EAEA members frequently underline that European exchange, for example through the Erasmus+ programme, brings a myriad of benefits, including improved methods in working with adults, innovative tools, more skilled staff, to only name a few. Transnational exchange of best practices is a key element in improving practice. That said, European exchange can only be fruitful if it is carefully analysed with regard to existing traditions and the local context. There is no solution that works for everyone; very often what needs to be adjusted is the approach, the mind-set, or attention to a particular problem (EAEA, 2018).

Adult education needs the best staff, and even the best staff needs continuous support. Adult educators are frequently asked to juggle several responsibilities, from planning the course and preparing the course materials, to marking exams, not to mention delivering the course itself. High quality of adult education courses, and therefore higher satisfaction of learners can only be ensured if adult educators get the support they need to access training opportunities – and the time they need to prepare for their courses, reflect on their practice and incorporate innovative elements. Employment conditions need to reflect the high expectations towards adult educators. This support is needed on the policy level, but also from the providers themselves.



Survey research analysis

Along with the desk research, partner countries conducted a survey research in order to observe and understand adults' needs regarding education and training. For this purpose, a questionnaire has been developed as a mean to identify the insights and gaps in the field from the perspective of learners. The questionnaire was comprised by 31 fields to complete of both multiple choice and short open questions. First, a few basic demographic data were collected (e.g. age, country) followed by more targeted questions about their previous participation, if any or their requirements for future participation. The document was created in Google forms and delivered electronically by all partners. In total, 86 questionnaires were collected from all partner countries and they were managed all together for analysis.

The biggest group of participants belong to the age group of 41-50 years (25 participants) with a slight difference from the previous groups of 31-40 years (23 participants) and 18-30 (18 participants). 13 more people from the group age 51+ participated in the survey, while seven persons did not provide any information about their age. The distribution of ages as shown in Figure 1, is very similar to the distribution of population of Spain and

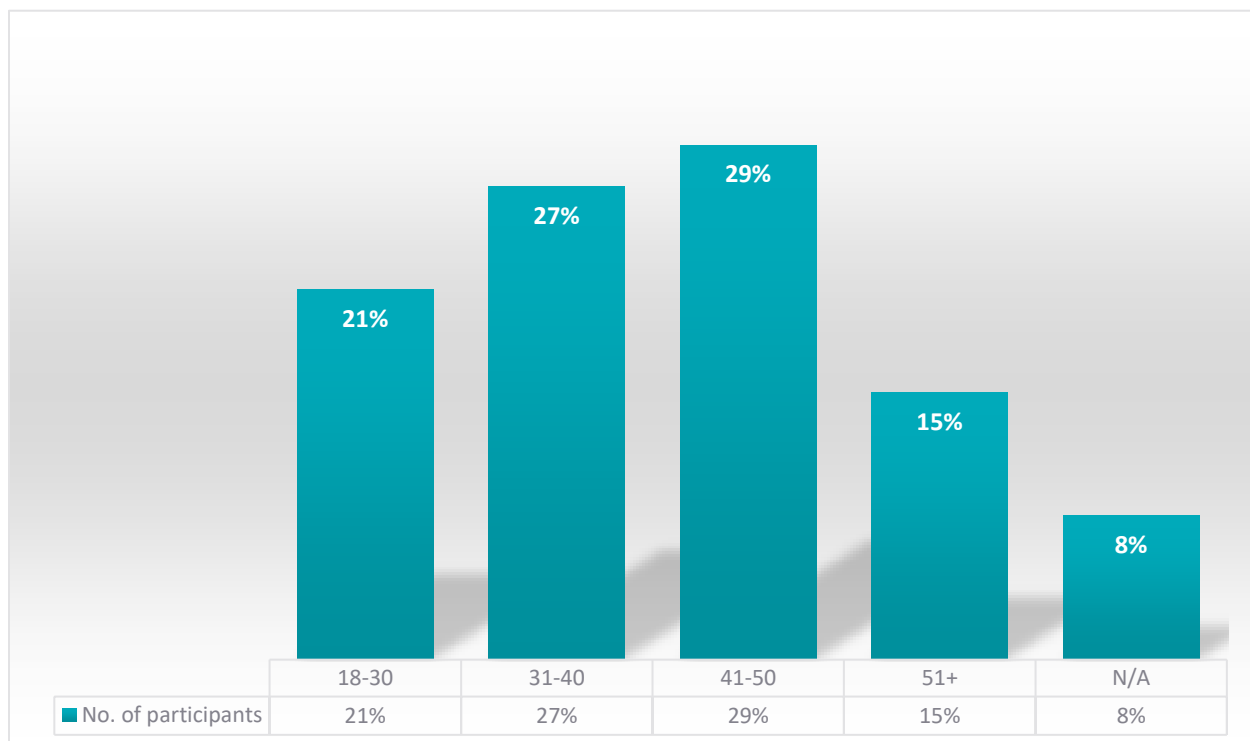


Figure 12. Participants' age group

slightly different from that of Ireland and Cyprus (which are the main countries that respondents come from; see Figure 2).

The sample mostly represents three countries, Spain, Ireland, and Cyprus (Figure 2). Particularly, 30 participants were Spanish, 28 Cypriot and 20 Irish. Eight more persons responded from UK (2), Austria, Croatia, France, Lithuania, Malta, and Portugal.

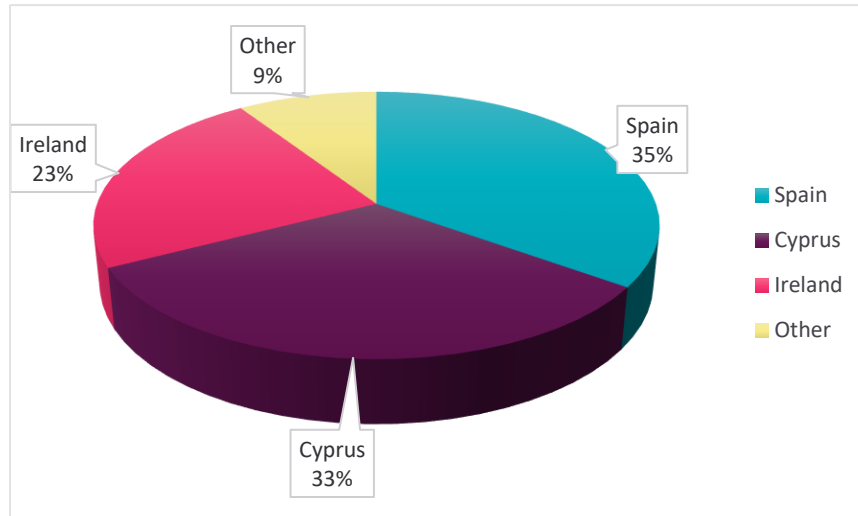


Figure 13. Participants by country

Regarding their level of education, almost half of them have obtained a bachelor degree (48%) while the other half is equally divided from adults that completed only their compulsory education (25%) and adults that have a Master’s degree (25%). A very small share reported that hold a PHD (2%; Figure 3).

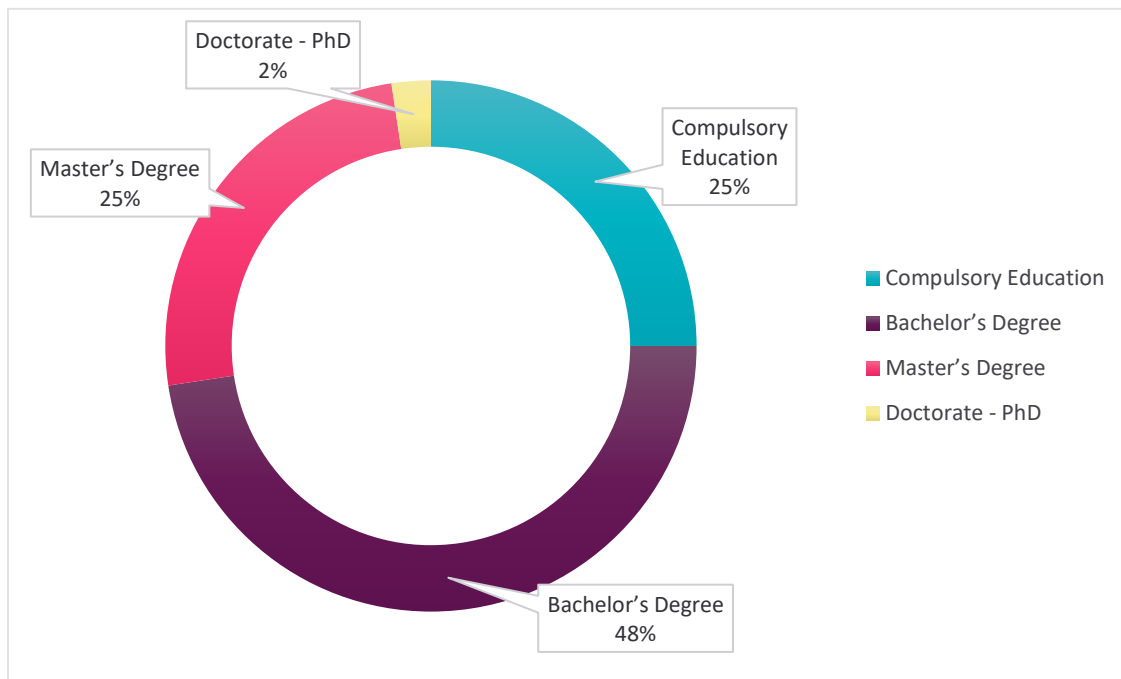


Figure 14. Participants' education level

Getting to the insights of their involvement in adult education, the first question concerned their awareness of relevant programmes that take place in their country. The majority reported that they knew about them (72%; Figure 4), however when they were asked to mention some to verify this, some of them gave vague or no answers. Consequently, the general image shows that while many have in mind about adult

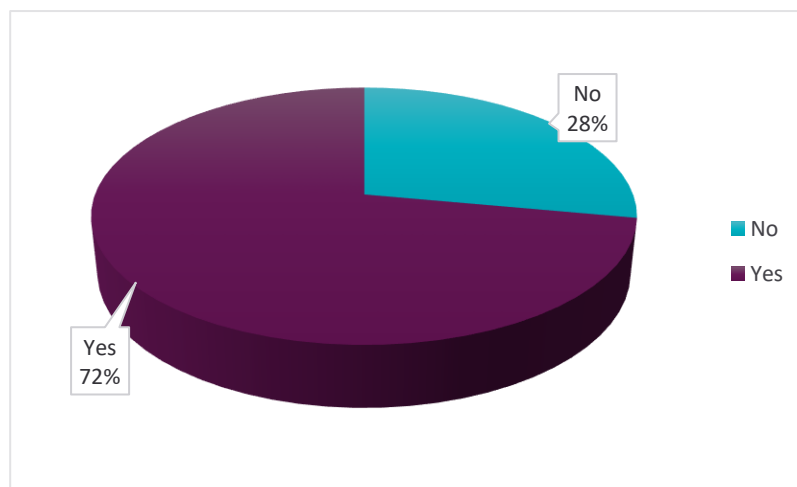


Figure 15. Are you aware of any adult education programmes in your country?

education programmes, there is a considerable percentage that are unfamiliar and unaware of them.

This unfamiliarity noted above is confirmed by the next question, which concerns their actual participation in any of these programmes during the last five years. Almost half of them (47%) did not get involved in any activity while the other half did (53%). Five years is considered a serious amount of time, if we look on the statistics of Eurostat in adult education, which uses a reference period of the four weeks for activities that last at least one year.

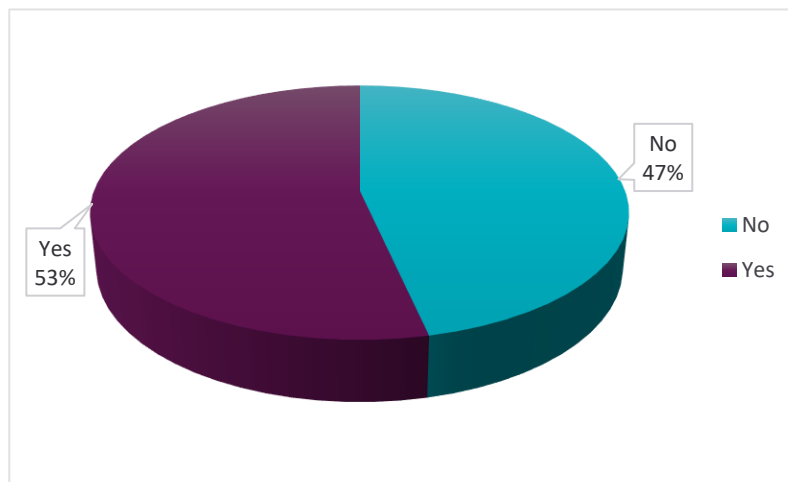


Figure 16. Have you participated in any adult education programme in the past five years?

The sample that answered positively in the previous question (53%, 46 participants), the adults that had participated in education programmes or training activities (in the past five years), followed a different set of questions. First, they were asked about how they were informed about that programme. As show in Figure 6, the most of them discovered

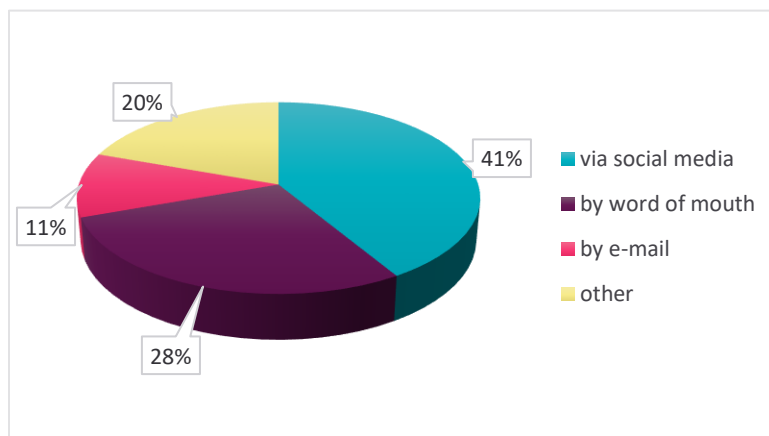


Figure 17. How did you find out about this programme?

it in the social media (41%) and then by word to mouth (28%). A few received a personal email (11%) and the rest (20%) reported various means e.g. from their employer, through online research, or leaflets.

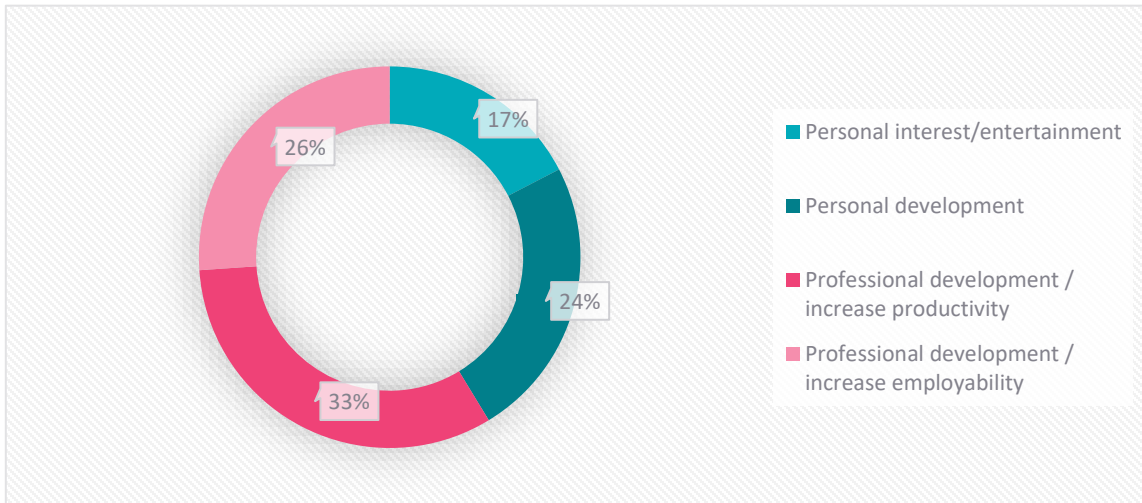


Figure 18. What was the main reason for participating in an adult education programme?

Mainly, they attended in activities of education and training for professional purposes, either to gain skills for increasing their employability or to enhance their productivity at their current work (59%). In a few cases, participation was mandatory by the employer. The other big share attended in activities for their own personal development or simply because they were interested in the specific domain (41%; Figure 7).

Next, participants were asked if their employer covered a part or the full amount of the programme’s fees. If we have in mind the percentage that participated for professional reasons (59%), we can conclude that most of their programmes were subsidised or covered by their employer (46%). Those who participated in programmes for personal reasons probably undertook the cost of it by their own.

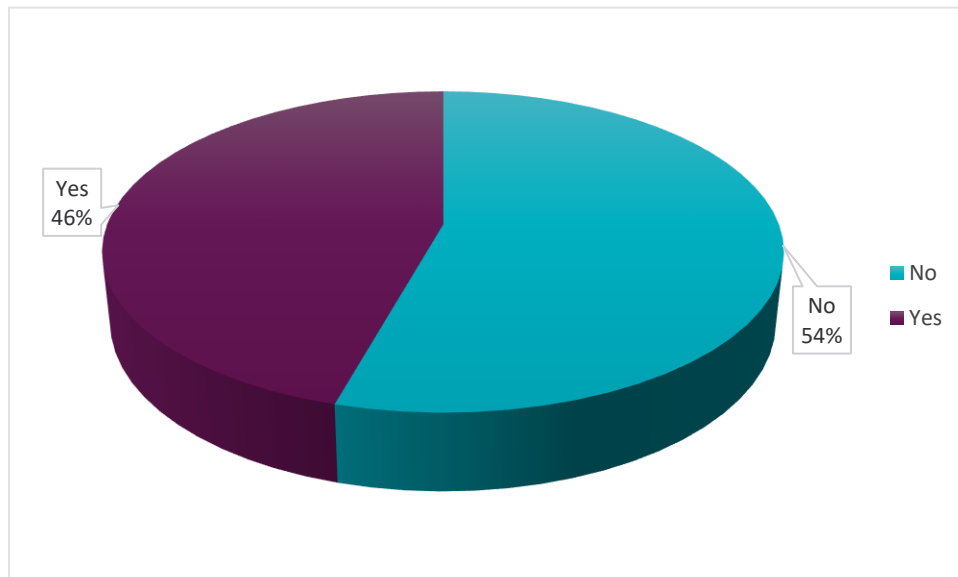


Figure 19. Did your employer cover a part/the full amount of the programmes' fees?

Eventually, the majority of the participants were awarded by a kind of certification after their attendance to the programme, however the importance or validity of this certification it cannot be clarified.

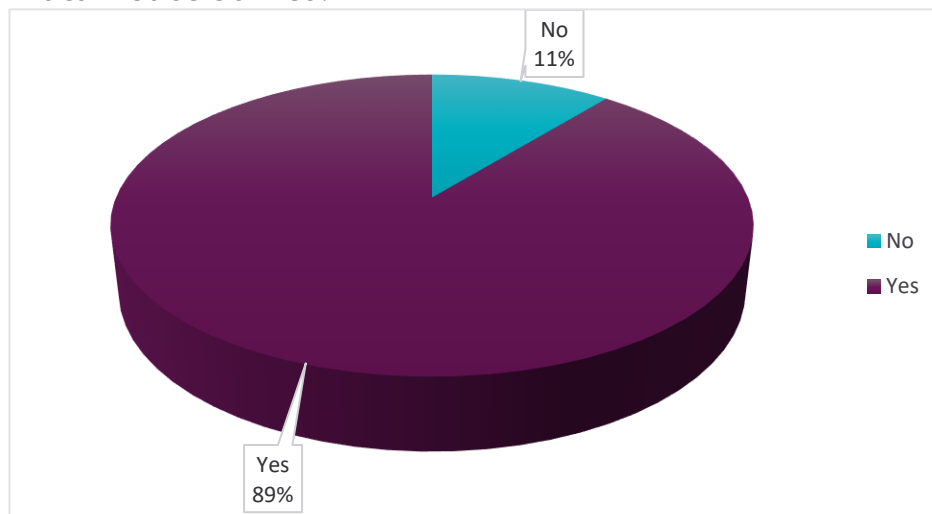


Figure 20. Does/Did the programme provide some kind of certification in the end of the lessons?

Returning to the respondents that did not attend any programme of adult education in the past five years, they were asked to report the reasons why. Primary is shown again their unawareness about any programmes and activities organised in their area (31%). They simply do not know about them if they exist. Next, it was reported that they were not informed on time about them (20%) and that they are not interested in participating (18%). Last, more rarely they claimed that they do not have time due to conflicts with their working schedule (8%) or due to family obligations (4%), as well as the irrelevance of the offered programmes to their needs (8%).

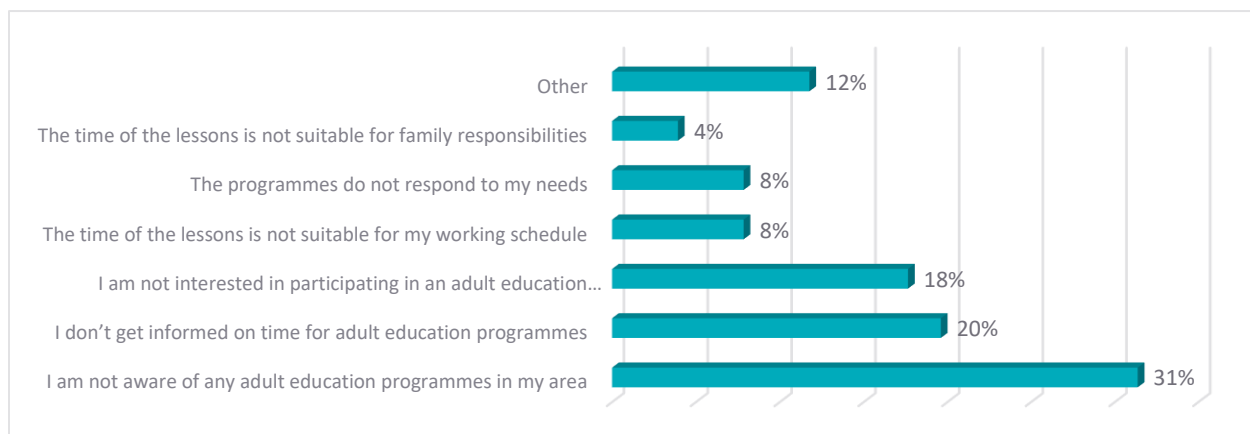


Figure 21. What was the reason for not participating in any adult education programmes?

The next set of questions were again addressed to all respondents and it concerned their needs for any future participation. Given four options on what kind of programmes should have been available in their opinion, they seem to collectively agree with all of them. The options referred to programmes with digital skills, communication skills, technical skills,

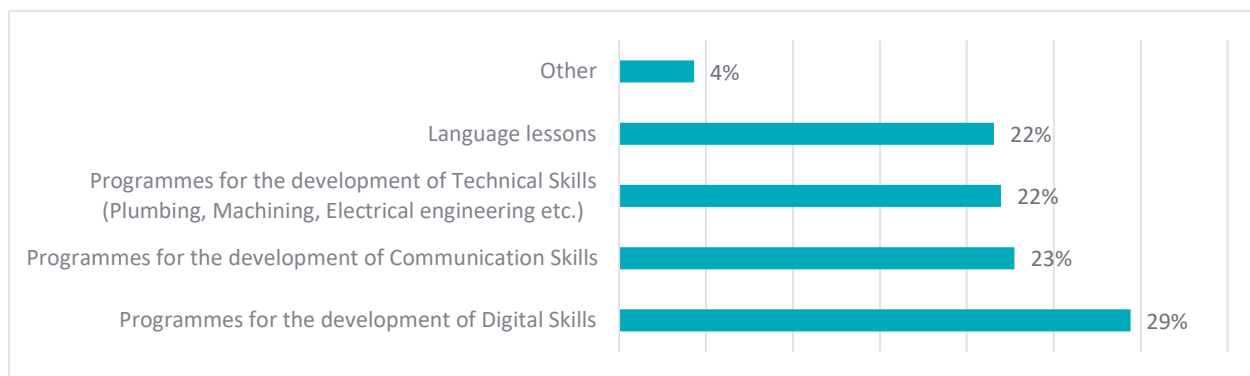


Figure 22. What kind of programmes do you think should have been available?

and language courses (Figure 11). Digital skills were reported to be slightly more important for them. In addition, a few noted the importance of providing training tailored to the specific needs of employees and their profession.

Next, respondents were asked to note what kind of programmes they would like to participate in the future. Answers vary regarding the needs of each individual. The most obvious is the need for programmes to enhance digital skills, both basic and advanced including certain software (i.e. project management), coding, machine learning, video editing and social media marketing. In general, they are mostly attracted by programmes that would offer for their professional (e.g. leadership, communication, health & safety, business management, finance, data analysis, online education, languages, teaching, technical skills), as well as their personal development and interests (e.g. health & wellbeing, environmental consciousness, philosophy, psychology, art, DIY and other).

What is concerning regarding the next set of questions is that adults are not convinced that current programmes are aligned with the labour’s need of their country, although they believe that adult education and training can provide good opportunities to avoid

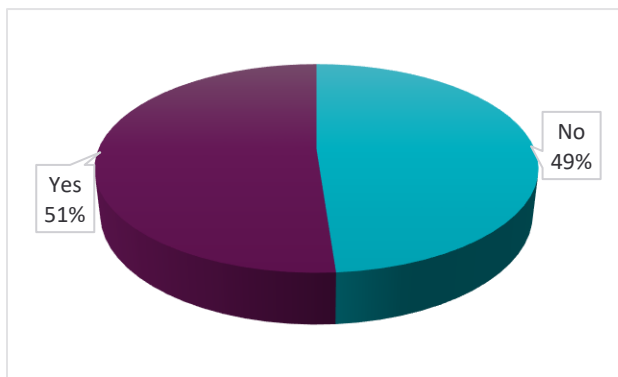


Figure 26. Do you consider adult education programmes in your country in line with the labour's needs?

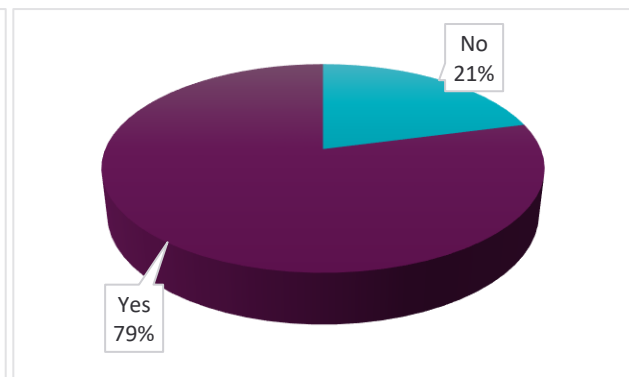


Figure 26. Do you consider adult education programmes as a way to avoid unemployment?

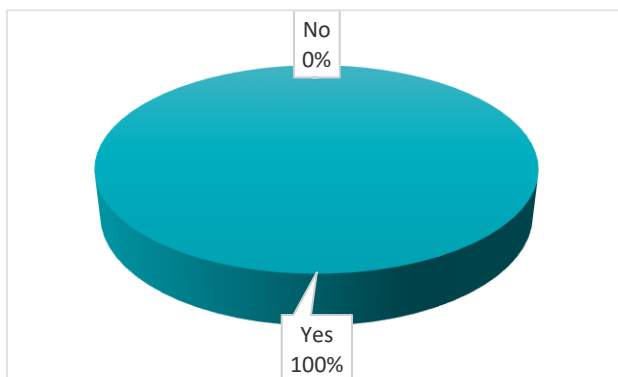


Figure 26. Do you believe that employers should provide training for their employees?

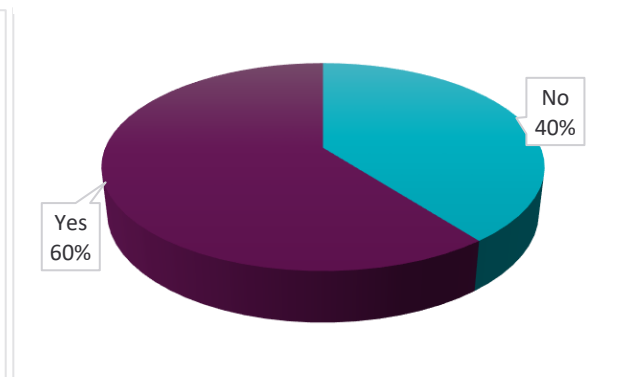


Figure 26. Would your employer cover a part/the full amount of the fees of an education programme related to your work?

unemployment. All of our respondents without any exception believe that employers should provide training for their employees, however a 40% of them they do not believe that their employer would cover the cost of that training.

In addition to the above, the majority of adults reported that they prefer to attend to programmes during weekdays at evening hours.

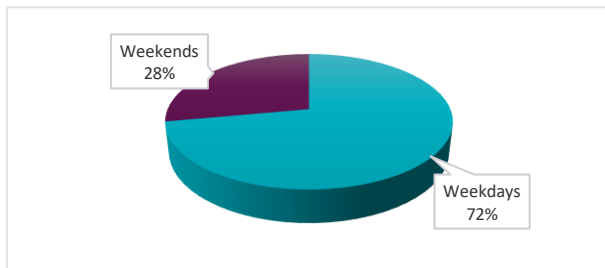


Figure 28. Which days of the week would you prefer for an adult education programme?

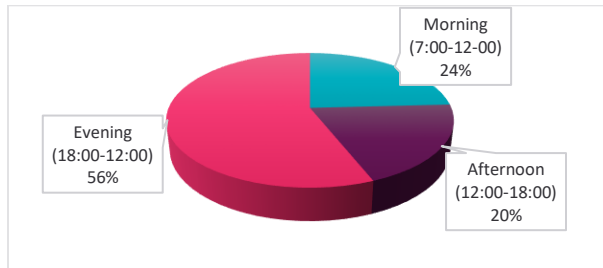


Figure 27. What time of the day would be the ideal for you to participate in an adult education programme?

Interestingly, half of the participants would like to be offered blended learning (face-to-face and online), while the other half is almost equally divided preferring only online or only face-to-face courses.

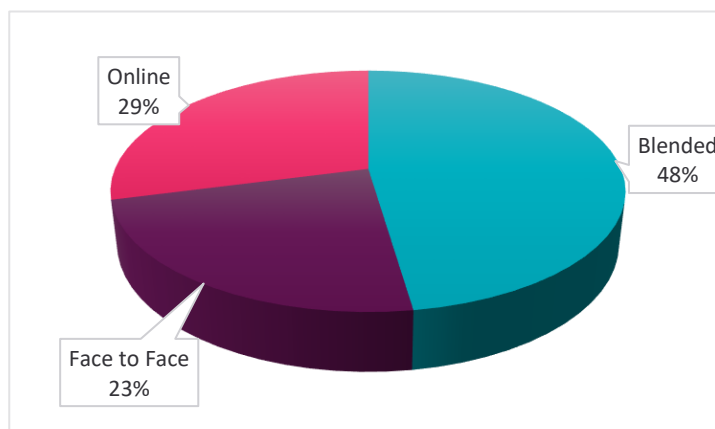


Figure 29. Which of the following ways of learning would you prefer?

They also seem to be familiar with the provision and participation of online courses. 69% have attended to online courses in the past, while 60% have used mobile applications for learning. A bit fewer (47%) have also used Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC) through the web.

Last, in opposite of what they reported as a mean of information about adult education programmes that they attended, they now seem to prefer a more direct and personal way for their future participation, as e-mail is. Of course, a large percentage also prefers to receive information via their social media as well.

Summing up the results, we can conclude that there is a clear need for better informing adults about available programmes in their area, as well as emphasizing the importance of continuous learning for their personal and professional development. Employers have a key role on this, while adults commonly believe that they should provide training opportunities for their employees and cover some, if not all, cost.

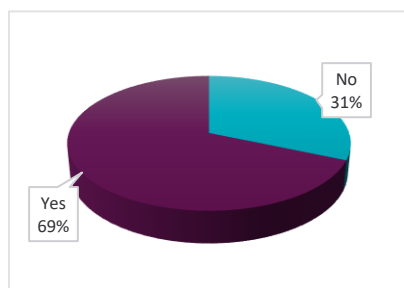


Figure 30. Have you taken any online lessons/webinars in the past?

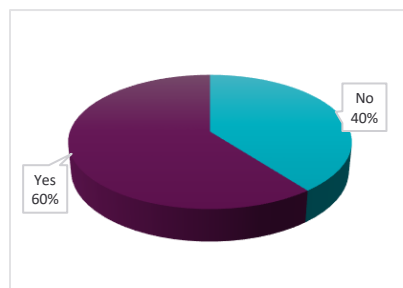


Figure 31. Have you used any mobile application for learning in the past?

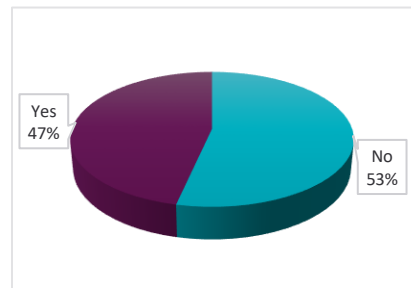


Figure 32. Have you used any online lessons (MOOCs or other) in the past?

Involving employers in the process of providing adult education, programmes become more tailored to the needs of their employees, which is intended. They are more aware of what skills and competences adults may lack and they have a direct communication with them, which facilitates to collaboratively decide for relevant education and training programmes. Moreover, we can observe that technology knowledge is essential in professional environments and there is a definite intention for enhancing digital skills, both basic and advanced, depending on the level of competence of each individual.

Last, it should be taken into account to offer convenience solutions as for example the provision of blended courses which would allow them to partly monitor their attendance in terms of time availability through online participation, as well as engage with learning through face-to-face interaction.

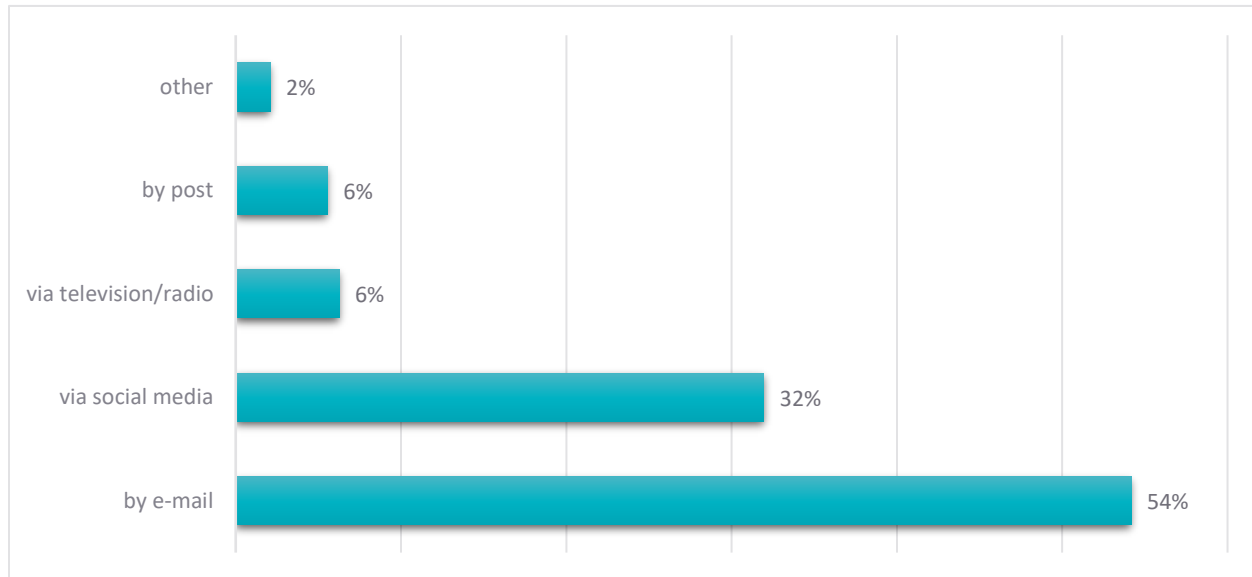


Figure 33. How would you liked to get informed about new adult education programmes?

Conclusion

While the European Commission estimates that over 60 million people in Europe struggle with numeracy, literacy or digital skills, the participation rates of adults in education remain below the target. More concerning is that the most disadvantaged adults are the least likely to participate and receive any form of education or training. Numerous challenges contribute to the fragmentation of the adult education sector. Many of them are linked to the national policy level, and adult education providers are powerless to intervene. In any case, they are called to navigate within this adversity and develop effective strategies for adult learners. The research conducted by the partner organisations of DIMA 2.0 has identified several of those challenges and drawn some conclusions, which might be useful for adult education providers to consider while developing strategies.

To begin with, the absence of comprehensive strategies and policies at a national level reduces the extent of effectiveness in adult education provision. Further repercussions are a disorganised offer of programmes by the private sector, lack of cooperation among stakeholders, and misestimation of public funds and support. In most of the cases, mechanisms for data collection are missing, which are essential for adult education providers while developing strategies. Therefore, in most countries, better infrastructures at this level are needed for efficient organisation, communication, and promotion of provided programmes.

The group of low skilled and low qualified adults cannot be easily identified and approached. Their characteristics, needs and educational barriers remain unknown at a large extend and differ from country to country. It is known that certain groups such as older adults (55-64), unemployed or migrants present among the highest risk rates; however, they are rarely found to be excited with education and training offerings. A closer look will reveal more groups in each country like prisoners, travellers, homeless, lone parents, young families, or other marginalized population. Each group has its own needs and barriers to participation, so it has to be treated accordingly. Among the most common barriers reported by partners were: lack of motivation, lack of incentives, irrelevance of lessons, inaccessibility, lack of time (due to either family or professional responsibilities), financial obstacles, low self-confidence, fear to change and lack of skills (e.g. digital gap). According to the findings, access to adult education remains unequal. Some target groups, as stated above, are left behind since their needs are misunderstood. Their socio-financial reality is not considered; thus, availability of offered programmes is not ensured.



Therefore, relevant strategies have to be carefully designed, mapping the obstacles for participation. Today, if not at all, only a rough needs analysis is conducted as a first step. Adult education providers do not make explicit use of the diagnostic tools they have available to get in touch with potential participants and gather more information. Thus, adult learners' expectations and needs are not always met. Adult education providers are also challenged to keep up to the modern trends and adjust to the new economic activity streams, such as digitalization or other developmental perspectives (i.e. greener economy, renewable energy sources, rationalization of consumption and waste, and reduction of carbon emissions).

Among the best practices and recommendations, ensuring the relevance and usefulness of offered programmes was the most prevalent. That is to create offerings that are tailored to the market needs and increase adult learners' employability. Adults urge to see the real-life benefits from learning at personal and professional levels at the short-term. Therefore, designing learning and training programmes should be a collaborative procedure between the labour market and education providers. Nevertheless, countries with higher levels of adult participation (i.e. Switzerland, Ireland) did not fail to mention the need for offering programmes for active citizenship or intercultural awareness.

Another common challenge concerns the unawareness of adults regarding the existence of adult education programmes, as well as the importance of attending to them. Adults do not always perceive the future benefits that may retain after training, or the possibilities of using those gained skills directly, to improve their current position in the labour market. Instead, low-skilled adults believe that they do not have the skills to participate in education or training, so they should seek for a job right away. Therefore, more informing and outreach activities are needed through a combination of communication channels, depending on the situation. Such information campaigns should be addressed not only to the target group but also to employers and the wider public. Moreover, the means of promotion should be wisely selected as low-skilled adults are not always familiar with modern sources (e.g. social media, websites, or platforms). Effective marketing, in this case, could be achieved using more traditional means (e.g. community newspapers, advertising in local public places, phone calls, etc.).

Although many times public infrastructures are absent and cooperation is not enough, adult education providers are called to identify the key stakeholders and develop their network. Such procedure is imperative for the facilitation of adult participation, especially for low-skilled adults, as efforts become coordinated and may provide better support. Cooperation may exist on different levels. For instance, open dialogue with companies



can better identify the demands of the current labour market and get employers more actively involved. Tertiary education institutions can contribute initiating research to investigate the sector or taking part in education provision. Public authorities may provide useful information about adult learners' rights, available funding, or other services, such as counselling and career guidance. EAEA mentions that representation is critical for adult education providers. A horizontal collaboration may strengthen their voice and arise essential issues, such as the lack of social recognition about their work or under-funding. Other local organisations and institutions can bring certain adult groups like prisoners, refugees, or elders, closer to education. So, support can be provided from different actors, and a meaningful collaboration can be only beneficial for adult learners.

As stated above, one of the most significant challenges is to engage and motivate low-skilled adults in education and training. Having in mind that most of them do not carry any positive experiences of previous learning, instruction practices should be adjusted accordingly. More learner-centred approaches, hands-on learning or problem-solving oriented activities linked to the context/workplace of the individual might add more value to them. Moreover, providing flexibility on the curriculum for each one to adapt and format their courses (on-job training modules) might be more attractive. Modular learning offers the ability to learners to shape their learning path, adding credits or part-qualifications to their learning portfolio. The modernization of education and training provision and the exploitation of innovative learning strategies and means could add to the quality and effectiveness of the sector.

Another important issue that arose from the research analysis is the provision of meaningful learning based on learners' previous knowledge. Basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills or soft skills like communication, time management, responsibility and work-readiness are often not included in adult education programmes, despite being among the competences that low-skilled adult learners mostly need. However, having a group of students of different aptitude and diverse characteristics requires advanced teaching skills from the educator. Differentiation and functionality consist of two teaching practices, challenging to be balanced in reality. For that reason, the best trainers for the least qualified learners is a common suggestion among partner countries.

In addition, flexibility is one of the primary needs that should be respected when designing programmes for low-skilled adults. This might mean, for example, shifting the venues or schedules according to learners' needs or considering the options of face to face and online learning, if deemed feasible.



Notably, the professional status of adult educators is not at the highest level in most countries. This has a negative impact on the perceived quality of their services, even if adult education programmes are designed to correspond to a range of formal criteria and provide a certificate upon completion. Maintaining quality requires continuous monitoring, development, and evaluation of their strategies. Quality assurance structures are not always correctly handled by adult education providers, while in-service training of trainers is insufficient. Adult educators need to seize any opportunities available for certification and professional development.

The process of recognition, validation and certification of learners' skills is not well established yet around Europe. While some countries have done more significant steps than others (e.g. Ireland), there is a general need to accelerate and promote those mechanisms. Adult educators can provide structural support and guidance to this, either pre-assessing existing skills of learners or equipping them with qualifications according to their National Qualification Framework. Recognition of skills may benefit individuals (increase motivation), employers (indications for matching roles for productivity) and economy (improve labour market functioning through transparency and mobility).

According to the findings, there is a severe gap in digital literacy among low-skilled adults. This does not allow them to get informed about existing opportunities, attend digital-friendly sessions (i.e. blended learning) or confidently compete in the labour market. At the same time, digital competence is expected to play a crucial role in job retention and transition. Adult education providers could consider and pay special attention to digital competences by involving them within their teaching activities and practices.

Despite the plethora of challenges and fragmentation of the adult education sector, partner countries have identified some successful examples as well. Taking into account that no solution works for everyone, a transnational exchange of best practices is a crucial element in improving strategies. For instance, it was reported that in some cases, scientific committees are set up to develop strategies or programmes upon discussion. In other instances, off-the-shelf programmes could be bought from external providers or course outlines could be obtained from other institutions. Professional learning tools, approaches, resources and other solutions can also be shared and borrowed within a 'code of good practices'.

The research presented in this report has provided valuable and insightful information. DIMA 2.0 partners are convinced that these findings can contribute to the creation of a useful toolkit for developing strategies in adult education provision. The next section includes the proposed structure of this toolkit based on this report.



Recommendations

This report has verified that adult education is a fragmented sector across Europe. European countries are still experiencing problems in harmonising and coordinating different areas of Education and Training. Participation in adult education varies significantly across the Member States and regions in Europe. The research held by the partner organisations of the DIMA 2.0 project displays in-depth the challenges and contextual factors that contribute to this. Despite the conditions, this analysis provides resourceful information and understanding of the field that can help adult education providers on the development of their strategies. The toolkit will encircle a step by step process for adult education providers to develop strategies, with a focus on low-skilled adults. The proposed structured is presented below:

DIMA 2.0 Toolkit Sections	
1	Introduction to adult education strategies
2	Profile and characteristics of low-skilled adults
3	Conducting needs analysis
4	Mapping stakeholders and facilitating participation
5	Adapting programmes to the characteristics of low-skilled adults
6	Designing programmes with a focus on low-skilled adults
7	Developing and implementing programmes
8	Monitoring, evaluation and improving strategies
9	Recognition, validation, and certification
10	Digital competency framework for organisations and educators
11	Examples of strategies for adult education



References

AONTAS (2009). *Flower Power: Women's Community Education QAF 2009*. Available at: https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Community-Education/flower_power_womens_community_education_qaf.pdf

AONTAS (2018). *Upskilling Pathways Recommendation Reaching Target Groups through Community Education*. www.aontas.com. Accessed 19 May 2020.

AONTAS-The Voice of Adult Learning (2019, August 30). *Widening Participation: Ireland and the European Agenda for Adult Learning*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aontas.com/knowledge%2Fblog%2Fwidening-participation-ireland-and-the-european-agenda-for-adult-learning>

Broek, S. and Buiskool, B-J. (2013). *Developing the Adult Learning Sector. Quality in the Adult Learning Sector (Lot 1)*. Final report. Panteia. https://oe-cert.at/media/Enquete2016/Study_quality_Broek_Buiskol_2013.pdf

Bron, A. & Jarvis, P. (2008). Identities of Adult Educators: Changes in Professionalism. In E. Nuissl & S. Lattke (Eds.) *Qualifying adult learning professionals in Europe* (pp. 33-44). Bielefeld, Germany: W. Bertelsmann Verlag.

Cabus, S. et al. (2019). *Analytical report of the associations between system characteristics and lifelong learning participation with particular concern for disadvantaged groups and youth at risk of exclusion*. ENLIVEN project. To be published.

CEDEFOP (2020). *Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways*. Volume 1. Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3081_en.pdf

Cedefop (2020). *On the way to 2020: data for vocational education and training policies. Indicator overviews: 2019 update*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Cedefop research paper; No 76. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/62708>

CEIC Data (2020). *Cyprus Real GDP Growth*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/cyprus/real-gdp-growth>

Central Intelligence Agency (2020, April 01). *The World Factbook*. Retrieved from CIA: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cy.html>

Central Statistics Office (2018, August 29). *Adult Education Survey 2017*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/aes/adulteducationsurvey2017/>



Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation & Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. (2013). International assessment of adult competencies: presentation of PIAAC results. Retrieved from: http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/files/keea/Research/PIAAC_Presentation.pdf

Citizens information (2019, July 8). *Adult education*. Retrieved from: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning_to_education/adult_education.html

Citizens information (2020, Dec 3). *Returning to Education*. Retrieved from: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning_to_education/

Citizens information (2020, March 25). *Education and training supports*. Retrieved from: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational_education_and_training/continuing_education_and_training.html

CyQF (n.d.). *The Cyprus Qualification Framework Level Descriptors*. Retrieved from: http://archeia.moec.gov.cy/mc/182/cygf_level_descriptors.pdf

Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE) (2016). *DIE Survey: Das Personal in der Weiterbildung*. Bielefeld 2016.

DIMA project (2016). *State of the Art in Adult Education Strategies, Policies, and Tools*. Available at: <http://www.dima-project.eu/resources/deliverables/Dima-TransnationalReport.pdf>

Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development. (2014). *National Strategy 2014-2020 for Life Long Learning*. Nicosia: Press and Information Office.

EAEA (2011). *Country report Spain*. (Helsinki). Retrieved from: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/spain_country-report-on-adult-education-in-spain.pdf.

EAEA (2018). *Partnerships and cooperations in adult learning: background paper*. Available at: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Policy-paper-on-partnerships-and-cooperations_final.pdf

EAEA (2019). *Adult Education in Europe 2019: A Civil Society View*. Available at: <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

EAEA (2019a). *European Commission's stocktaking report on Upskilling Pathways: EAEA's reaction and further recommendations*. Available at <https://eaea.org/2019/03/28/european-commissions-stocktaking-report-upskilling-pathways-eaeas-reaction-recommendations/>



EAEA (2019b). Life skills and participation in adult learning: policy paper. Available at https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Life-skills-and-participation-in-adult-learning_December-2019.pdf

EAEA (2020). BLUESS - Blueprints for basic skills development in Slovakia. Basic skills development in selected countries: state-of-play report. Unpublished

EAEA (n.d.). *European Agenda for Adult Learning*. Retrieved from: <https://eaea.org/our-work/influencing-policy/monitoring-policies/european-agenda-for-adult-learning/>

European Commission (2015). *Improving Policy and Provision for Adult Learning in Europe*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/library/reports/policy-provision-adult-learning_en.pdf

European Commission (2018). *Education and Training Monitor 2018 – Country analysis: Cyprus*. Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/cyprus/sites/cyprus/files/2018_etm_cy.pdf

European Commission (2019). Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults Taking stock of implementation measures. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/implementation-report-upskilling-pathways_en.pdf

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

European Commission (n.d.). *EU policy in the field of adult learning*. Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/eu-policy-in-the-field-of-adult-learning_en

European Commission, EACEA (Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture) and Eurydice. (2013). *Funding of Education in Europe: The Impact of the Economic Crisis. Eurydice Report*. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/147EN.pdf.

Eurostat (2018). *Adult participation in Learning*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20190517-1>

Eurostat (2020a). *Adult Learning Survey 2016 data*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/data/database>

Eurostat (2020b). *Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and age*. Available at: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>



Eurostat (2020c). *Individuals' Level of Digital Skills*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

Eurydice (2019a, June 10). *Cyprus: Adult Education and training Funding*. Retrieved from European Commission: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/cyprus/adult-education-and-training-funding_en

Eurydice (2019b, December 26). *Cyprus: Populations: Demographics Situation, Languages and Religions*. Retrieved from European Commission: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-15_en

Eurydice (2020, January 22). *Ireland*. Retrieved from European Commission: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-funding-37_en

Eurydice (2020, May 04). *Spain*. Retrieved from European Commission: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/spain_en

FiBS and DIE (2013). *Developing the Adult Learning Sector – Financing the Adult Learning Sector*. Available at: http://arhiv.acs.si/porocila/Financing_the_Adult_Learning_Sector-final_report.pdf

FinALE (2018). *Invest in adult learning. Executive summary of the outcomes of the FinALE project*. Available at: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Finale_summary_a5_English-online.pdf

Gravani, M. & Ioannidou, A. (2014): *Adult and Continuing Education in Cyprus*. Bielefeld DOI 10.3278/37/0575w

Hourigan, Niamh, and Maria Campbel (2010). *The TEACH Report Traveller Education and Adults: Crisis, Challenge and Change*. NATC, 2010.

HRDA (2017). *Forecasts of Employments Needs in the Cyprus Economy 2017-2027*. Retrieved from: http://www.anad.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/page/project/p_id/404

HRDA (2018). *Annual Report 2018 (Greek)*. Retrieved from: http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/ANAD_ANUAL%20REPORT%202018.pdf

Joint Committee on Education and Skills (2019). *Report on Education Inequality & Disadvantage and Barriers to Education*. Houses of the Oireachtas, May 2019.



Kil, M. et al. (2013). *Outreach – Empowerment – Diversity Collection, Presentation and Analysis of Good Practice Examples from Adult Education Leading towards an Inclusive Society*. OED network. Available at: https://www.oed-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/oed-collection-of-good-practice-report_26-04_final-2.pdf

Korelli, Y; Kyriacou-Liveri, C; Theocharous, A. (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe – Cyprus*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports (2018).

Kozyra et al. (2017). *The status of adult learning and education in Europe and North America*. CONFINTEA VI: Mid-term review 2017. Regional report. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg.

Life Skills for Europe (LSE) (2018). *Learning Framework*. Available at: <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/LSE-Capabilities-Framework-FINAL-WITH-CC.pdf>

MCIT (2020, March 16). *Cyprus in brief: Economic Environment*. Retrieved from: http://www.businessincyprus.gov.cy/mcit/psc/psc.nsf/eke17_en/eke17_en?OpenDocument

Ministry of Education & Culture (2017b). *The Referencing of the Cyprus Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning: National Report*. Retrieved from: <http://archeia.moec.gov.cy/mc/182/cyqf-referencing-report.pdf>

Ministry of Education and Culture (2017a). *Annual Report 2017*. Retrieved from: http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/annual_reports/annual_report_2017_en.pdf

Ministry of Education and Culture (2018). *Annual Report 2018 (Greek)*. Retrieved from: http://www.moec.gov.cy/etisia-ekthesi/pdf/annual_report_2018_gr.pdf

Ministry of Finance, Cyprus (2020, March 03). *Economic Indicators: Macroeconomics*. Retrieved from: <http://mof.gov.cy/en/economic-indicators/macroeconomics/main-economic-indicators/gdp-growth-rate-2013q1-2019q4>

OECD (2018). *Educational Policy Outlook: Spain*. Available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm

OECD (2019). *Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning*. Retrieved from: www.oecd.org/employment/emp/engaging-low-skilled-adults-2019.pdf

OECD (2019). *Getting Skills Right: Future-Ready Adult Learning Systems*. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/employment/getting-skills-right-future-ready-adult-learning-systems-9789264311756-en.htm>



OECD (2019a). Skills Matter: Additional Results from the Survey of Adult Skills, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1f029d8f-en>.

OECD (2019b). Getting Skills Right: Engaging low - skilled adults in learning. Retrieved from: www.oecd.org/employment/emp/engaging-low-skilled-adults-2019.pdf

OECD (2020). *Education GPS: Spain*. Retrieved from: <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=ESP&treshold=10&topic=EO>. Date of access: 04/05/2020

Przybylska, E. (2008). Pathways to Becoming an Adult Education Professional in Europe. In E. Nuijss & S. Lattke (Eds.) *Qualifying adult learning professionals in Europe* (pp. 87-100). Bielefeld, Germany: W. Bertelsmann Verlag.

QQI (2018). *National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)*. Retrieved from: [https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-\(NFQ\).aspx](https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx)

Research voor Beleid & Plato (2008). *Adult Learning Professions in Europe, a Study on Current Situation, Trends and Issues, final report*. Zoetermeer. <http://www.ginconet.eu/sites/default/files/library/ALPINE.pdf>

Research voor Beleid. (2010). *Key competences for adult learning professionals*. http://www.frae.is/media/22268/Kennarafaerni-2010_1168938254.pdf

Schuller, T. and D. Watson. (2009). *Learning Through Life. Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning*. NIACE, Leicester.

Social Justice Ireland (2020, April 9). *COVID-19 Is a Significant Risk to Progress on Educational Disadvantage*. Retrieved from: www.socialjustice.ie, 9 Apr. 2020, www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/covid-19-significant-risk-progress-educational-disadvantage. Accessed 20 May 2020.

Spunout (2016, October 14). *Community Education: The non-formal approach to education*. Retrieved from: https://spunout.ie/education/article/community-education?gclid=CjwKCAiA-vLyBRBWEiwAzOkGVBMnCVWY3e8rX9fsmZShm-NqdUz2D6oXON1FELgHq4iID2VhEshaoxoCMPAQAvD_BwE

Spunout (2016, October 14). *The Education, Training and Development Option for jobseekers*. Retrieved from: <https://spunout.ie/employment/article/education-training-and-development-option>



Spunout (2016, September 21). *What is the Back to Education Initiative?*. Retrieved from: <https://spunout.ie/employment/article/back-to-education-initiative>

Statistical Service (2018). *Adult Education Survey 2016*. Ministry of Finance, Republic of Cyprus.

Statistical Service (2019). *Demographics Statistics 2018*. Ministry of Finance, Republic of Cyprus

Statistical Service (2020a). *Unemployment 2020*. Ministry of Finance, Republic of Cyprus

Statistical Service (2020b). *Statistics of Education 2017/2018*. Ministry of Finance, Republic of Cyprus

Stevenson, A. et al. (2016). *Citizens' Curriculum Phase 2 project report. Learning and Work Institute*. Available at: <https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CC-Phase-2-interim-evaluation-report-FINAL.pdf>

The Irish Times (2017, September 26). *Navigating the world of adult further education and training*. Retrieved from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/navigating-the-world-of-adult-further-education-and-training-1.3227747>

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2019). *4th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education. Leave No One Behind: Participation, Equity and Inclusion*. Available at: http://uil.unesco.org/system/files/grale_4_final.pdf



Annexes

Annex 1: Questionnaire for adult learners

Name/Surname (Optional): Age (Optional): Country*: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Belgium <input type="checkbox"/> Cyprus <input type="checkbox"/> Ireland <input type="checkbox"/> Spain <input type="checkbox"/> Switzerland <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
Organisation responsible for the survey*: Level of education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Compulsory Education <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate - PhD 	
1. Are you aware of any adult education programmes in your country?	Yes: No:
1.1. If yes, please note some below:	
2. Have you participated in any adult education programme in the past five years?	Yes: No:
2.1. If yes:	
2.1.1. What was the last programme you have participated in?	
2.1.2. How did you find out about this programme?	<input type="checkbox"/> by e-mail <input type="checkbox"/> via social media <input type="checkbox"/> via television/radio <input type="checkbox"/> by post <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
2.1.3. What was the main reason for participating in an adult education programme?	

<p>2.1.4. Who provided the programme (Ministry of Education, Private Institute, Ministry of Labour etc.)?</p>	
<p>2.1.5. Did your employer cover a part/the full amount of the programmes' fees?</p>	<p>Yes: No:</p>
<p>2.1.6. Where do/did the lessons take/took place?</p>	
<p>2.1.7. What time of the day do/did the lessons take/took place?</p>	
<p>2.1.8. What days of the week do/did the lessons take/took place?</p>	
<p>2.1.9. Does/Did the programme provide some kind of certification in the end of the lessons?</p>	<p>Yes: No:</p>
<p>2.1.10. What kind of evaluation did the programme offer at the end of the lessons?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Test <input type="checkbox"/> Oral Exam <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>
<p>2.2. If no:</p>	
<p>2.2.1. What was the reason for not participating in any adult education programmes?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I am not aware of any adult education programmes in my area <input type="checkbox"/> I am not interested in participating in an adult education programme <input type="checkbox"/> I don't get informed on time for adult education programmes <input type="checkbox"/> The time of the lessons is not suitable for my working schedule</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> The time of the lessons is not suitable for family responsibilities <input type="checkbox"/> The location of the lessons is not suitable for me to attend <input type="checkbox"/> The programmes do not respond to my needs <input type="checkbox"/> The cost of the lessons' fees is too high <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
3. Do you consider adult education programmes in your country in line with the labour's needs?	Yes: No:
4. Do you consider adult education programmes as a way to avoid unemployment?	Yes: No:
5. Do you believe that employers should provide training for their employees?	Yes: No:
6. Would your employer cover a part/the full amount of the fees of an education programme related to your work?	Yes: No:
7. What kind of programmes do you think should have been available?	<input type="checkbox"/> Programmes for the development of Digital Skills <input type="checkbox"/> Programmes for the development of Communication Skills <input type="checkbox"/> Language lessons <input type="checkbox"/> Programmes for the development of Technical Skills <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
8. What kind of programmes would you like to participate in in the future?	
9. Which days of the week would you prefer for an adult education programme?	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekdays <input type="checkbox"/> Weekends
10. What time of the day would be the ideal for you to participate in an adult education programme?	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning (7:00-12:00) <input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon (12:00-18:00) <input type="checkbox"/> Evening (18:00-12:00)

<p>11. Which of the following ways of learning would you prefer?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Face to Face <input type="checkbox"/> Online <input type="checkbox"/> Blended</p>
<p>12. Have you taken any online lessons/webinars in the past?</p>	<p>Yes: No: </p>
<p>13. Have you used any mobile application for learning in the past?</p>	<p>Yes: No: </p>
<p>14. Have you used any online lessons (MOOCs or other) in the past?</p>	<p>Yes: No: </p>
<p>15. How would you liked to get informed about new adult education programmes?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> by e-mail <input type="checkbox"/> via social media <input type="checkbox"/> via television/radio <input type="checkbox"/> by post <input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>

Annex 2: Interview protocol for adult educators

Name of interviewer	
Date	
Nationality	
Age	
Name of interviewee (and company, university, authority etc. they represent)	
Challenges and needs	
1. What are the main challenges with regards to adult education programmes in your country?	
Answer:	
2. What are the main challenges with regards to teaching to low skilled and low qualified adults?	
Answer:	
3. What are the tools/methods you use to identify the needs of your programmes?	
Answer:	
4. What are the tools/methods that you use in the development of your learning programmes?	
Answer:	

5. Are there tools that would help you improve your learning offer but are not available because of price/location?
Answer:
Participation of adults
1. What are the main challenges that you face regarding adult participation?
Answer:
2. How adults' participation in adult education and training can be further enhanced at the local, regional, and national level?
Answer:
3. Do you think that the learning needs of all adults are met? If yes, how you ensure this? If not, what kind of resources do you think should be developed?
Answer:
4. How do you ensure equal access and participation of adults in adult education and training (e.g. migrants, elderly people, low skilled adults etc.)
Answer:
5. What motivates adults learners?
Answer:
6. What are adult's barriers to learning?

Answer:
7. What might encourage adults to learn in the future?
Answer:
8. What are the factors that would make adult learning more attractive?
Answer:
Other issues
1. How can quality assurance of the field be ensured?
Answer:
2. Is the financing of the sector (either public or private) effectively managed or further actions should be taken to increase its efficiency?
Answer:
3. Do you think that the level of cooperation among the several stakeholders of the field is satisfactory?
Answer:
Policy priorities
1. Are you aware of policies, programmes, or other initiatives related to adult education and training?
Answer:

2. If yes, what kinds of statistical data and information are useful in addressing these policy priorities?
Answer:

