# BUILDING NATIONAL ALE REGISTRIES IN EUROPE

## Frameworks, Insights, and Needs for Supporting Individual Learning Accounts

**RALExILA**

NATIONAL REGISTERS OF ADULT LEARNING
TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS

## PROJECT DETAILS

| | |
|---|---|
| **Acronym** | RALExILA |
| **Full name** | **National Registries of Adult Learning and Education to support the deployment of Individual Learning Accounts** |
| **Project Number** | 101132300 |
| **TITLE OF PUBLICATION** | **BUILDING NATIONAL ALE REGISTRIES IN EUROPE – FRAMEWORKS, INSIGHTS, AND NEEDS FOR SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS** |
| **Title and number of WorkPachage** | WP2 Research and needs analysis |
| **Deliverable name:** | DEL 2.1 Report on framework, content and needs analysis for the Implementation of national registries for ALE in Europe |
| **Coordination:** | Algebra University |
| **Authors** | Aneta Golebiowska, Elena Pavić, Leo Mršić (Algebra University) Viola Pinzi, Greta Pelucco, Lisa Marie Steinkampf (EAEA) Stefan Jahnke, Jasmina Poličnik, Martina Darmanin (KIC) Xanthia Aristidou (CARDET) Klaudius Šilhár (AIVD) |
| **Contributors/reviewers** | Maja Brkljacic (Algebra University) Raffaela Kihrer (EAEA) Stefan Jahnke (KIC) Xanthia Aristidou (CARDET) Michal Deneš (AIVD) |
| **Creative Commons Licensing** | This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. CC BY-NC 4.0 |
| **Date of Publication** | December 16, 2024 |

LEAD PARTNER/AUTHOR
**Algebra University**

# ABSTRACT

This research report covers ten European countries – Cyprus, Croatia, Malta, Slovakia, France, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal, and Finland – each with unique educational frameworks, governance practices and socio-economic contexts. These different frameworks allow for a comparative analysis that reveals both common challenges and region-specific innovations. The main objective of the study is to identify the current gaps in the ALE registers of these countries, with a focus on governance, quality assurance and ease of access. As the report demonstrates, the European countries included in this study have taken different and tailored approaches to improving their ALE systems through financial incentives, management frameworks, quality standards and targeted programmes. However, further improvements are needed to ensure equitable access, increase participation and meet the changing demands of the digital and knowledge economy.

# Table of content

# List of figures

Co-funded by
the European Union

## List of tables

## Annex

# Introduction

The RALExILA (National Registries of Adult Learning and Education to support the deployment of Individual Learning Accounts) project is a strategic initiative to investigate and strengthen the structures that support adult learning (ALE) across Europe, with a particular focus on the potential of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs). At a time when rapid technological advances, changing labour market demands and evolving skills requirements are creating new challenges for lifelong learning, this project responds to the urgent need for adaptable, user-centered systems that can support adult learners to improve their knowledge, skills and employability. By examining national ALE registers and models for the integration of ILAs, this research aims to offer a comprehensive roadmap for education policy makers, institutions and other stakeholders to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and engagement of ALEs.

The research covers ten European countries – Cyprus, Croatia, Malta, Slovakia, France, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal, and Finland – each with unique educational frameworks, governance practices and socio-economic contexts. These different frameworks allow for a comparative analysis that reveals both common challenges and region-specific innovations. The main objective of the study is to identify the current gaps in the ALE registers of these countries, with a focus on governance, quality assurance and ease of access. Particular attention will be paid to understanding the motivations, objectives and resource needs that influence the implementation of ILAs and their integration into existing adult education systems.

*Research objectives and scope*

The primary objective of this research is to generate actionable insights that can drive the design and implementation of user-centered ALE registries and improve the accessibility of ILAs for adult learners. This includes understanding and evaluating the structural and operational aspects of ALE registries, from governance frameworks to data quality and utilization, as well as assessing the readiness of various stakeholders – including adult learners, educators, policy makers, and employers – to use these systems.

Specific research objectives include:

1. **Mapping the structure** and current functionality of ALE registers in ten national contexts to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.

2. **Investigate existing strategies** and models for the use of ILA within ALE systems to assess their effectiveness and scalability.

3. **Evaluate perspectives and awareness** of ALE registers and ILAs, focusing on understanding the experiences, needs and barriers perceived by adult learners and employers.

4. **To develop recommendations** for the design of ALE registers that are inclusive, user-friendly and in line with both local and transnational policy objectives.

To achieve these objectives, the study follows a mixed methods approach, including desk research, focus groups, in-depth interviews, surveys and design thinking workshops. This approach enables us to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex and interdependent elements that shape ALE systems and ILA practices.

*Methodological approach*

The methodology of the study includes several research methods aimed at collecting data from different sources and stakeholders to ensure the robustness and depth of the results.

**Desk Research:** Desk research conducted at the European level and in ten countries forms the basis of this study as it provides insights into the current state of ALE systems and ILAs. It includes a comprehensive review of existing reports, policy documents and research articles detailing the educational landscape, challenges and opportunities in each country. This phase of the study also allowed for the identification of twenty specific ALE practices, which are analysed in detail to highlight best practices and identify gaps.

**Focus groups:** Focus groups were organized in four countries (Cyprus, Croatia, Malta and Slovakia) with small groups of eight to ten participants representing different target groups, including adult learners, educators, policy makers and employers. The aim of these discussions was to capture nuanced views on ALE and ILAs and to explore participants' experiences, motivations and perceived barriers. The results of the focus groups serve as a prelude to the design thinking workshops to build rapport between participants and encourage openness in later stages.

**In-depth interviews:** The in-depth interviews were conducted in all ten participating countries allow for a personal exploration of personal insights, motivations and expertise. In each partner country (Cyprus, Croatia, Malta and Slovakia), three to five people were interviewed whose knowledge is crucial to understanding ALE systems and ILAs. This method is particularly valuable for gaining a detailed understanding of local challenges, governance issues and gaps in data availability.

**Surveys:** The survey phase was Conducted in all ten countries and aimed to collect quantitative data from a wide audience. Adult learners and employers were the key target groups as their insights provide information on awareness, use and perceptions of ALE registers and ILAs. By identifying patterns, satisfaction levels and knowledge gaps, the survey results help to develop targeted information campaigns and improve register presentation.

**Design thinking workshops:** Held in four countries (Cyprus, Croatia, Malta and Slovakia), the workshops aimed to foster creative, solution-oriented discussions with various stakeholders. Divided into Discover, Empathize and Define phases, the workshops guided participants through a structured process to generate ideas, deepen understanding of learners' needs and define clear problem statements. The goal was to develop practical, innovative strategies that can support the creation of engaging ALE registers and improve ILA integration.

*Significance of the study*

The RALExILA project aims to provide valuable insights and actionable recommendations for the adult education sector. The results of conducted research are of great benefit to policy makers and educational institutions by providing evidence-based guidance for the development of ALE systems and the integration of ILAs. By considering critical factors such as governance, quality assurance and stakeholder engagement, this research provides strategies for building ALE registers that meet the needs of adult learners and support lifelong learning.

From a practical perspective, this research is expected to raise adult learners' awareness of the opportunities offered by ILAs and enable them to participate in ALE schemes with a clearer understanding of the potential benefits. Employers, as key stakeholders, will gain insight into the ways in which ALEs and ILAs can contribute to workforce development and skills enhancement, promoting a culture of lifelong learning within organizations.

# ALE in the European Union

Adult education is crucial in shaping Europe's future. It provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to become active, responsible citizens who can positively impact their surroundings, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable future for all. It is essential not only for personal growth but also for the advancement of communities and society as a whole. Adult learning addresses labour market needs by offering opportunities for retraining and upskilling, while also promoting social inclusion and the well-being of individuals and society.

The primary aim of this segment of the study, conducted as part of the RALExILA, is to explore and address the changing landscape of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) and Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) within the European Union (EU). The research seeks to enhance our understanding of the theoretical and policy aspects surrounding the implementation of ALE registries and ILA systems, with a focus on governance structures, quality assurance practices, and data/information models. By analysing the current situation in selected EU countries, the study aims to identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities to improve the integration and effectiveness of ALE and ILA initiatives at the EU level. It also serves as a basis for a European-wide model on the implementation of ILAs developed through the RALExILA project.

This study encompasses a detailed analysis of databases, governance frameworks, quality assurance mechanisms, and information models pertinent to Adult Learning and Education (ALE), along with the implementation of Individual Learning Account (ILA) systems across the European Union. The research will examine the progress of ILA systems supporting adult learning up until 2024, incorporating historical context where relevant. However, the study may face limitations due to data availability, and its geographical scope may affect the broader applicability of the findings to regions not included in the research.

To supplement the study, an overview of the statistical data on formal, non-formal and informal education has been compiled, which is attached to this report as Annex 1.

In addition, the results of two surveys of employees and learners are attached to this report as Annex 2.

This study will enhance the existing body of knowledge on lifelong learning policies and systems within the EU, offering valuable insights into the development, integration, and effectiveness of ALE registers and ILA systems. The findings will help identify effective strategies for improving adult learning and education through technological advancements and policy innovation.

Adult Learning and Education (ALE) is a crucial element of the European Union's strategy to promote lifelong learning among its citizens. It aims to boost participation in all forms of adult learning (formal, non-formal, and informal), enabling individuals to gain new professional skills, support personal development, and foster active citizenship. The *European agenda for adult learning*[1] provides the policy framework for ALE development by 2030, setting targets to help EU Member States raise participation rates in adult learning.

The *Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning*[2] adopted by the Council of the European Union underlines the importance of inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications. This is particularly important as the EU strives to reach its target of 60% of all adults participating in continuing

---

[1] https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/adult-learning/adult-learning-initiatives

[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01)

Co-funded by
the European Union

education and training each year by 2030, which is part of the *European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*.[3]

As part of the *European Skills Agenda*[4], the EU has introduced the *Upskilling Pathways*[5] recommendation, which aims to allow adults to improve their skills and employability through a structured approach to upskilling. This includes provision for adults with low skills and qualifications to access training to improve their basic skills and achieve an upper secondary qualification or equivalent (European Microfinance Network[6]).

ILAs are another innovative mechanism introduced by the EU to give individuals the opportunity to upskill and improve their skills. ILAs provide people of working age with a budget to spend on training to improve their employability.[7] The implementation of ILAs has been recognized as a way to make the right to education tangible for all, provided that EU Member States are more committed to this initiative.

These initiatives are supported by the work of organizations such as the *European Association for the Education of Adults* (EAEA)[8], which publishes resources and recommendations to promote adult education and influence policy, and the *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD)[9], which researches and promotes adult education and basic skills development.

This research aims to explore the strategic role of ALE and ILAs within the EU's broader vision of promoting a learning society in which lifelong learning is accessible to all adults. By examining these initiatives, the research will provide insights into the theoretical and practical aspects of ALE and ILA and contribute to the understanding of how adult learning can be effectively supported at the EU level.

The main purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of ALE and ILA in the EU and to highlight their importance, policy framework and practical implications. This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Analysing the theoretical underpinnings of ALE.** Building on seminal works such as *The Palgrave International Handbook on Adult and Lifelong Education and Learning* (2018)[10] and *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning The theory & practice* (2018)[11], this study aims to examine the theoretical underpinnings of ALE in the EU context. By studying key concepts and definitions related to ALE, a nuanced understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and their implications for lifelong learning strategies will be created.

2. **Examining the EU policy framework in relation to ALE.** By analysing documents such as the *European agenda for adult learning*[12], this study seeks to describe the overarching policy

---

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1606&langId=en

[4] Ibidem

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

[6] https://www.european-microfinance.org

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12876-Adult-skills-Individual-Learning-Accounts-a-tool-to-improve-access-to-training_en

[8] https://eaea.org/our-resources/publications/

[9] https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/adult-learning-and-basic-skills.htm

[10] Milana M., Webb S., Holford J., Waller R., Jarvis P. (2018). The Palgrave International Handbook on Adult and Lifelong Education and Learning. Palgrave Macmillan

[11] Jarvis, P. (2010). Adult Education and Lifelong Learning The theory & practice. Routledge

[12] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01)

framework for ALE initiatives at EU level. It aims to identify the main policy priorities, strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting ALE as a fundamental component of lifelong learning strategies within the EU.

3. **Examining quality assurance mechanisms in ALE.** This part of the research aims to examine the quality assurance systems underpinning ALE initiatives within the EU. Drawing on frameworks such as the *European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training* (EQAVET)[13] and the *European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education* (EQAR)[14], the study aims to assess the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms in ensuring high quality ALE programmes and initiatives.

4. **Examining the sources of funding and initiatives for ALE**. By examining the sources of funding for ALE at EU level and selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU, this study aims to provide insights into the funding mechanisms supporting ALE within the EU. It seeks to identify the main funding sources, allocation mechanisms and initiatives that aim to promote access to ALE for all adult learners in the EU.

5. **Examining the role and effectiveness of ILA**. In addition to examining ALE, this research aims to examine the role of ILA as a facilitator of adult learning within the EU. By examining experiences and outcomes with ILA at EU level, the study aims to assess the effectiveness of ILA in enabling access to education funding and participation in lifelong learning activities.

In summary, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of ALE and ILA within the European Union, focusing on the theoretical underpinnings, policy framework, quality assurance mechanisms, funding sources and practical implications for lifelong learning strategies.

## Theoretical aspects of ALE

The theoretical aspects of ALE examine the basic principles and concepts underlying adult learning. They analyse the EU literature and theoretical foundations as well as the main concepts and definitions related to adult learning. This introduction provides a starting point for further exploration of the topic of adult learning.

### An overview of the EU literature on the theoretical foundations of ALE

ALE in the EU context draws on a range of theoretical perspectives, with a particular focus on those that align with EU objectives for adult learning. The following section examines how some of the key theories are interpreted and applied within the EU framework[15]:

**Andragogy.** The EU is guided by Knowles' principles of promoting learner autonomy and creating learning environments that cater for the diverse experiences and motivations of adults[16]. The European Commission *Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways* emphasizes the importance of providing adults with learning opportunities that are tailored to their individual needs and aspirations.[17]

---

[13] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1536

[14] https://www.ehea.info/page-eqar

[15] https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/adult-learning/about-adult-learning

[16] Knowles, M. (1984). Andragogy in action: Applying modern principles of adult learning. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

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

**Transformative Learning.** The EU recognizes the transformative potential of adult learning in promoting active citizenship and social inclusion. Eurydice, the information network for education in Europe, highlights the role of ALE in promoting critical thinking, active citizenship and social inclusion.[18]

**Experiential Learning.** The EU promotes learner-centred approaches that emphasize active participation and experiential learning. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) promotes learning by doing approaches in adult learning programmes.[19]

Building on the identified key theoretical perspectives of andragogy, transformative learning and experiential learning in the EU context, this study will take a closer look at how the EU literature addresses lifelong learning, social inclusion and skills development.

**Lifelong learning.** The concept of lifelong learning is enshrined in numerous EU documents and is a central pillar for ALE. In its *A New Skills Agenda for Europe* (2016), the European Commission emphasizes that lifelong learning is essential to equip all Europeans with the knowledge, skills and competences needed to navigate a rapidly changing world of work. [20] This focus on lifelong learning is reflected in the theoretical underpinnings of ALE in the EU. Learning environments for adults are seen as crucial components for promoting a culture of continuous learning throughout life. *The Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning* underlines the importance of ALE for the acquisition and development of key competences needed for a lifelong learning perspective.[21]

**Social inclusion.** Social inclusion is a core principle of the EU, and the literature emphasizes the role of ALE in promoting equal access to learning opportunities for all adults. The *Education and Training 2020* states that adult learning plays a crucial role in promoting social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.[22]

EU literature examines how ALE can address the particular challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, such as low-skilled adults, migrants and people with disabilities. The Eurydice report *Adult education and training in Europe: Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications* highlights the importance of designing ALE programmes to be accessible and meet the diverse needs of adult learners.[23]

**Skills development** Against the backdrop of a rapidly changing labour market, the EU is prioritizing adult learning to give people the skills they need to adapt and succeed. *The New Skills Agenda for Europe* emphasizes the need to invest in adult learning to ensure a skilled workforce that can drive innovation and growth.[24]

EU literature explores how ALE can provide adults with the opportunity to develop a range of skills, including technical skills, soft skills and digital skills. *The Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New*

---

[18] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/publications/adult-education-and-training-europe-building-inclusive-pathways-skills-and

[19] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en

[20] https://ec.europa.eu/social/skills-agenda

[21] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)

[22] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a1ffa181-8ac4-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1

[23] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/publications/adult-education-and-training-europe-building-inclusive-pathways-skills-and

[24] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en

*Opportunities for Adults* emphasizes the importance of providing adults with "learning opportunities that are tailored to the skills needs of the labour market.[25]

The theoretical underpinnings of ALE in the EU context are informed by a range of perspectives. However, there is a clear focus on theories that support learner autonomy, transformative learning, active participation and alignment with EU objectives such as lifelong learning, social inclusion and skills development. These theoretical underpinnings guide the development of policies and practices for ALE within the EU.

## Key concepts and definitions related to ALE.

In the EU, the term Adult Learning Education (ALE) encompasses a wide range of concepts and definitions that emphasise its important role in promoting lifelong learning and personal development. This section provides an overview of the main concepts and definitions related to ALE and highlights their importance and implications for adult learners in the EU context. The key concepts and definitions related to ALE support the validity of the main theories – including **andragogy, transformative learning, experiential learning and lifelong learning** – presented in the previous section. Other concepts and definitions related to ALE include:

**Situated learning**, proposed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, emphasizes the importance of social context in learning. This theory states that individuals learn best when they participate in communities of practice and engage in authentic activities and collaborative problem solving in their social and cultural environment.[26]

**Heutagogy**, a relatively new concept, emphasizes self-directed learning and learner autonomy. This approach encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own learning path, actively seek resources, set goals and adapt their learning strategies to their needs and interests.[27]

Understanding the key concepts and definitions related to lifelong learning is essential for policy makers and practitioners in designing effective learning interventions that meet the diverse needs of adult learners in the EU. By incorporating lifelong learning, learner-centred approaches and theories such as andragogy, transformative learning, experiential learning, situated learning and heutagogy, stakeholders can create inclusive and empowering learning environments that promote personal growth, social cohesion and economic prosperity.

Within the EU, the terms **adult learning** and **education** are used interchangeably to encompass all forms of adult learning. This broad terminology reflects the diverse learning needs and experiences of adults in different contexts and at different stages of their lives.[28]

The European Commission defines adult learning as a range of formal and informal learning activities, both general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.[29]

---

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

[26] Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge University Press.

[27] Hase, S., & Kenyon, C. (2000). From andragogy to heutagogy. Ultibase Articles, 5, 1-10.

[28] https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/adult-learning/adult-learning-initiatives
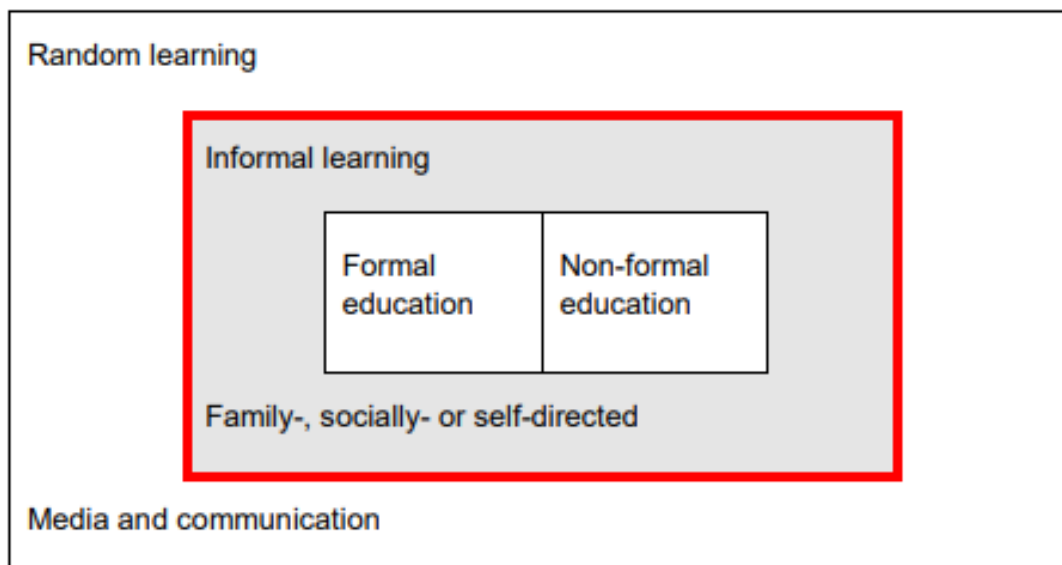
[29] Ibidem

*Figure 1. Scope of education and learning*

*Source: Classification of learning activities (CLA), Manual, 2016[30]*

The EU distinguishes between three main types of learning:

**Formal education** is defined as education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organisations and recognised private bodies, and constitutes the formal education system of a country. Formal education programmes are thus recognised as such by the relevant national education or equivalent authorities. Formal education consists mostly of initial education [...]. Vocational education, special needs education and some parts of adult education are often recognised as being part of the formal education system. Qualifications from formal education are by definition recognised and, therefore, are within the scope of International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). ISCED is the reference classification for organizing education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields. ISCED is a product of international agreement and adopted formally by the General Conference of UNESCO Member States. Institutionalised education occurs when an organisation provides structured educational arrangements, such as student-teacher relationships and/or interactions, that are specially designed for education and learning'. There is a clear hierarchy of qualifications granted by ISCED levels up to post-secondary non-tertiary education programmes (level 4). For tertiary education (levels 5 to 8), the pathways can be more complex.[31]

**Non-formal education** is defined as education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education within the process of lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided in order to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway structure; it may be short in duration and/or low-intensity; and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal education mostly

---

[30] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/7659750/KS-GQ-15-011-EN-N.pdf

[31] https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf

leads to qualifications that are not recognised as formal or equivalent to formal qualifications by the relevant national or sub-national education authorities or to no qualifications at all. Nevertheless, formal, recognised qualifications may be obtained through exclusive participation in specific non-formal education programmes; this often happens when the non-formal programme completes the competencies obtained in another context.[32]

**Informal learning** is defined as intentional, but it is less organised and less structured and may include for example learning events (activities) that occur in the family, in the work    place, and in the daily life of every person, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially directed basis.[33]

## Policy framework of ALE in the EU

The introduction of the ALE policy framework in the EU assumes that lifelong learning is crucial for the personal, social and professional development of citizens. The EU promotes policies to support access to adult learning that are linked to broader educational and social objectives. This framework includes a variety of programmes and initiatives aimed at increasing the availability, quality and effectiveness of adult learning across the region.

### Overview of EU policies and strategies related to ALE

EU has several policies and strategies to promote ALE[34]. These policies and strategies are designed to:

- Increase adult participation in learning;
- Improve the quality of ALE provision;
- Ensure that ALE is accessible to all adults, regardless of their background or circumstances;
- Promote the recognition of ALE qualifications and competences.

EU stated that individuals participate in adult learning for a variety of reasons, such as:

- **Enhance their employment prospects.** Learning new skills and knowledge can increase competitiveness in the labour market and increase the chances of getting a job or promotion.
- **Develop personally or professionally.** Adult learning can help individuals to develop their interests, talents and knowledge, leading to greater personal and professional satisfaction.
- **Obtain transferable skills, such as critical thinking.** Adult learning offerings often focus on developing transferable skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication, that can be applied in a variety of work and life situations.

EU has also pointed out that adult learning also contributes to society:

- **Improving social cohesion.** By providing opportunities for people from different backgrounds to learn together, ALE can promote social integration and understanding.

---

[32] Ibidem

[33] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3888793/5833561/KS-CC-05-005-EN.PDF.pdf/7175b7bb-2102-4204-a83c-f51d5d9b7532?t=1414779172000

[34] https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/adult-learning/about-adult-learning

- **Promoting active citizenship**. Equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to actively participate in their communities.

- **Improving the competitiveness of businesses and European economies** A skilled workforce is essential for economic growth and innovation.

With this in mind, the EU is pursuing a multi-pronged approach to supporting adult learning through various initiatives and programmes.
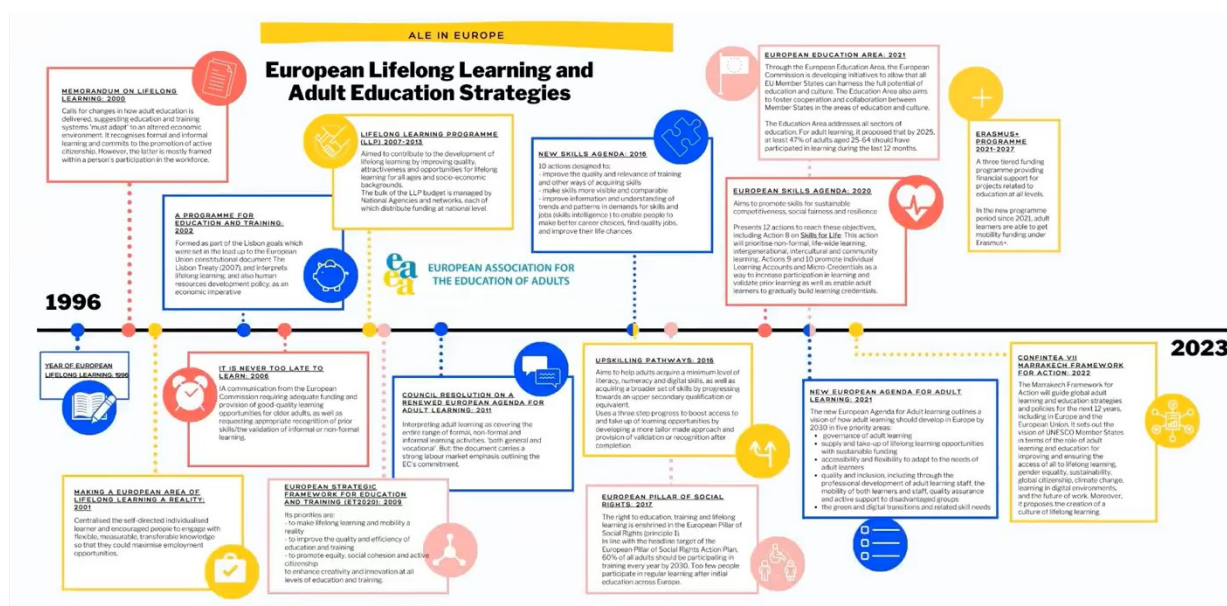


*Figure 2. European Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Strategies*

*Source: Webinar on New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030 and EU's New Skills Agenda[35]*

Key EU policies and strategies related to ALE chronologically include:

1. **DECISION No 2493/95 /EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL** establishing 1996 as the 'European year of lifelong learning' declaring 1996 to be the "European Year of Lifelong Learning".[36]

2. **Memorandum on Lifelong Learning.** The call for change in adult education which underlined the need for education and training systems to evolve in response to changing economic conditions. Both formal and informal learning is recognized, with a focus on promoting engaged citizenship. However, the focus was primarily on the engagement of individuals in the world of work.[37]

3. **COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning** a Reality which emphasizes the importance of empowering self-directed, individualized learners

---

[35] https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/LLL-ALE-policies-Europe_update-2022.pdf

[36] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31995D2493&from=EN

[37] https://arhiv.acs.si/dokumenti/Memorandum_on_Lifelong_Learning.pdf

and encouraging individuals to interact with adaptable, quantifiable and transferable knowledge to optimize their prospects for employment. [38]

4. **Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of Education and training systems in Europe.** Within the framework of the Lisbon objectives, which were set before the adoption of the European Union's constitutional document, the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), this initiative considers lifelong learning and human resources development policy as a crucial economic necessity.[39]

5. **COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION Adult learning** which emphasises that it is never too late to learn points to the need for sufficient funding and provision of high-quality learning opportunities tailored to older adults. It also calls for the appropriate recognition of prior learning and the validation of informal or non-formal learning experiences. [40]

6. **Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13** which aimed to promote lifelong learning by improving its quality, attractiveness and accessibility for all age groups and socio-economic backgrounds. [41]

7. **Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020').** Its core objectives included making lifelong learning and mobility a reality, improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training, promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, and fostering creativity and innovation at all levels of education and training.[42]

8. **Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning.** Comprehensive view of adult learning, encompassing formal, non-formal and informal learning efforts and including both general and vocational aspects. However, the focus of the document is strongly on the labour market, which underlines the European Commission's commitment in this area.[43]

9. **A NEW SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE.** Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness sets out a series of actions to improve the skills of the European workforce, including the promotion of adult learning.[44]

10. **COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults.** This Recommendation, adopted in 2019, provides guidance to Member States on the development of upskilling pathways for adults.[45]

11. **European Pillar of Social Rights.** The right to education, training and lifelong learning is enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights (Principle 1). An ambitious goal is for 60% of all adults to participate in further training every year by 2030.[46]

---

[38] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/committees/cult/20020122/com(2001)678_en.pdf

[39] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2d17e529-6c81-4b85-8d19-e9dbe65a93c0

[40] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52006DC0614&from=EN

[41] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/lifelong-learning-programme-2007-13.html

[42] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN

[43] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011G1220(01)&from=EN

[44] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0381

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

[46] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1606&langId=en

12. **EUROPEAN SKILLS AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVENESS, SOCIAL FAIRNESS AND RESILIENCE** aims to advocate for capabilities that contribute to sustainable competitiveness, social justice and resilience. It presents 12 initiatives to achieve these goals, among which Action 8 stands out with its focus on "Skills for Life". This initiative focuses on non-formal, holistic learning experiences, including intergenerational, intercultural and community-based learning. In addition, Actions 9 and 10 advocate the introduction of individual learning accounts and micro-credentials to increase learning readiness, validate prior learning and enable adult learners to progressively acquire evidence of learning. [47]

13. **COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS** Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies ensure that all EU Member States can harness the full potential of education and culture. In addition, it aims to promote cooperation and collaboration between Member States in the fields of education and culture. This covers all levels of education. Specifically for adult learning, the target is set that by 2025 at least 47% of adults aged 25 to 64 should have participated in learning activities in the previous 12 months.[48]

14. **Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030.** This resolution outlines a vision for the development of adult learning in Europe by 2030. It focuses on five key priority areas:

    - Governance – strong national strategies and stakeholder partnerships.

    - Supply and take-up – sustainable funding and accessible learning opportunities.

    - Accessibility and flexibility – adapting to the needs of adult learners.

    - Quality, equity, inclusion – professional development for adult learning staff, mobility of learners and staff, quality assurance and support for disadvantaged groups.

    - Green and digital transitions – addressing the skills needs associated with these transitions.[49]

15. **Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European education area and beyond** is meant to support EU Member States' efforts to improve national education and training systems with the help of complementary EU-level tools, mutual learning and the exchange of good practices using the open method of coordination. Up to 2030, achieving and further developing the EEA is the overarching political objective of the strategic framework.[50]

16. **The Erasmus+ programme** provides funding for a range of activities in the fields of education, training and youth, including adult learning.[51]

---

[47] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9723&furtherNews=yes#navItem-1

[48] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0268&from=EN

[49] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01)

[50] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/strategic-framework-for-european-cooperation-in-education-and-training-towards-the-european-education-area-and-beyond.html

[51] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu

17. **The European Social Fund** provides financial support for a range of activities in the fields of employment and social inclusion, including adult learning.[52]

18. **The Future of Europe's Competitiveness** proposes a new industrial strategy for Europe. The three main areas for action outlined in the report correspond to the three main transformations with which Europe must contend. One of these is that Europe needs to redress its slowing productivity growth by closing the innovation gap.[53]

19. **European Commission's report on employment and social developments in Europe** shows how [54]social investments and reforms can support competitiveness, economic growth and inclusion.

EU also supports ALE through several other initiatives, including:

- Career guidance. The EU supports career guidance services that help people plan their careers and make informed education, training and career decisions.

- Working Group on adult learning which supports Member States in implementing the EU's vision for adult learning.

- Network of National Coordinators for adult learning which promotes adult learning in their respective countries, provide policy advice and share best practise.[55]

EU is committed to promoting ALE through a range of policies and initiatives. The aim is to ensure that all adults have the opportunity to develop the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century and contribute to a more prosperous and inclusive Europe.

## Organizations and institutions responsible for ALE at EU level

Supporting the development of environments conducive to ALE is a common task of many organizations and institutions at the EU level. In this section the main institutions, their tasks and responsibilities in this area will be presented.

The **European Commission** is one of the main institutions responsible for defining policies and strategies in the field of adult learning in the EU. It oversees initiatives such as the European Education Area and the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

- The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC) is responsible for the development and implementation of EU policy in the field of education and training, including adult learning.[56]

- The European Lifelong Learning Platform (ELLP) is a website managed by the EAC that provides information and resources on ALE in Europe.[57]

The **European Parliament** contributes to the development of ALE policies and laws through its legislative and budgetary powers. It also monitors and scrutinizes EU initiatives in this area.

---

[52] https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en

[53] https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en

[54] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_4744

[55] https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/adult-learning/adult-learning-initiatives

[56] https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/education-youth-sport-and-culture_en

[57] https://www.lllplatform.eu

The Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) is responsible for education, training and youth issues, including adult learning.[58]

The European Parliament has adopted a number of resolutions on adult learning, including the 2021 resolution on a new European Agenda for Adult Learning.[59]

The **Council of the European Union** plays an important role in shaping ALE policies and initiatives in the EU. It works with other EU institutions to set priorities, set targets and allocate resources to promote lifelong learning and adult education in all Member States.[60]

- The Council of the European Union is responsible for adopting legislation and coordinating Member States' policies in areas such as education and training.

- The Council has adopted a number of conclusions on adult learning, including the 2021 conclusions on a new European Agenda for Adult Learning.

Other EU agencies and organizations:

- The **European Center for the Development of Vocational Training** (CEDEFOP) is a tripartite agency that provides information, expertise and advice to EU Member States and social partners in the field of vocational education and training.[61]

- The **Information Network on Education in Europe** (Eurydice) provides information and data on education systems and policies in Europe, including adult learning.[62]

- The **Statistical Office of the European Union** (EUROSTAT) provides data on a range of topics related to education and training, including adult learning.[63]

**European Training Foundation (ETF)** – While primarily focusing on the EU's neighbouring regions, ETF supports adult education policies and reforms and contributes to the development of lifelong learning strategies in line with EU standards.[64]

**European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** – An EU advisory body that provides opinions on policies related to adult learning and vocational education, particularly in relation to economic and social cohesion.[65]

**European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)** – A non-governmental organization representing adult education organizations across Europe, promoting ALE and lifelong learning at the European level.[66]

**EPALE – Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe** – EPALE is a European, multilingual, open membership community of adult learning professionals, including adult educators and trainers, guidance

---

[58] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/cult/home/highlights

[59] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01)

[60] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu

[61] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en

[62] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu

[63] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat

[64] https://www.etf.europa.eu/en

[65] https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en

[66] https://eaea.org

Co-funded by
the European Union

and support staff, researchers and academics, and policymakers. EPALE is funded by the Erasmus+ programme. It is part of the European Union's strategy to promote more and better learning opportunities for all adults.[67]

Several organizations and institutions at EU level are responsible for promoting and supporting ALE. These organizations and institutions work together to develop and implement policies, provide information and resources, and support research and innovation in ALE.

## Quality Assurance in ALE

Quality in ALE plays a key role in ensuring an effective and efficient learning process that meets the needs of adult learners. High quality standards are essential to ensure that ALE programmes are appropriately designed, implemented and evaluated. The EU and other international organizations attach great importance to the development of policies and practices that promote quality and continuous improvement in the field of adult learning.

Quality assurance in ALE in the EU is a crucial aspect of ensuring the effectiveness, relevance and credibility of educational programmes for adult learners. The EU places great emphasis on quality assurance mechanisms to promote lifelong learning opportunities and support the personal and professional development of adults across Europe.[68]

One of the most important EU initiatives related to quality assurance in ALE is **the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)**. EQAVET provides a common reference framework of principles, quality criteria and indicators to support quality assurance in VET systems across Europe. It aims to improve the quality of vocational education and training by promoting a culture of continuous improvement and transparency.[69]

The **European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)** on quality assurance in higher education play an important role in ensuring quality in ALE. These standards contain principles for internal quality assurance in higher education institutions, standards for external assessment by quality assurance agencies and criteria for the quality assurance agencies themselves. By complying with the ESG, HEIs can improve the quality of their educational programmes and services.[70]

Various **transnational projects and initiatives** in the EU focus on the development of quality assurance systems and tools for ALE. These projects aim to improve the quality of adult learning, promote innovation in teaching and learning practice and ensure the cross-border recognition of skills and qualifications.[71]

The **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** facilitates the recognition of qualifications and competences across EU countries. The EQF helps to ensure that adult education programmes meet certain quality standards and are comparable at European level.[72]

---

[67] https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/why-epale

[68] https://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/AdultEducation/en/ThematicWorkingGrouponQualityinAdultEducationFinalReport.pdf

[69] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1536

[70] https://ehea.info/page-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance

[71] https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Quality-Assurance-for-Adult-Learning.pdf

[72] https://europass.europa.eu/en/europass-digital-tools/european-qualifications-framework

The European Commission supports quality assurance in ALE through initiatives such as the **European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)**. These initiatives promote the development of quality assurance systems, the use of quality criteria and indicators and the exchange of best practice between EU Member States.[73]

**Adult Education Survey (AES)** coordinated by Eurostat, gathers data on adult learning and education across EU Member States. While not directly a quality assurance system, the AES provides valuable insights into the participation, outcomes, and effectiveness of adult education programmes. These data are used to inform policy decisions and help monitor the quality of ALE provision. Regular surveys and reports contribute to the overall evaluation and improvement of ALE systems within the EU.[74]

**National Quality Assurance Systems.** Each EU Member State is responsible for developing its own national quality assurance systems for ALE, in line with European-level recommendations. These systems typically include mechanisms for accrediting adult learning providers, ensuring the quality of educational programmes, and evaluating the outcomes for adult learners. Many countries also have national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) that are aligned with the EQF to ensure that adult learning qualifications are recognized and meet quality standards across Europe.[75]

The EU promotes the introduction of quality assurance mechanisms that involve stakeholders, including adult learners, educators, employers and competent authorities. By involving stakeholders in the quality assurance process, ALE programmes can better respond to the diverse needs and expectations of adult learners and ensure that the education provided is relevant, up-to-date and of high quality.

Quality assurance in ALE at EU level is essential for promoting excellence, transparency and accountability in ALE. By establishing robust quality assurance mechanisms and frameworks, the EU is committed to creating a favourable environment for lifelong learning and skills development for adults across Europe. This commitment helps to improve the effectiveness and impact of ALE programmes and to promote a more inclusive, innovative and competitive adult learning sector that meets the changing needs of individuals and society.

## Quality indicators and evaluation methods

Quality indicators and evaluation methods are crucial for assessing and improving the quality of ALE programmes. These tools provide valuable insights into the effectiveness, relevance and impact of educational initiatives for adult learners. Here are the key points to consider:

**Quality indicators.[76]** They are specific, measurable criteria used to evaluate the quality of ALE programmes. These indicators can relate to different aspects of adult learning, e.g. teaching and learning processes, learning outcomes, programme management and stakeholder involvement. Examples of quality indicators in ALE are:

- **Learner satisfaction rate**. This measures how satisfied learners are with the programme.

---

[73] https://www.enqa.eu

[74] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/adult-education-survey

[75] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems

[76] https://eaea.org/2022/12/14/for-a-new-approach-to-quality-in-ale/

- **Completion rates.** Tracking the number of learners who complete the programme.

- **Employment outcomes.** Assessing the employability of graduates.

- **Skills development**. Assessing the expansion of specific skills.

- **Programme relevance**. Ensuring the programme meets the needs of the learners.

- **Participation rate.** This measures the proportion of the target population that participates in the programme.

- **Employability and career progression.** This assesses the impact of the programme on learners' career progression and their long-term employment prospects.

**Evaluation methods[77]**

Evaluation methods are systematic approaches to assess the performance and impact of ALE programmes using quality indicators. Common methods include:

- **Surveys.** Gathering feedback from learners and stakeholders.

- **Interviews.** Gathering detailed insights through direct questioning.

- **Focus groups.** Engaging groups of stakeholders in discussions to gain different perspectives.

- **Observations**. Observing teaching and learning processes in real time.

- **Document analysis.** Reviewing programme-related documents and data.

- **External audit.** An independent evaluation by external experts who assess compliance with the standards and the overall effectiveness of the programme.

- **Benchmarking against established standards, best practices or other similar institutions or countries.** Comparing the programme's performance against recognized benchmarks to identify opportunities for improvement and ensure competitiveness.

These methods help gather data, feedback and evidence to measure programme's effectiveness, identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions.

**Continuous improvement[78]**

Quality indicators and evaluation methods support a culture of continuous improvement in the ALE. By regularly monitoring and evaluating programmes against established quality indicators, providers can identify strengths and weaknesses, make changes, and improve the overall quality of the adult learning experience. This ensures that ALE programmes remain relevant, engaging and effective for adult learners.

**Stakeholder engagement[79]**

When developing quality indicators and evaluation methods for ALE, it is important to involve relevant stakeholders, including adult learners, educators, employers, policy makers and community

---

[77] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/6fc940f9-0e08-4304-80a1-c340478be2d5/03%20EVA%20EN%20elearning%20Part%20181125_final.pdf

[78] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372274

[79] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245179

Co-funded by
the European Union

representatives. Stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process ensures that different perspectives are taken into account and that the evaluation results reflect the needs and priorities of all stakeholders involved in adult learning initiatives.

**Data-driven decision making[80]**

Quality indicators and evaluation methods provide valuable data and insights that support evidence-based decision-making in ALE. By analysing evaluation results and performance data against quality indicators, providers can make informed decisions about allocating resources, improving programme design, and enhancing the overall quality of ALE.

Quality indicators and evaluation methods are essential for assessing, monitoring and improving the quality of ALE programmes. By using these tools effectively, providers can improve the impact, relevance and effectiveness of ALE initiatives and create meaningful learning experiences for adult learners. Robust quality assurance mechanisms at EU level ensure that ALE programmes meet the highest quality standards and support lifelong learning and skills development across Europe.

## ALE funding in the EU

ALE funding in the EU is a key element in supporting the development of adult citizens' competences and skills. Various funding mechanisms, both at national and European level, enable the implementation of educational programmes tailored to the needs of the labour market. Initiatives such as the European Social Fund and the Erasmus+ programme play an important role in ensuring access to ALE across the EU.

Funding for ALE in the EU is diverse and includes several sources that contribute to the sustainability and development of ALE programmes. These sources include EU structural and investment funds, EU programmes and initiatives, national and regional funds, and private funding.[81]

### EU Structural and Investment Funds

1. **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)[82]** supports initiatives to improve employment opportunities, promote social inclusion and improve education and training systems. As part of ALE, ESF+ funds projects that focus on upskilling, reskilling, and lifelong learning and support adult learners in acquiring new skills and qualifications.

2. **European Regional Development Fund[83]** aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the EU by redressing regional imbalances. It supports ALE by funding infrastructure projects, innovative learning environments, and regional development programmes that include adult education components.

---

[80] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372274

[81] https://eaea.org/our-work/influencing-policy/monitoring-policies/funding-for-adult-education

[82] https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en

[83] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/erdf_en

Co-funded by
the European Union

3. **Cohesion Fund**[84] is aimed at member states with a gross national income per capita of less than 90% of the EU average. It finances projects that promote sustainable development, including those that improve adult education and training systems in economically less economically developed regions.

4. The **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)**[85] is a temporary measure that amongst other things supports adult education by funding reforms and investments aimed at enhancing lifelong learning, upskilling, and reskilling, thereby improving employability and facilitating the green and digital transitions across EU Member States.

5. **European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)**[86] provides financial support to workers who have lost their jobs due to globalization or structural changes in the economy, such as shifts in production or market demands. EGF funding helps Member States offer training, upskilling, and adult learning opportunities to displaced workers, ensuring they can re-enter the workforce. Key areas of support include:

   - Vocational training programmes for adults affected by large-scale layoffs.

   - Personalized learning plans to help workers adapt to new economic conditions.

   - Initiatives that support the reintegration of workers into emerging sectors through adult education.

## EU Programmes and Initiatives

1. **Erasmus+**[87] is the EU's flagship programme for education, training, youth and sport. It provides extensive support for ALE through:

   - Key Action 1 (KA1): Mobility of individuals, enabling adult learners and educators to participate in learning and training abroad.

   - Key Action 2 (KA2): Cooperation partnerships that promote innovation and the exchange of good practice between adult education providers.

   - Key Action 3 (KA3): Policy support initiatives aimed at reforming and improving ALE systems across the EU.

2. **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme**[88] aims to protect and promote the rights and values enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in particular by supporting civil society organizations active at local, regional, national and transnational level.

---

[84] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/cohesion-fund_en

[85] https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

[86] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=326

[87] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en

[88] https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/justice-and-consumers/justice-and-consumers-funding-tenders/funding-programmes/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme_en

Co-funded by
the European Union

3. **Horizon Europe**[89] is the EU's framework programme for research and innovation. It funds projects that develop new technologies and methods for adult learning to improve the quality and accessibility of ALE across Europe.

4. The **Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)**[90] aims to foster digital transformation across the EU and includes funding streams that support digital skills development, particularly for adult learners. The programme funds initiatives such as:

   - **Digital skills training** Providing digital literacy and advanced digital skills courses for adults to help them thrive in the evolving digital economy.

   - **Upskilling programmes**. Supporting workers in sectors undergoing digital transformation by offering adult learning programmes focused on new technologies, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and data management.

   - **Adult Learning in Digital Sectors**. Supporting the digital upskilling of adults, especially those from marginalized or rural communities, to ensure equitable access to digital learning.

   The DIGITAL complements the broader EU agenda for adult learning by addressing the growing demand for digital skills in all sectors of the economy.

## National and Regional Funding

1. **National Governments.** EU Member States provide significant funding for ALE through their national budgets. These funds support a wide range of adult education programmes, strategies and initiatives tailored to national priorities and needs.

2. **Regional and local authorities** play a crucial role in funding ALE programmes that address specific local or regional challenges. These authorities often complement national and EU funding and ensure that adult education is accessible and relevant to the local population.

## Private Funding

1. **Employers** invest in ALE to improve the skills and productivity of their workforce. This includes funding vocational training, upskilling courses and other education relevant to their industry.

2. Various **foundations and charities** provide grants and funding for ALE programmes, particularly those that address social issues such as education for disadvantaged groups, community development and lifelong learning initiatives.

3. ALE funding at the EU level is increasingly supported through **public-private partnerships (PPPs)**. These partnerships enable collaboration between governments, educational institutions, and private sector organizations to co-finance adult learning initiatives. PPPs are particularly effective in funding vocational training programmes tailored to labour market needs, digital upskilling, and sector-specific learning programmes.

---

[89] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

[90] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/digital-programme

4. Adult **learners** often contribute to the cost of their education through tuition fees and other expenses. This personal investment in learning underlines the value placed on continuous professional and personal development.

Diversified funding sources are critical to the sustainability and resilience of ALE programmes. By utilizing a mix of public and private funding, ALE providers can mitigate the risks associated with reliance on a single funding source. This diversity ensures that ALE programmes can adapt to changing financial circumstances and continue to provide valuable learning opportunities for adults across Europe.

## Selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU.

The European Union is committed to promoting lifelong learning and skills development for adults across Europe. This commitment is reflected in the substantial funding that the EU provides for ALE programmes and initiatives.

### Erasmus+[91]

1. **Key features**

   a) Mobility opportunities:

   - Adult learners: Participate in courses, internships and volunteering abroad.

   - Teachers and trainers: Participate in professional development, job shadowing and best practice exchanges.

   b) Partnerships

   - Strategic partnerships: Working with ALE providers, businesses and other organizations to develop and implement innovative ALE programmes.

   - Sector Skills Alliances: Addressing skills gaps and supporting sectoral collaboration in strategic areas.

   c) Capacity building

   - European training academies for adult educators: training and support for adult educators.

   - Supporting the reform of ALE systems: Supporting Member States in the reform of their ALE systems.

2. **Benefits**

   a) Improved skills and knowledge: Participants acquire new skills and knowledge that can improve their employability and personal development.

   b) Increased internationalization: ALE providers and institutions develop stronger international networks and partnerships.

   c) Innovative ALE practices: New and effective approaches to adult learning are developed and implemented.

---

[91] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en

*European Social Fund (ESF)*[92]

1. **Key features:**

   a) Targeted support: ESF funding focuses on specific target groups with the greatest need for ALE, such as low-skilled adults, unemployed adults and adults with disabilities.

   b) National co-financing: ESF funding is usually co-financed by national governments, ensuring a strong commitment to ALE from both the EU and the Member States.

   c) Flexible implementation: Member States can design and implement ESF-funded ALE programmes flexibly, allowing them to tailor the programmes to the specific needs of their population.

2. **Benefits:**

   a) Better employment prospects: Participants gain the skills and qualifications they need to find and keep a job.

   b) Reduced social exclusion: ALE programmes can help reduce social exclusion by providing adults with the skills and knowledge they need to participate fully in society.

   c) Stronger economies: A better skilled workforce can increase economic growth and competitiveness.

*Horizon Europe*[93]

1. **Key features:**

   a) Focus on research and innovation: Horizon Europe funds will be used to support research and innovation in ALE.

   b) Long-term projects: Funded projects usually have a long-term duration and allow for in-depth research and development.

   c) International collaboration: Projects often involve collaboration between researchers from different countries.

2. **Benefits:**

   a) New technologies and approaches: Horizon Europe funding can lead to the development of new technologies and approaches in adult learning.

   b) Improved effectiveness of ALE: Research results can be used to improve the effectiveness of ALE programmes.

   c) Informed policy making: Policy makers can use research results to make evidence-based policy decisions.

In addition to these large programmes, the EU also funds many smaller initiatives to promote ALE. These initiatives usually focus on specific target groups or areas of need. EU funding has had a significant impact

---

[92] https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en

[93] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

Co-funded by
the European Union

on ALE in Europe. They have helped to increase the number of adults participating in ALE, improve the quality of ALE programmes and develop new and innovative approaches to adult learning.

## Theoretical aspects of ILA in EU

Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) have been explored as a means of promoting lifelong learning and improving the employability of workers in the Member States. The EU has recognized the importance of continuous skills development in maintaining competitiveness in a global economy and ILAs are seen as a strategic tool to achieve these goals. The EU has established a comprehensive policy framework to support lifelong learning. This includes initiatives such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, which emphasizes the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning. The EU Skills Agenda also underlines the importance of equipping people with the skills needed for the modern labour market.[94]

### Key concepts and definitions related to ILA

The concept of ILAs gained a lot of attention in the late 1990s and early 2000s, particularly in the United Kingdom. The UK government introduced ILAs in 2000 to encourage adults to engage in lifelong learning. However, the programme faced challenges, including fraud and misuse of funds, so it was discontinued in 2001. Despite these setbacks, the idea of ILAs has endured and evolved, with new models being introduced in different countries.[95]

The concept of ILAs is an essential part of the Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022[96] on individual learning accounts, which aims to promote the continuous skills development of working-age adults in the European Union. ILAs are defined as personal accounts that allow individuals to accumulate and use educational entitlements over time and provide them with access to training, guidance and validation opportunities relevant to the labour market.

*Key definitions*

**Individual training entitlement** means the right to access a personal budget at an individual's disposal to cover the direct costs of labour-market-relevant training, guidance and counselling, skills assessment or validation that are eligible for funding.[97]

**Individual learning account** is a delivery mode for individual training entitlements. It is a personal account that allows individuals to accumulate and preserve their entitlements over time, for whichever eligible training, guidance or validation opportunity they deem most useful and whenever they want to, in line with national rules. It grants the individual full ownership of the entitlements, irrespective of the funding source.[98]

**Transferability** of individual training entitlements means that, once conferred, such entitlements remain in the possession of the individual concerned, including during transitions, such as between jobs, from job to learning, from employment to unemployment, and between activity and inactivity.[99]

---

[94] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en

[95] https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/5259

[96] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(03)

[97] Ibidem

[98] Ibidem

[99] Ibidem

**Enabling framework** comprises support that promotes the effective take-up of individual training entitlements. This includes career guidance and validation opportunities, a national registry of opportunities that are eligible for funding from individual training entitlements, a single national digital portal to access the individual learning account and national registry, and paid training leave.[100]

**Lifelong learning** is a broad concept concerning an individual's education that is viewed as flexible, diverse and available at different times and places throughout life. The scale of current economic and social change, the rapid transition to a knowledge-based society and demographic pressures resulting from an ageing population in Europe are all challenges that demand a new approach to education and training, within the framework of lifelong learning[101]. Lifelong learning refers to the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge and skills for personal or professional reasons. In the EU context, lifelong learning is a central principle aimed at ensuring that individuals can access learning opportunities throughout their lives, regardless of age, and across various settings. ILAs are a key tool in promoting lifelong learning by providing individuals with the means to finance their education and training at different stages of life.

**Upskilling** is a process of learning new skills or of teaching workers new skills.[102] It refers to acquiring new and improved skills within an individual's existing field or job role. ILAs are often used to fund upskilling opportunities to ensure that workers remain competitive and can adapt to technological advancements or changes in their sectors.

**Reskilling** is the process of learning new skills so you can do a different job, or of training people to do a different job[103] and involves learning new skills to transition to a different job or career field. ILAs are increasingly used as a tool to support individuals in shifting to new industries, particularly in response to economic transitions, automation, or digital transformation.

**Personalized learning** is a process of tailoring education to a learner's current situation, characteristics and needs to help achieve the best possible progress and outcomes. Personalised learning can include personalising the curriculum, courses, learning materials and activities, and different forms of learning support. Each learner is provided with education that is tailored to their individual characteristics and needs. They learn in a way that is most suitable for them, resulting in different learning experiences for each learner.[104] In the context of ILAs personalised learning refers to the ability of individuals to tailor their learning experiences according to their personal needs, goals, and career aspirations. ILAs give individuals flexibility in choosing when, how, and what to learn, empowering them to take control of their educational pathways.

**Portability** the level of possibility of something happening or being true.[105] In the context of ILAs, probability refers to the ability of individuals to carry their learning accounts with them across different jobs, sectors, or even regions within the EU. The idea of portability is fundamental to the ILA system, allowing individuals to use their accumulated credits or funds throughout their lives, regardless of changes in employment or location.

---

[100] Ibidem

[101] https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/european-industrial-relations-dictionary/lifelong-learning

[102] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/upskilling

[103] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/reskilling

[104] https://www.european-agency.org/resources/glossary/personalisation-personalised-learning

[105] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/probability

Co-funded by
the European Union

**Public-private partnerships (PPPs)** is a long-term contract between a private party and a government entity, for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility, and remuneration is linked to performance.[106] PPPs play a significant role in the development and funding of ILAs. In some countries, ILAs are co-financed by both the government and private sector employers to ensure broad access to training and education opportunities. PPPs are essential for creating sustainable funding models for ILAs and ensuring that the training provided aligns with labour market needs.

**Accredited training providers.** Accreditation is the last level of public control in the European conformity assessment system. It is designed to ensure that conformity assessment bodies (e.g. laboratories, inspection or certification bodies) have the technical capacity to perform their duties.[107] Accredited training providers are educational institutions or organizations that meet specific quality standards and are authorized to offer learning programmes funded by ILAs. These providers can include HEIs, vocational schools, private training institutions, and online learning platforms. Ensuring the accreditation of providers is crucial for maintaining the quality of education and training offered through ILAs.

**Learning credits** means prepaid credit units which customer may redeem for learning services, including instructor-led trainings, packaged certifications, certification exams, and/or membership subscriptions.[108] Learning credits refer to the financial resources or points allocated to an individual's ILA, which can be redeemed for education and training programmes. Learning credits can be accumulated over time and are often provided by governments, employers, or other stakeholders as part of an individual's professional development. Credits can be used to cover tuition fees, certification programmes, or other educational expenses.

**Flexibility in learning** systems enable learners to move within and across education, training and employment. Flexibility means that young people can adapt their learning pathway as they go along, to suit their interests and abilities.[109] Flexibility in learning is a core principle of ILAs. Individuals can choose from a wide range of learning options, including part-time, full-time, in-person, or online courses. ILAs offer the flexibility to fit learning around personal and professional commitments, making education more accessible for adults in different life stages.

**Targeted learning support**[110] refers to specific measures within ILA systems that aim to assist disadvantaged or marginalized groups in accessing education and training. This can include additional funding, guidance, or personalized learning plans to support individuals with low skills, unemployment, or those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Blended learning** is a style of education in which students learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching.[111] Blended learning is an educational approach that combines online and face-to-face learning. In the context of ILAs, blended learning offers flexibility for adult learners to

---

[106] https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/what-ppp-defining-public-private-partnership

[107] https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/goods/building-blocks/accreditation-conformity-assessment-bodies_en

[108] https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/learning-credits

[109] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/flexible-education-and-training-systems

[110] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202403364

[111] https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en

participate in courses that fit their schedules, making it easier to balance learning with other commitments such as work or family.

**Learning pathways** ate the chosen route taken by a learner through a range of (commonly) e-learning activities, which allows them to build knowledge progressively.[112] Learning pathways refer to the routes that individuals take to achieve their educational or career goals. ILAs support the creation of personalized learning pathways, allowing learners to choose from a variety of educational and training options that best meet their needs.

**Work-based learning** refers to all forms of learning that takes place in a real work environment. It provides individuals with the skills needed to obtain and keep jobs and progress in their professional development.[113] Work-based learning involves acquiring new skills and competencies through practical experience in a work environment. ILAs can fund work-based learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships, internships, or on-the-job training, enabling individuals to gain practical skills while continuing to work.

Based on the Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts 2022/C 243/031 document,[114] the following situation analysis is given:

- Insufficient financial support for individuals is one of the main barriers influencing participation in learning.

- Many adults, especially among the low-qualified and those furthest from the labour market, are not motivated to take up training.

- One possible approach to addressing the problems outlined above is to provide people with direct support through training entitlements in ILAs.

- Member States may establish additional training entitlements for individuals most in need, depending on the national context and the changing labour market. For instance, Member States could top up ILAs in strategic sectors, to support the green and digital transitions.

- ILAs should allow people to accumulate and use training entitlements over a set period, to be defined at national level, so that they can take up longer or more costly training or train during economic downturns, in response to emerging skills needs.

- Individuals should be able to preserve their individual training entitlements independently of their labour force or professional status and across career changes.

- The possibility of allowing the preservation of individual training entitlements during periods in which the individual lives in another Member State.

- There is a need for up-to-date public registries of recognised training through dedicated single national digital portals accessible to all, including people with disabilities, and, preferably, interconnected with the Europass platform.

---

[112] Scott, P.H. (1991). "Pathways in Learning Science: A case study of the development of one student's ideas relating to the structure of matter". In Duit, R.; Goldberg, F.; Niedderer, H. (eds.). *International Workshop on Research in Physics Learning: Theoretical Issues and Empirical Studies*

[113] https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/tvetipedia+glossary/lang=en/show=term/term=Work-based+learning

[114] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(03)

- Adequate funding is a key feature of successful schemes for ILAs. A national scheme of ILA could facilitate cost-sharing between various funding sources, such as public authorities, employers and funds managed by social partners, by allowing various funding sources to contribute to the ILA.

ILAs are a key element of the Council Recommendation of June 16, 2022, on promoting the continuous upskilling of people of working age in the EU. ILAs enable the accumulation and use of educational rights and provide access to further training relevant to the labour market, career guidance and skills validation. ILAs support the objectives of the green and digital transitions and promote a competitive and socially inclusive economy.

## An overview of ILA as a support mechanism for adult learning.

ILAs are an important mechanism for promoting ALE by providing direct financial support and other resources for the personal and professional development of individuals.[115]

### Objectives of ILAs[116]

1) **Increase participation in training.** ILAs aim to enable more working-age adults to engage in relevant training, thus contributing to the overall competitiveness and social progress of the Union.

2) **Support professional transitions.** ILAs provide support for individuals undergoing professional transitions, regardless of their current employment status.

3) **Increase motivation to learn.** By offering financial entitlements and other support, ILAs incentivize and motivate individuals to seek training opportunities.

4) **Empower individuals with control over their learning.** ILAs seek to provide individuals with greater autonomy over their learning by allowing them to manage their own learning funds or credits. This flexibility enables learners to select the timing, location, and type of education they need, supporting personal and professional development.

5) **Support upskilling and reskilling.** ILAs are designed to facilitate upskilling and reskilling in response to shifting labour market demands, giving individuals the financial resources to develop new competencies and remain adaptable in a changing workforce.

6) **Enhance employability and career development.** ILAs enhance employability by equipping individuals with modern skills, enabling them to pursue training aligned with their career aspirations and transition effectively within or across sectors.

7) **Increase access to education and training.** ILAs broaden access to educational opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as low-skilled workers, the unemployed, and marginalized communities, helping reduce educational disparities and promoting inclusivity.

8) **Facilitate adaptation to technological and economic changes.** ILAs support adaptation to technological advancements and economic shifts by providing flexible learning opportunities that keep workers up to date with emerging technologies and industry practices.

---

[115] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(03)
[116] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(03)

9) **Support social inclusion and reduce inequalities.** By expanding access to lifelong learning, ILAs help reduce educational and economic inequalities, fostering social cohesion and inclusive growth within the EU.

10) **Strengthen workforce competitiveness and economic growth**. By fostering continuous learning and development, ILAs contribute to a more skilled and resilient workforce, addressing skill shortages in key sectors and bolstering economic competitiveness.

11) **Promote flexibility in learning pathways.** ILAs offer individuals the flexibility to choose part-time, full-time, or online learning options, allowing them to balance educational pursuits with work and personal commitments.

12) **Encourage innovation in learning and training.** ILAs foster innovation by supporting the development of new teaching methods, educational technologies, and adult training programmes, contributing to the modernisation of adult education systems.

13) **Ensure the portability of learning opportunities.** ILAs aim to make learning portable, allowing individuals to carry their learning credits or funds across jobs, regions, and EU countries, supporting lifelong learning and mobility.

*Core components of ILAs*

ILAs are individualized accounts created for each learner, giving them direct control over the funds or credits allocated for their education and training. These accounts are tailored to the specific needs and goals of the learner, enabling them to choose when, where, and how to invest in their learning.

- The account can be managed by the individual, making learning a self-directed process.

- Individuals accumulate learning credits, vouchers, or financial resources which they can use to access accredited educational programmes, certifications, or skill-building courses.

The core components of ILAs are:

1) **Individual Training Entitlements**. These are personal budgets allocated to individuals to cover the costs of eligible training, career guidance, skills assessment and validation. This financial support is vital to remove the barriers that prevent many adults from undertaking further education.[117]

2) **Accumulate and preserve**. Individuals can accumulate and maintain their entitlement over time, giving them flexibility to decide when and how to use these funds. This ensures that training can be tailored to individual needs and circumstances.[118]

3) **Transferability**. ILAs are designed to be transferable across different career stages, including during periods of unemployment or inactivity. This ensures support regardless of changes in employment status. [119]

4) **Enabling framework.** This includes career guidance, validation opportunities, a national registry of eligible training opportunities, a single national digital portal for easy access and provisions for paid

---

[117] https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Statement_ILA_July-2022_final.pdf

[118] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-promoting-our-european-way-of-life/file-individual-learning-accounts

[119] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_6477

training leave. The enabling framework ensures that individuals can effectively take up their entitlements.[120]

*Implementation considerations*

1) **Sustainable funding.** Ensuring adequate and sustainable funding from public and private sources is critical.[121]

2) **Awareness-raising and outreach.** Effective education and awareness-raising measures are essential to inform individuals about their entitlements and motivate them to participate in training. Collaboration with social partners, civil society organizations and other stakeholders can strengthen these efforts.[122]

3) **Monitoring and continuous improvement.** Regular monitoring and evaluation of the ILA system is necessary to ensure its effectiveness and adjust where needed. This includes consulting with social partners and stakeholders to refine the system based on feedback and changing needs.[123]

ILAs provide a strong support mechanism for ALE that often removes financial barriers, provides tailored guidance and validation, and increases individuals' motivation for continuous learning. By empowering individuals and promoting equal access to learning, ILAs make an important contribution to the EU goals of full employment, social progress and a highly competitive social market economy.

## Experiences and results with ILA at EU level

The introduction of ILAs in the EU has led to a variety of experiences and results that are crucial for understanding their effectiveness. Different Member States have introduced unique ILA models to support the skills development of their citizens, allowing for a comparison of their effectiveness and adaptation. An analysis of these experiences at the EU level is necessary to assess the impact of ILA on the labour market and on the individual educational pathways of adults.

The EU has funded various pilot projects and studies to explore the implementation and effectiveness of ILAs in the Member States. These projects aim to identify best practices, potential challenges and the impact of ILAs on individuals' learning and career outcomes.[124]

### Key Findings from EU-Level Initiatives

1) **Improved Access to Training.** ILAs have been found to significantly improve access to training and education for individuals, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. By providing financial support, ILAs help remove barriers to participation in learning activities.[125]

---

[120] https://www.opm.gov/wiki/training/Individual-Learning-Accounts-ILA.ashx

[121]

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356971637_Individual_Learning_Accounts_A_Comparison_of_Implemented_and_Proposed_Initiatives

[122] https://www.oecd.org/publications/individual-learning-schemes-203b21a8-en.htm

[123] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264999322003224

[124] https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/news/individual-learning-accounts-where-are-we-now-2023-11-21_en

[125] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3083

2) **Enhanced Employability** Studies have shown that individuals who utilize ILAs often experience improved employability and career progression. The flexibility to choose relevant courses allows individuals to tailor their learning to meet specific career goals and labour market needs.[126]

3) **Promotion of Lifelong Learning Culture.** ILAs contribute to fostering a culture of lifelong learning within the EU. By encouraging continuous skills development, ILAs help create a more adaptable and resilient workforce capable of responding to changing economic conditions.[127]

4) **Increased Flexibility in Learning.** ILAs have provided individuals with the flexibility to engage in learning on their own terms, which has been a key factor in their success. The ability to use learning credits for formal, non-formal, or informal education allows individuals to tailor their learning experience to fit their personal or professional needs. This flexibility has been particularly beneficial for working adults, parents, and those with limited time for traditional classroom education.[128]

5) **Targeted Support for Disadvantaged Groups.** Another positive result of ILAs is their contribution to social inclusion. Several EU countries have used ILAs to target disadvantaged groups, such as low-skilled workers, the unemployed, or individuals from marginalized communities. ILAs have provided these groups with valuable opportunities to access education, which they might not have been able to afford otherwise.[129]

6) **Alignment with Labor Market Needs.** ILAs are increasingly being designed to ensure that the training funded aligns with labour market needs, particularly in high-demand sectors. This has helped to reduce skill mismatches in the workforce and address labour shortages in critical areas such as technology, healthcare, and green industries.[130]

## Challenges in Implementation

1) **Administrative Complexity.** One of the main challenges identified in the implementation of ILAs is the administrative complexity involved. Setting up and managing ILAs requires significant coordination between various stakeholders, including governments, employers, and training providers.[131]

2) **Ensuring Equitable Access.** Ensuring that all individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups, can access and benefit from ILAs remains a challenge. Strategies to address this include targeted outreach and additional support measures for disadvantaged populations.[132]

3) **Sustainable Funding.** Developing a sustainable funding model for ILAs is crucial for their long-term success. This involves balancing contributions from governments, employers, and individuals while ensuring that the funds are used effectively and efficiently.[133]

---

[126] https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/skills-future-managing-transition

[127] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en

[128] P. Cummins, A.K. Harrington, Individual Learning Accounts: A Comparison of Implemented and Proposed Initiatives, 2021, DOI:10.1177/10451595211046971

[129] https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2019/11/individual-learning-accounts_a06e7b80/203b21a8-en.pdf

[130] Ibidem

[131] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3083

[132] https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/news/individual-learning-accounts-where-are-we-now-2023-11-21_en

[133] https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/skills-future-managing-transition

Co-funded by
the European Union

## Case Studies from Member States

*France*

The Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF), France's Individual Learning Account, is effective in promoting workers' basic digital skills, but is less successful in promoting more specialised skills in areas critical to the green and digital transitions. Launched in 2015, this ILA allows workers to accumulate training points that they can use to develop skills aligned with their personal career goals. Despite its strengths, the CPF does not have a structured mechanism to steer users towards high demand training relevant to the labour market, such as programming, artificial intelligence or renewable energy.

CPF enrolment data from 2021 shows a focus on basic digital training, with more than 90% of STEM trainees focusing on digital skills and specialised software. However, less than 0.1% participated in green skills training, and STEM areas such as AI and renewable energy also attracted few participants, indicating a gap in the promotion of key skills for economic resilience. In addition, gender inequalities persist, reflecting trends in France's formal education system, where women remain underrepresented in advanced STEM education under the CPF.[134]

*Belgium*

Belgium has also implemented ILAs through the Training Vouchers scheme, which provides employees with vouchers that can be used to pay for training courses. This initiative aims to enhance the skills and competencies of the workforce, thereby improving employability and productivity.[135]

## Recommendations for Future Development

1) **Simplify Administrative Processes:** Simplifying the administrative processes associated with ILAs can enhance their accessibility and efficiency.[136]

2) **Targeted Support for Disadvantaged Groups:** Providing additional support and outreach to disadvantaged groups can help ensure equitable access to ILAs.[137]

3) **Sustainable Funding Models:** Developing sustainable funding models that involve contributions from multiple stakeholders can ensure the long-term viability of ILAs.[138]

The experience and results with ILA at EU level show that they have the potential to promote lifelong learning and improve employability. Although there are still some challenges to overcome, the positive results from different Member States provide valuable lessons for future development and implementation. By learning from these experiences, the EU can further advance its goal of creating a skilled and adaptable workforce that meets the demands of the modern labour market.

## An introduction to ILA as a tool to enable individuals to access education funding

ILAs are based on the principle of giving individuals control over their educational path. Each eligible individual receives a certain amount of money in their account that they can use for approved educational

---

[134] https://www.bruegel.org/analysis/promoting-stem-skills-brief-assessment-french-individual-learning-accounts

[135] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/LEARNING_AND_GUIDANCE_CHEQUE_BEL_FL.pdf

[136] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3083

[137] https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/news/individual-learning-accounts-where-are-we-now-2023-11-21_en

[138] https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/skills-future-managing-transition

programmes, courses or certifications. This model is particularly beneficial for adult learners as they can tailor their education to their specific career needs and interests. Below are some examples.

*United Kingdom*

In the UK, ILAs were originally designed to provide financial support for adults to participate in a variety of learning activities. The accounts were funded by a combination of government contributions and individual payments. Despite its early setting, the concept influenced later policy on adult learning and skills development.[139]

*Singapore*

Singapore's SkillsFuture Credit is another example of an ILA. Launched in 2016, it offers Singaporeans aged 25 and above credits that can be used for a wide range of recognised skills-related courses. The initiative aims to promote lifelong learning and equip the workforce with relevant skills.[140]

## Benefits of ILAs[141]

1) **Empowerment and autonomy.** ILAs give individuals control over their education and training, allowing them to choose courses that are most relevant to their career goals.

2) **Encouragement of lifelong learning.** By providing financial support, ILAs encourage individuals to engage in continuous learning and skills development

3) **Improved access to training.** By providing financial support and a clear structure for accessing training, ILAs make learning opportunities more accessible, particularly for people in atypical employment or with lower qualifications.

4) **Support for vulnerable groups.** ILAs specifically address the needs of disadvantaged groups, such as low-skilled workers and those furthest from the labour market, by providing additional entitlements and tailored support.

5) **Economic competitiveness.** By facilitating continuous upskilling and reskilling, ILAs help to retain a skilled workforce, which is crucial for economic competitiveness and innovation, especially in the context of digital and green transitions.

6) **Flexibility and adaptability.** The ability to acquire and use entitlements over time, as well as the transferability of these entitlements to different employment relationships, increases the flexibility and adaptability of the workforce.

7) **Flexible learning pathways**. ILAs are designed to offer flexibility in learning pathways, allowing individuals to choose from a wide range of educational and training options that suit their needs. This includes formal education (such as degrees or certificates), non-formal education (such as workshops or online courses), and informal learning opportunities (such as experiential or on-the-job learning). Learners can pursue education at their own pace, whether part-time, full-time, or through blended learning methods (online and in-person). This flexibility ensures that learning fits into the individual's work, family, and personal commitments.

---

[139] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmeduski/561/561.pdf

[140] https://www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/credit

[141] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264999322003224

8) **Skills recognition and validation.** A critical component of ILAs is the recognition and validation of learning outcomes, especially for non-formal and informal learning. This ensures that the skills and competencies acquired through various learning experiences are recognized and can be applied in the labour market. ILAs often integrate with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), allowing learning outcomes to be recognized and validated across EU countries. Skills recognition helps individuals showcase their qualifications and competencies to employers, improving their employability and career prospects.

## Challenges and Considerations

While ILAs offer numerous benefits, they also present challenges:

1) **Sustainability of financing.**[142] One of the biggest challenges in implementing ILAs is securing sustainable funding. Many ILA schemes rely on contributions from governments, employers and individuals. However, maintaining continuous funding can be difficult, especially during economic downturns or times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Public funding constraints. In some countries, public funding for ILAs is limited due to budgetary constraints, which can limit access to learning opportunities, especially for disadvantaged groups.

- Employer involvement. Employer contributions are crucial in some ILA models, but companies may be reluctant to invest in training, especially if they are unsure of the long-term returns or if employees may leave after training.

Consideration: developing innovative, diversified funding models, including public-private partnerships, co-funding mechanisms and employer incentives, can help make ILAs systems more resilient and sustainable.

2) **Equity and accessibility.**[143] Ensuring equitable access to ILAs is an important consideration, particularly for marginalized or disadvantaged groups. While ILAs are designed to facilitate access to learning, some populations may still face barriers to participation.

- Digital divide. People in rural areas, older workers and low-income groups may not have access to digital devices or reliable internet, limiting their ability to benefit from online learning options.

- Awareness gaps. In some cases, people are unaware of the existence or benefits of ILAs. Targeted outreach is needed to inform vulnerable populations, such as low-skilled workers or migrants, about how they can use ILAs to improve their skills and job prospects.

- Complex administrative procedures. The complexity of accessing and using ILAs can be a barrier for some individuals, particularly those with lower levels of education or who are unfamiliar with digital systems.

Consideration: broad awareness campaigns, simplifying administrative procedures for accessing ILAs and providing digital literacy training can improve accessibility and equality of opportunity.

---

[142] https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5259/
[143] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1315&langId=en

Co-funded by
the European Union

3) **Ensuring quality.**[144] Maintaining high standards of education and training in all ILA-funded programmes is important to ensure that learners benefit from meaningful and recognized skills development. However, in some national ILA systems, quality assurance is a challenge.

- Accreditation of providers. It can be difficult to ensure that all learning providers meet quality standards, especially with the growth of online learning platforms. In some countries, there are concerns about the inconsistency of training quality and the relevance of certain programmes to the needs of the labour market.

- Relevance of programmes. Some learners have difficulty finding programmes that match their career goals or the skills needed in the labour market. This can lead to misuse of ILA funds for programmes that do not improve employability.

Consideration: strengthening accreditation systems, introducing rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes and providing guidance on the selection of relevant training can help to improve quality assurance in ILA systems.

4) **Targeting the labour market.**[145] ILAs are designed to help workers develop the skills needed for the evolving labour market, but aligning training programmes with labour market demands can be challenging. Rapid change in industries such as technology, healthcare and green energy requires constant adaptation of educational offerings.

- Skills mismatch. There is a risk that the training funded by ILAs does not match the actual needs of the labour market, leading to a mismatch between the skills individuals acquire and those required by employers.

- Involvement of employers. While some employers are actively involved in co-funding ILAs, others may not see the immediate benefit of participating. This can lead to a lack of coordination between training providers and industry needs.

Consideration: building strong public-private partnerships, conducting labour market analysis, and involving employers in the design and delivery of ILA-funded programmes can ensure that training aligns with current and future industry needs.

5) **Transferability and portability.**[146] Transferability is a key feature of ILAs as it allows individuals to use their learning credits in different workplaces, regions or countries. However, ensuring seamless transferability and recognition of qualifications across borders remains a challenge.

- Cross-border recognition. Qualifications and skills acquired under ILA-funded programmes are not always recognized in other EU Member States, which can limit labour mobility and the effectiveness of lifelong learning in the EU.

- Sectoral transferability. In some sectors, especially highly specialized ones, there may be limited opportunities for individuals to transfer their learning points or apply newly acquired skills in other sectors.

---

[144] https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8944-2022-INIT/en/pdf

[145] Ibidem

[146] https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2019/11/individual-learning-accounts_a06e7b80/203b21a8-en.pdf

Considerations: aligning ILA systems with the EQF can contribute to the recognition of qualifications across the EU, promoting labour mobility and the transferability of skills.

6) **Administrative and bureaucratic burdens.**[147] Some countries face challenges related to the administration of ILAs, particularly in managing large systems and ensuring appropriate allocation and use of funds.

- Administrative complexity. The process of setting up and managing ILAs can be complex and resource-intensive for both governments and individuals. Lengthy procedures, excessive paperwork and a lack of user-friendly interfaces can discourage people from using ILAs.

- Fraud and abuse. Strong oversight mechanisms are needed to ensure that ILAs are used for their intended purpose. In some cases, there have been issues with individuals or education providers misusing funds or providing substandard services.

Considerations: simplifying administrative processes, using digital platforms to streamline the administration of ILAs and establishing robust monitoring and auditing systems can reduce bureaucracy and prevent misuse of funds.

7) **Raising awareness and engagement.**[148] Getting people to take advantage of ILAs is an ongoing challenge. In many cases, workers – particularly those with low skill levels – are not fully aware of the benefits of ILAs or lack motivation to upskill.

- Low participation rates. In some countries, participation in ILA programmes is lower than expected, especially among older workers or people in non-knowledge-based sectors.

- Barriers to motivation. Adults, especially those who already have a permanent job or are close to retirement, may not feel motivated to engage in lifelong learning as they see it as unnecessary or time-consuming.

Consideration: developing targeted awareness campaigns, offering career guidance services and providing incentives (e.g. time off for training or financial rewards) can help to encourage participation in ILA-funded programmes.

8) **Digitalization and technological challenges.**[149] The emergence of digital learning platforms offers significant opportunities to expand access to education through ILAs, but also brings challenges in terms of digital infrastructure and digital literacy.

- Digital infrastructure. In some areas, particularly rural areas, infrastructure (e.g. broadband access) may be inadequate to support online learning, limiting the effectiveness of ILAs.

- Digital literacy. Many adults, particularly older workers, may not have the digital skills necessary to engage in online learning, which is increasingly becoming a key component of ILA-funded programmes.

Consideration: investing in digital infrastructure, digital literacy training, and ensuring that ILA systems provide both online and offline learning opportunities can address these challenges.

---

[147] Ibidem

[148] https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8944-2022-INIT/en/pdf

[149] https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/news/individual-learning-accounts-where-are-we-now-2023-11-21_en

ILAs are an effective tool to enable individuals to access education funding and promote lifelong learning. By providing financial support and flexibility, ILAs empower individuals to take control of their learning, improving their employability and career prospects. However, successful implementation requires overcoming challenges such as fraud prevention, accessibility and sustainable funding. By examining the experiences of different countries, policymakers can learn valuable lessons and develop effective ILA models that meet the needs of their populations.

## Conclusions: ALE and ILA in the EU

This part of the report provides a comprehensive analysis of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) and Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) within the European Union (EU) framework, drawing on desk research, theoretical perspectives and practical experience from Member States. The aim is to highlight the importance of ALE in promoting lifelong learning, assess the EU policy framework, examine funding mechanisms and evaluate the effectiveness of ILAs in supporting adult learning in the region.

The introduction to the EU desk research lays the foundation for the research by outlining the scope and objectives of the study, which focuses on analysing EU policies related to adult learning, existing funding mechanisms, and the role of ILAs in promoting educational opportunities for adults. The desk research, which includes a review of EU reports, academic studies and policy documents, serves as a methodology to understand how ILAs contribute to skills development, labour market outcomes and alignment with overall EU objectives.

The theoretical examination of ALE highlights its crucial role in promoting lifelong learning and skills development for adults. It examines key concepts such as the importance of non-formal and informal learning in ALE and emphasizes the importance of these learning opportunities to close skills gaps, improve employability and adapt to economic and technological changes. Theories explored include human capital theory, which establishes a link between education and labour market outcomes, and the capability approach, which emphasizes the importance of empowerment and individual agency in learning.

The policy framework of ALE in the EU provides an overview and focuses on key initiatives such as the European Skills Agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights. The policies aim to improve the quality of ALE, ensure equitable access to learning opportunities and facilitate upskilling and reskilling of adults to meet the challenges of digitalization and the green transition. It also discusses EU-wide strategies aimed at increasing participation in ALE and improving the relevance of learning opportunities for the labour market.

Quality assurance in ALE is crucial to ensure that learning outcomes are effective and aligned with the needs of the labour market. This refers to the standards and frameworks developed by the EU to ensure that adult learning programmes are of high quality, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and ET 2020. The research findings emphasize the importance of accreditation, clear learning outcomes and the integration of non-formal and informal learning into the broader educational landscape. The quality of ALE also includes the ability to adapt educational provision to the needs of learners and the economy.

Financial support for ALE programmes is critical to their success. The research examines the various funding mechanisms available within the EU, including the Erasmus+ Programme, national initiatives and employer contributions. They discuss the challenges of sustainable funding, particularly given the budgetary constraints faced by many EU Member States. They will also explore innovative funding models, including public-private partnerships, and examine how funding is distributed across sectors to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities for all adults, including those from marginalized groups.

Theoretical aspects of ILAs in the EU emphasize that ILAs are seen as a tool to promote lifelong learning by giving individuals control over their educational and career paths. This section outlines the theoretical underpinnings of ILAs, including the concept of individual empowerment and self-directed learning. It explains how ILAs function as a financial tool that enables adults to access education funding, choose their

preferred courses and develop skills that are aligned with their personal and professional needs. Theoretical perspectives such as human capital theory and lifelong learning principles are discussed to emphasize the importance of ILAs for continuous skills development.

Experiences and results with ILAs at EU level provides an analysis of the practical implementation of ILAs in different EU Member States. The experiences and outcomes of ILAs are evaluated, with the main findings pointing to improvements in access to education, improved employability and the promotion of lifelong learning. Member States such as France and Belgium have introduced different ILA models, providing valuable insights into their effectiveness and challenges. This part of the research also discusses the challenges of implementing ILAs, such as administrative complexity, equitable access for disadvantaged groups and sustainable funding.

The part of the report concludes that ILAs have the potential to play a central role in promoting lifelong learning and improving employability in the EU. The findings show that while ILAs can significantly improve access to education and training, challenges remain in relation to administrative burden, sustainability of funding and ensuring equitable access. Recommendations for future development include simplifying administrative procedures, ensuring targeted support for disadvantaged groups and developing sustainable funding models that involve both public and private stakeholders. In addition, a stronger alignment of ILA-funded programmes with the needs of the labour market and the integration of quality assurance measures are crucial to maximize the impact of ILAs.

By analysing both theoretical foundations and practical outcomes, this part of the report contributes to a broader understanding of how ILAs can be used as an ALE tool to empower individuals and meet the skills needs of the modern labour market.

# 1. ALE and ILA in selected EU countries

This section provides a comprehensive desk research overview of ten European countries – Cyprus, Croatia, Malta, Slovakia, France, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal and Finland – each selected for their unique approach and the current state of ALE and ILA systems. The analysis of these countries aims to gain insights into the different methodologies, policies and frameworks driving adult learning across Europe and to highlight the facilitating factors, challenges and potential for transnational alignment in the development of ALE and ILA.

The main aim of this desk research is to examine the implementation status, structure and effectiveness of ALE and ILA systems in each country. This includes analysing governance frameworks, quality assurance mechanisms and database models to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. Each country has its own ALE landscape, shaped by its socio-political, economic and cultural context. The results of this research contribute to a nuanced understanding of how national registers and ILA models can better meet the needs of adult learning.

The selection of countries was deliberate and strategic. One example:

**France** is the only country with a fully integrated ILA-like system that closely follows the European model for ILAs proposed by the European Commission and the Council. The national framework includes comprehensive information systems that are valuable for exploring how ILAs can be standardized and scaled.

**The Netherlands** provides a model for close collaboration between educational institutions and social partners, especially employers. With a well-developed ALE registration system, they offer insights into the role of employee stakeholders in ALE.

**Slovenia** stands out for its centralized approach to adult certification and data collection in informal learning, offering perspectives on data-driven methods to support ALE initiatives.

**Ireland** has advanced micro-credentialing at different levels of education and demonstrates innovative ways for adult learning, quality assurance and flexible credentialing.

**Portugal** emphasizes social inclusion in ALE, focusing on disadvantaged groups. The extensive legacy of Portugal's ALE policy, particularly in the recognition of prior learning, reflects a long-standing commitment to accessible adult education and skills development.

**Finland** integrates higher education into continuing education, opens access to ALE to all levels of society and provides a solid framework for lifelong learning.

In addition to primary research in these six countries, desk research will be conducted in **Cyprus, Croatia, Malta and Slovakia** (project partners), each providing context-specific insights into the structural and strategic factors influencing ALE registers and policies.

Each national profile will be captured as part of this research:

**Current ALE and ILA systems:** structure, functionality, accessibility and scope of data repositories.

**Governance frameworks and quality assurance:** How each country ensures the integrity, accessibility and user-centered design of its ALE systems.

**Stakeholder engagement and impact:** Perspectives from adult learners, educators, policy makers and employers that reveal the needs and motivations behind ALE initiatives.

Through this detailed country-specific analysis, the desk research aims to develop a set of best practices and lessons learned to support the creation of interoperable, inclusive and sustainable ALE registers. Ultimately, the findings will provide recommendations for the further development of national ALE and ILA systems in line with evolving European frameworks and lifelong learning objectives.

## 1.1. Croatia

Adult education in Croatia is rooted in the concept of **life-long learning**. It is integrated into the broader life-long learning system, defined by a legal framework that encompasses both **formal and informal education**, as well as by acquiring knowledge and skills through **informal learning**.[150] Adult education in Croatia is intended for individuals over 14 years of age.[151]

The current landscape of work and education in Croatia presents several challenges. There is a notable mismatch between the skills of the labour force and market demands, a slow rate of higher education attainment, and low levels of basic skills among the population. According to **the European Semester 2024 Country Report for Croatia,[152]** the labour market saw significant growth in 2023, with the employment rate for individuals aged 20 to 64 exceeding 70% for the first time. However, this rate still falls short of the EU average of 75.3%. Employment rates for women (66.8%) are notably lower than those for men (74.6%) and the EU average (70.2%). The unemployment rate has decreased to 6.1%, the lowest in decades. A tight labour market has resulted in substantial real wage increases, driving demand. To address labour shortages, particularly in the construction and tourism sectors, there has been an influx of workers from non-EU countries, facilitated by relaxed labour market regulations. Furthermore, allowing pensioners to work part-time has bolstered the labour force in areas such as administration, retail, and processing.

**Territorial disparities** in employment outcomes highlight the necessity for tailored strategies to engage the inactive population and combat undeclared work. The unemployment situation is particularly challenging in Pannonian Croatia, where the rate approaches 10%. Regional employment rates vary significantly: Northern Croatia stands at 73.6%, while Zagreb City exceeds the EU average at 78%. In contrast, Adriatic Croatia (70.6%) and Pannonian Croatia (62.8%) fall behind the EU average by 5 to 15 percentage points. Furthermore, both Pannonian and Adriatic Croatia struggle to attract and retain skilled workers, leading to a phenomenon known as the "talent development trap."

The disparity in employment rates among low-skilled workers compared to their medium- and high-skilled counterparts underscores the urgent need for targeted reskilling and upskilling initiatives. In 2023, the employment rates for low-qualified (39.2%) and medium-skilled workers (69%) significantly lagged behind those of high-qualified workers, who enjoyed an employment rate of 86.6%.

Addressing challenges such as the **rising rate of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET)** and the low employment rate of individuals with disabilities necessitates targeted interventions and enhanced workplace adaptations to foster inclusivity. While the gender employment gap has shown signs of improvement, it remains a concern. In 2022, Croatia's gender employment gap was 7.8 percentage points, slightly below the EU average of 10.7 percentage points, highlighting the ongoing need for efforts to ensure gender equality in the labour market. Additionally, **increasing participation in adult learning, particularly among low-qualified workers**, is **vital for achieving the 2030 EU headline target on adult learning**, as supported by the recently adopted Act on Adult Education.

Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

[150] https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/13/3/276

[151] https://www.asoo.hr/en/education/adult-education/

[152] 0aa0e1a7-e869-483b-b9b1-513d7df3040e_en (europa.eu)

Co-funded by
the European Union

*Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE*

The legal and strategic framework for ALE in Croatia is supported by important strategic documents and legislation.

**The Adult Education Act**[153] (Zakon o obrazovanju odraslih) is the primary legal framework governing adult education in Croatia. The Act outlines the objectives of adult education, including ensuring access to quality education programmes that enable individuals to acquire knowledge and skills for personal growth and access to the labour market. According to the Adult Education Act which came into force in December 2021, adult education institutions can be established by the Republic of Croatia, local and regional self-government units, as well as other legal and natural persons[154].

**The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act**[155] (Zakon o Hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru), enacted in 2013, establishes a systematic framework for the classification and recognition of qualifications in Croatia. It aims to improve the transparency, accessibility, and comparability of qualifications, aligning them with European standards. The Act facilitates lifelong learning by enabling individuals to acquire qualifications through various educational pathways, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning. One of the key objectives of the Act is to enhance the recognition of qualifications both nationally and internationally. This recognition is essential for individuals who wish to move between different educational systems and labour markets, thereby improving their mobility and employability. Additionally, the framework promotes lifelong learning, encouraging individuals to pursue continuous education and skills development throughout their lives. Stakeholder engagement is another crucial aspect of the framework. The Act involves various parties, including educational institutions, employers, and governmental bodies, in its development and implementation. This collaborative approach ensures that the framework remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the labour market, ultimately contributing to a skilled workforce in Croatia.

In terms of strategy, the Croatian Parliament has adopted **Digital Croatia Strategy 2032**[156] (Strategija digitalne Hrvatske za razdoblje do 2032.) in 2023 which envisions comprehensive and continuous development of digital skills at all education levels and through lifelong learning, with a focus on ensuring inclusive and quality education while promoting lifelong learning to acquire digital competences.

In 2022 the Government of the Republic of Croatia has adopted two overarching strategies incorporating goals and measures concerning education and lifelong learning, **National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026**[157] (Nacionalni plan oporavka i otpornosti 2021.-2026) and **National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030**[158] (Nacionalna razvojna strategija Republike Hrvatske do 2030. Godine). The Strategy highlights education as a major vehicle for development and focuses on improving the quality and relevance of adult education programmes to increase the share of the adult population in lifelong learning processes, while the Plan supports a modernised system of science and education that enables lifelong learning and adaptation of all generations to new circumstances. The Plan introduces a voucher

---

[153] https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_12_144_2460.html

[154] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/croatia/adult-education-and-training

[155] https://www.zakon.hr/z/566/Zakon-o-Hrvatskom-kvalifikacijskom-okviru

[156] https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_01_2_17.html

[157] https://planoporavka.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Plan%20oporavka%20i%20otpornosti%2C%20srpanj%202021..pdf?vel=13435491

[158] https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_02_13_230.html

system to bolster lifelong learning, specifically targeting the development of green and digital skills. This system, designed for both employed and unemployed individuals, aims to facilitate the acquisition of skills essential for the labour market.

**The National Plan for the Development of Education and Training until 2027**[159] (Nacionalni plan razvoja sustava obrazovanja za razdoblje do 2027. Godine) adopted in 2023, outlines specific objectives aimed at enhancing the education system across various levels, with one of them being *Specific objective 4: Increase the proportion of adult population in lifelong learning processes*. To address the issue of insufficient involvement in lifelong learning, the plan aims to raise awareness of the importance of continuous education. It seeks to increase the participation of Croatian citizens in lifelong learning activities, thereby contributing to personal and professional development.

The **Implementation Programme of the Ministry of Science and Education 2021–2024**[160] (Provedbeni programme ministarstva znanosti I obrazovanja za razdoblje 2021.-2024. godine) focuses on addressing key challenges in VET and ALE. The harmonization of educational programmes with the needs of the labour market is one of the primary challenges that the programme aims to tackle. This involves ensuring that the skills and knowledge taught in VET and ALE programmes are aligned with current and future employment demands, which is crucial for economic development and individual career success. The programme also sets a special objective to increase the participation of adults in different forms of education. This includes providing more opportunities for lifelong learning and making education more accessible to all adults, regardless of their background or circumstances.

**The Strategic Framework for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning in the Republic of Croatia 2017–2021**[161] (Strateški okvir promocije cjeloživotnog učenja u Republici Hrvatskoj 2017. – 2021.), adopted in 2017, outlined the nation's commitment to lifelong learning as an essential aspect of development strategies at various levels. The framework's objective was to develop a high-quality, accessible, and inclusive system of education that encourages continuous learning and participation among Croatian citizens. The strategy defined instruments intended to improve the adult education system, increase the participation of citizens, and ensure the quality of education provided.[162] It addressed the issue of insufficient involvement of Croatian citizens in lifelong learning by raising awareness of the importance of continuous education and learning throughout life. **Publication on the results of monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Promotion of Lifelong Learning in the Republic of Croatia 2017-2021 and the improvement of the promotion of lifelong learning**[163] has shown that there was a slight increase in adult participation in lifelong learning, particularly in non-formal education. However, it remains below the set objectives, indicating room for improvement in engagement strategies. In addition, efforts were made to raise awareness about the importance of non-formal and informal learning. However, significant barriers to participation still exist, including institutional obstacles and a lack of awareness regarding available educational opportunities. Addressing these barriers is essential for increasing engagement in lifelong learning. The Lifelong Learning Week served as a primary promotional activity, aimed at increasing

---

[159] https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/AkcijskiNacionalniPlan/Nacionalni-plan-razvoja-sustava-obrazovanja-za-razdoblje-do-2027.pdf

[160] https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/PristupInformacijama/Provedbeni-program//Provedbeni%20program%20Ministarstva%20znanosti%20i%20obrazovanja%202021.%20-%202024..pdf

[161] https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/strategic-framework-promotion-lifelong-learning-republic-croatia-2017-2021

[162] https://www.asoo.hr/en/projects-and-cooperation/esf-projects/promotion-of-lifelong-learning-phase-ii/

[163] ASOO_S~4_0.PDF (europa.eu)

visibility and participation in lifelong learning programmes. The number of events held during this week reflects the agency's commitment to promoting lifelong learning, although the overall impact on participation rates needs further evaluation.

The Croatian government has adopted **the Education, science and technology strategy**[164] (Strategija obrazovanja, znanosti i tehnologije) in 2014. This strategy outlines measures aimed at enhancing adult education, promoting citizen participation, and ensuring quality implementation. It includes plans to develop standards for andragogical staff and implement lifelong learning and training programmes for adult education providers. The strategy is closely tied to the **Croatian Qualifications Framework**[165] (Hrvatski kvalifikacijski okvir), ensuring that learning outcomes meet labour market needs. Efforts are underway to increase adult participation in education, with initiatives such as the Strategic Framework for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning. However, challenges remain, including low adult participation rates and the need to strengthen basic skills.

**The National Plan for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in Croatia**[166] (Nacionalni plan za razvoj umjetne inteligencije) currently under development, aims to transform the economy through the strategic adoption of AI technologies, fundamentally rethinking business models to drive productivity and create new areas of growth. The Plan will focus on enhancing research and innovation in AI, developing human resources, improving data accessibility, digital infrastructure, and security, and establishing an ethical and legal framework for AI application. A working group consisting of experts from academia, business, civil society and the public sector has been appointed to develop the AI strategy. The working group has finalised a first draft of the National plan for the development of artificial intelligence, including policy measures and actions for the period 2021 to 2025. A final version of the strategy will be completed in 2021. This initiative is closely connected to Adult Learning and Education (ALE), as the development of AI competencies will require upskilling and reskilling of the workforce. ALE can play a critical role in equipping individuals with the necessary skills for AI-driven industries, promoting lifelong learning, and ensuring that the workforce is prepared for the digital transformation of the economy.

*National ALE governance structure*

The governance of adult education in Croatia is primarily regulated by state authorities. The **Croatian Parliament** enacts laws, which are prepared by the **Government**, and proposals are decided upon by working bodies of both entities. Key developments include the adoption of the **Adult Education Strategy** in 2004 and the establishment of **the Agency for Vocational Education and Adult Education (AVETAE)** (Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje i obrazovanje odraslih) in 2006, followed by the **Adult Education Act** in 2007.

The **Ministry of Science, Education and Youth**[167] (Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i mladih) plays a vital role in the operational regulation of adult education. It proposes laws, prepares strategic development documents, approves formal adult education programmes, and oversees adult education institutions. The **Department for Adult Education**[168] (Odjel za obrazovanje odraslih) within the ministry handles these responsibilities, ensuring compliance with national educational standards.

---

[164] https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/full/2014_10_124_2364.html

[165] http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2017-09/The%20CROQF%20Act.pdf

[166] NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AI Policy - OECD.AI

[167] https://mzom.gov.hr/

[168] https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/PristupInformacijama/OrganizacijskaShemaMZOM-2024-07-19.pdf

The **Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy**[169] (Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskoga sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike) coordinates the evaluation of adult education programmes, especially those linked to active employment policies. This includes funding and support for training programmes, aligning education with labour market needs.

AVETAE is a central agency for adult education, responsible for the development and oversight of the system. It evaluates and provides expert opinions on adult education programmes, ensuring they meet quality standards. The agency also prepares methodologies for creating educational standards and programmes and manages EU-funded projects aimed at improving the quality of adult education.

Other agencies, such as the **National Centre for External Evaluation of Education**[170] (Nacionalni centar za vanjsko vrednovanje obrazovanja), conduct assessments, while the **Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes**[171] (Agencija za mobilnost i programe EU) oversees project selection under the **Erasmus+** programme.

Furthermore, **local and regional authorities** often act as founders of public adult education institutions, holding the rights to establish and govern these entities. They determine the activities and administration of the institutions they establish and may also provide funding for various educational programmes.

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

Funding for adult learning in Croatia is sourced from various avenues, including government budgets and EU programmes. National strategies and plans provide financial support for initiatives aimed at enhancing adult education.

Policy measures aimed at addressing current and future labour market demands prioritize the development of skills essential for the green and digital transitions. **Croatia's Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)**[172] (Nacionalni plan oporavka i otpornosti) outlines strategic reforms and investments to facilitate a fair green transition, with a focus on implementing new active labour market policy measures to boost employment linked to green and digital transitions. One of reforms planned under NRRP is *"The implementation of the voucher system for employed and unemployed individuals"* (C4.1. R3-I1), a reform investment by the Croatian Employment Service, part of the **"Labour Market and Social Protection"** component (C4). Under this reform a **Voucher system**[173] has been established which aims to support lifelong learning, particularly in acquiring green and digital skills, with an emphasis on activating vulnerable groups within the labour market. The estimated cost of the implementation is 39,816.84 EUR, with the budget allocation divided into 70% for green skills and 30% for digital skills. Since June 2023, the Voucher system[174], which has been operational since April 1, 2022. is being used to finance citizens' education from various sources and encourage lifelong learning. Recently, Voucher system has been co-financing programmes outside the green and digital fields—referred to as general areas. General area

---

[169] https://mrosp.gov.hr/

[170] https://www.ncvvo.hr/

[171] https://www.ampeu.hr/

[172] https://planoporavka.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Plan%20oporavka%20i%20otpornosti%2C%20srpanj%202021..pdf?vel=13435491

[173] Voucher - gov.hr

[174] https://vauceri.hzz.hr/en/

programmes are funded through **the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)**, while green and digital programmes are financed through the NRRP. The individuals can participate in educational programmes developed based on the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF)[175]. They can be used by both employed and unemployed people for reskilling and upskilling, with a particular emphasis on developing green and digital skills. Based on this system the **ESF+ will broaden the offer of vouchers as well as introduce building blocks for potential implementation of Individual Learning Accounts in the future.**[176]

Furthermore, new quality assurance system is being developed in the scope of **the European Social Fund project "Development of a Quality Assurance System in Adult Education"** [177], which includes the creation of models for self-evaluation and external evaluation of adult education institutions. The project, implemented by the Agency for VET and Adult Education, ran from January 2019 to June 2023. and aimed to establish a structured framework for self-assessment and external evaluation of adult education institutions in Croatia. The goal is to enhance quality and relevance through the creation of evaluation models, development of tools, and the establishment of a network of external evaluators.

The project **"Further Development of the QA System in Adult Education and Raising Awareness on Lifelong Learning",**[178] funded by the ESF is also led by the Agency for VET and Adult Education. Running until December 2029, it aims to enhance quality assurance, promote lifelong learning, and strengthen the competencies of educational staff. Key activities include external evaluations of adult education institutions, capacity-building events, and the national campaign "Lifelong Learning Week" to support quality development and stakeholder engagement.

In February 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System signed a grant agreement funded by **the European Social Fund** for the project **"Implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (HKO) and Development of Tools for Connecting Education and the Labour Market"**[179]. The project, lasting 48 months and with a total value of 3,320,008.20 EUR, aimed to strengthen the connection between the labour market and the education system by developing 200 occupational standards for vocational education and adult learning. Key outcomes included the enhancement of the **Portal for Advanced Labour Market Monitoring**[180], which is unique in the EU for its interactive capabilities and integration of ESCO classification data. Additionally, 200 new occupational standards were developed in collaboration with employer associations, and methodologies for creating occupational standards and sector profiles were improved. The project fostered partnerships between the education system and the labour market, actively involving employers in the development process and establishing a system for analysing labour market trends and workforce demand. This work laid the groundwork for the creation of new educational programmes tailored to market needs.

## Quality assurance in national ALE systems

### Quality assurance systems in ALE

---

[175] https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/13/3/276

[176] https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2022/en/country-reports/croatia.html

[177] https://www.asoo.hr/en/quality-assurance/adult-education/project-development-of-a-qa-system-in-adult-education/

[178] Daljnji razvoj sustava osiguravanja kvalitete u obrazovanju odraslih i podizanje svijesti o važnosti cjeloživotnog učenja

[179] https://esf.hr/esfplus/odrzana-zavrsna-konferencija-projekta-implementacija-hko-a-i-razvoj-alata-u-povezivanju-obrazovanja-i-trzista-rada/

[180] MRMSOP - Portal za napredno praćenje tržišta rada i obrazovanja (gov.hr)

QA mechanisms for ALE programmes in Croatia include **both internal and external systems**. **The Croatian Qualification Framework Act**[181] incorporates provisions for quality assurance provisions, resulting in a comprehensive register that details learning outcomes, occupational standards, qualification standards, and programmes for acquiring and validating learning outcomes.

The **external evaluation** of adult education institutions in Croatia is carried out by the **Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education**, following Article 25 of the Adult Education Act (NN 144/21) and the **Regulation on External Evaluation** (NN 19/23). These evaluations follow established protocols, ethical codes, and quality standards defined in the Guidelines, aligning with good European practices.

The primary purpose of external evaluation is to assess how well adult education institutions meet the established quality standards. This approach ensures the quality of institutions and programmes while promoting **continuous development** in key areas such as educational programmes, teaching, resources, learner support, and stakeholder collaboration. Additionally, the evaluation encourages institutions to take responsibility for maintaining quality and achieving strategic goals, which in turn **contributes to the overall improvement** of the adult education system.

The already mentioned ESF project "Development of a QA System in Adult Education" aimed to develop a quality assurance system for adult education institutions through **self-assessment and external evaluation models**. The project had four main components: the National Competence Assessment Survey for Adults (PIAAC), establishment of a quality assurance system, promotion and visibility, and project management. A key element of the project was the implementation of PIAAC, a large-scale OECD study assessing the skills of adults aged 16 to 65 in literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving. Croatia participated in the second cycle of PIAAC (2018-2024), with data collected by Ipsos under the coordination of the Agency for VET and Adult Education. The study aimed to inform educational and employment policies by understanding the skills of the workforce. A pilot study was conducted in 2021, and the main study's data collection concluded in 2023, with results expected in 2024. The project also focused on developing a quality assurance system for adult education by analysing current practices and creating new models based on expert input. **A pilot of the self-assessment model was conducted with 25 adult education institutions**, followed by the preparation of external evaluation models. Capacity-building activities included 55 training sessions, 84 advisory visits, and the development of support materials for stakeholders involved in the quality assurance process. The project aimed to enhance the adult education system, ensuring it meets high-quality standards and effectively supports lifelong learning in Croatia.

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

Internally, adult education institutions engage in **self-assessment practices** to gauge and enhance the quality of their educational offerings. Many adult education institutions, including secondary vocational schools, are still in the process of developing systematic self-assessment procedures. However, they participate in self-assessment alongside vocational education institutions, evaluating their work to facilitate systematic improvement.

To support adult education institutions in implementing internal quality assurance systems, the Agency for VET and Adult Education developed the **Guidelines, Areas, and Tools for Self-Evaluation** as part of the **Handbook for Internal Quality Assurance in Adult Education**[182]. The handbook offers a summarized quality assurance model and guidance for conducting self-evaluation. Its development followed a pilot

---

[181] https://www.zakon.hr/z/566/Zakon-o-Hrvatskom-kvalifikacijskom-okviru

phase under the ESF project "Development of a QA System in Adult Education," where feedback and analysis were used to create a resource that institutions can use for building their internal quality systems and conducting evaluations.

The Agency has also developed a **Self-evaluation manual for institutions for vocational education**[183], which describes the standard procedure for implementing self-evaluation in vocational education and training.

Adult education institutions conduct **self-evaluation** based on the mentioned guidelines and the online **e-Quality**[184] self-assessment tool provided by the Agency. The process includes four main steps:

1. **Preparation and Planning** of the self-evaluation process.
2. **Conducting the Evaluation**, gathering data and insights.
3. **Creating an Improvement Plan** based on the findings.
4. **Reviewing the Entire Process** to ensure effectiveness.

This structured approach helps institutions identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for development, serving as the foundation for **external evaluations**.

The external evaluation is structured in three phases: **before**, **during**, and **after** the institution visit. Key activities include:

- **Self-evaluation** by the institution and submission of a **Self-Evaluation Report** to the Agency.
- Appointment of the **Expert Committee** by the Agency.
- Conducting **training sessions** for institutions and evaluators involved.
- On-site **visit by the Expert Committee** according to a pre-agreed plan.
- Preparation of a **Visit Report** by the Expert Committee.
- Review and advisory opinion by the **Advisory Council**.
- The Agency issues a **Final Report** and a **Decision on Quality Level**.

**Both external and self-assessment** are based on the assessment of the quality areas and standards listed in the table below.

*Table 1. Quality areas and standards for ALE assessment in Croatia*

| Quality Area | Standard | Description | Indicators and Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| **I. Management and Quality** | 1.1 Effective | Institution has a defined mission, vision, and | Mission and vision statements, strategic |

---

[182] https://www.asoo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Prirucnik-za-unutarnje-osiguravanje-kvalitete-u-obrazovanju-odraslih-Smjernice-podrucja-i-alati-za-samovrednovanje_2022.pdf
[183] untitled (asoo.hr)
[184] https://www.asoo.hr/en/quality-assurance/vocational-education-and-training/e-quality/

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Assurance** | Management System | strategic goals aligned with national strategies, with transparent decision-making. | goals, involvement of stakeholders in decision-making, resource allocation plans. |
| | 1.2 Internal Quality Assurance System | Quality assurance processes include strategic planning, regular evaluation, and continuous improvement across all activities. | Quality assurance strategy, annual plans, evaluation reports, and feedback analysis. |
| | 1.3 Regular Self-Evaluation | Self-evaluation is conducted regularly to identify strengths and areas for improvement. | Self-evaluation reports, action plans, involvement of internal and external stakeholders. |
| | 1.4 Data Collection and Analysis | The institution collects and analyses data on all activities for quality improvement. | Data collection methods, examples of analysis, information systems, protection of personal data. |
| | 1.5 Documentation and Records | Proper maintenance of adult education documentation and compliance with regulations. | Andragogical records, data management practices, issued certificates. |
| **II. Educational Programmes, Learning, and Teaching** | 2.1 Outcome-Based Programmes | Adult education programmes are aligned with learning outcomes and the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CQF). | Defined learning outcomes, programme approvals, and student feedback. |
| | 2.2 Diverse Pedagogical Methods | Uses various teaching methods aligned with approved programmes to promote effective learning. | Examples of teaching methods, teaching materials, use of technology, feedback from learners. |
| | 2.3 Work-Based Learning and Practical Skills | Supports practical skills acquisition through work-based learning if applicable. | Student participation in work-based learning, contracts for practical training, mentoring arrangements, compliance with work safety regulations, |

| | | | feedback on quality of training. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **III. Student Achievements and Support** | 3.1 Fair Assessment | Student achievements are evaluated objectively and consistently. | Assessment methods, exam records, student feedback on assessment fairness. |
| | 3.2 Student Follow-Up | Tracks students after programme completion and uses findings for quality improvement. | Employment rates, further education rates, student satisfaction. |
| | 3.3 Admission and Recognition | Ensures fair and transparent admission processes, recognition of prior learning. | Admission rules, recognition processes, feedback from applicants. |
| | 3.4 Comprehensive Student Support System | Provides a support system tailored to the diverse needs of students, such as career, administrative, technical, and other forms of support. | Feedback from students on support satisfaction, tailored support services (e.g., for older students, working adults, migrants, vulnerable groups), data on participation from underrepresented groups, coverage of education costs. |
| **IV. Human and Material Resources** | 4.1 Sufficient Teaching Capacity | Adequate number of qualified teachers with appropriate competencies. | Teacher-student ratio, teacher qualifications, professional development plans. |
| | 4.2 Appropriate spatial and material conditions for the implementation of adult education programmes | The institution has appropriate spatial and material conditions according to regulations, ensuring quality teaching and achievement of learning outcomes. | Availability of adequate spatial and material resources as required by regulations, Conditions adapted to the number of enrolled participants, Properly equipped spaces to support learning based on approved curricula, Use of specialized, equipment as required for practical training and safety, Collection and utilization of feedback |

| | | | from students on the quality of spatial and material conditions. |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.3 Sustainable Financial Management | Ensures proper financial management for long-term sustainability. | Financial plans, income and expense statements, documentation of additional funding sources. |
| **V. Institutional Communication and Ethics** | 5.1 Public Information | Provides clear, accurate, and updated information on all activities. | Websites, brochures, open days, event reports. |
| | 5.2 The institution actively collaborates with other educational institutions and organizations, promoting mobility and internationalization, knowledge transfer, and innovation | The institution actively collaborates with other educational institutions and organizations, promoting mobility and knowledge transfer. | Meetings, seminars, workshops, and conferences in cooperation with other institutions, Contracts and other forms of inter-institutional cooperation, Data on joint programmes and projects (e.g., ESF projects, Erasmus projects) at local level. |
| | 5.3 Ethical Standards | Implements mechanisms to maintain integrity and prevent unethical behaviour. | Ethical code, established procedures for handling complaints, evidence of compliance. |

*Source: Osiguravanje kvalitete* [185]

Based on the findings, the Agency issues a **report** and a **decision on the quality level** of the institution. Evaluations are conducted **every five to seven years**, in line with the **Annual Evaluation Plan** or at the **institution's request**. The Annual Plan is published on the Agency's website by June 1st each year. Institutions can request a postponement within 15 days of notification if there are justified reasons. Institutions may also request evaluations outside of the annual plan if needed.

## National ALE registries and information models for ALE

### *Available registries (description, structure)*

As previously mentioned, Croatia has introduced **a system of vouchers for adult education**, which can be examined as a type of ALE registry. The system has been operational since April 1, 2022, and aims to finance

---

[185] https://www.asoo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Prirucnik-za-unutarnje-osiguravanje-kvalitete-u-obrazovanju-odraslih-Smjernice-podrucja-i-alati-za-samovrednovanje_2022.pdf

participation in educational programmes developed for employed and unemployed persons[186]. The Croatian government has set out education vouchers to be sent to both employed and unemployed individuals in a response to new technologies and the need for upskilling[187]. The implementation of the voucher system in Croatia was an attempt to increase enrolment in adult education and strengthen skills across the country[188]. As part of the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience, 30,000 vouchers have been planned, with more than a third allocated to disadvantaged groups[189]. Beneficiaries can use these vouchers at around 204 institutions for adult education which offer more than 1.600 programmes.

The system allows users to independently select the **educational programme** and the **provider** that best suits their needs. The cost of the selected programme is covered by the **approved voucher amount**, which is paid directly to the chosen education provider. If the cost of the programme exceeds the value of the voucher, the difference can be covered by the user or their employer. The exact **voucher amount** is determined based on the **sector or sub-sector** of the programme, total workload required for obtaining the qualification, and the number of hours dedicated to **guided learning**, **work-based activities**, and **independent learning**.

The duration of educational programmes varies depending on the level of **competencies being acquired**. Programmes that aim to provide competencies for work at the **secondary education level** can last up to **10 months**, while programmes for the **tertiary education level** can last up to **12 months**.

The voucher system is accessible to all **unemployed and employed individuals aged 15 and older**, who are looking to gain **skills needed for career development**, **employment**, or **job retention**. However, it is **not available** for individuals who are enrolled in the regular education system (e.g., students), higher education institutions, or those who are retired (except under specific conditions), foreign workers from third countries, and employees in **state or public services** involved in establishing or implementing the voucher system.

The main benefit of this system is that it supports the acquisition of **micro-qualifications** and **partial qualifications** that meet the demands of the **labour market**, directly improving **employability** and **productivity**. Users are free to choose the programme and the provider, and once approved, the **voucher** must be activated within **four months**. The system is supported by a dedicated **application**, ensuring minimal **administrative burden** and streamlined processes. Each user can utilize only one voucher.

To obtain a voucher, users follow four simple steps: (1) researching the **needed skills** listed in the **Skills Catalogue**, (2) consulting with a **HZZ advisor** regarding their chosen skill, (3) contacting the **selected education provider**, and (4) submitting a request through the **"My Vaucher"** application. The entire process is supported by **online resources** and **video guides**, ensuring accessibility and transparency for users.

---

[186] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/croatia/adult-education-and-training-funding

[187] https://total-croatia-news.com/lifestyle/croatian-education-vouchers/

[188] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377106464

[189] https://en.iro.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Network_recommendations_5.-AdultEd.pdf

*Figure 3. Voucher system for ALE in Croatia*

*Source: Voucher for learning[190]*

The implementation of the voucher system for adult education in Croatia has shown positive results. According to the information available, Croatia is **on track to reach its 2030 target for adult learning** thanks to the successful implementation of the learning vouchers system[191].

In terms of broader economic impacts, **a World Bank report**[192] highlighted the importance of increasing economic participation and the quality of human capital as critical factors for Croatia's long-term growth, suggesting that initiatives like the voucher system could play a significant role in achieving these goals.

*Information models for ALE*

The **voucher system catalogue**[193] is tailored to labour market needs and allows users to choose relevant programmes based on their professional goals and interests.

The catalogue be searched by the following categories:

- Programme category,
- Admission criteria,
- Employment status,
- Industry,
- County,

---

[190] https://vauceri.hzz.hr/en

[191] https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2023/en/country-reports/croatia.html

[192] https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/04/10/increasing-employment-and-quality-of-human-capital-critical-for-croatia-s-long-term-growth

[193] https://vauceri.hzz.hr/katalog-vjestina/popis-vjestina-i-programa/

- City,

- Provider,

- Online/onsite.
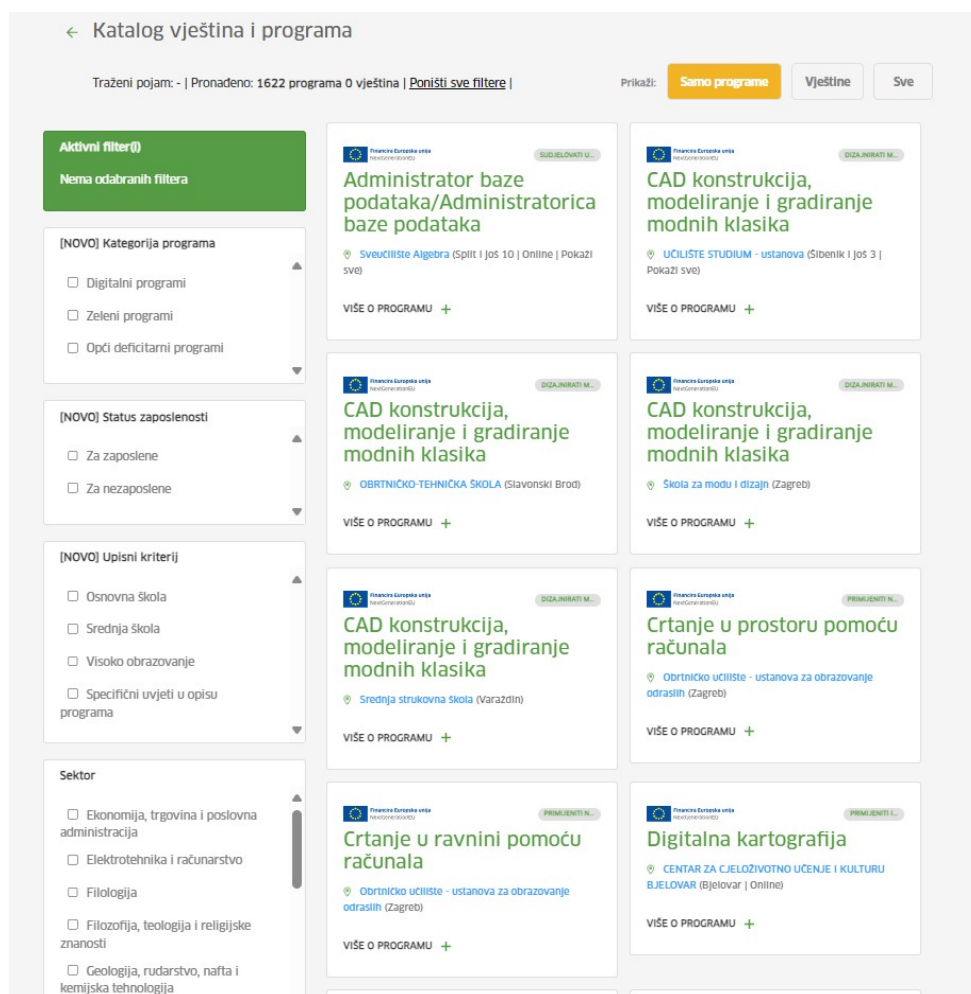


*Figure 4. Programme search*

*Source: Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje[194]*

The voucher system contains the following information about the programmes:

- Programme title

- Skills categorisation

- Category – green, digital, or general deficit programmes

- Certificate Name upon Completion

---

- Education Provider

- Contact Email

- Programme locations

- Online availability

- Programme duration

- Maximum voucher amount for education

- Entry requirements – possession of prior qualification and/or employment status

- Self-assessment questionnaire – to assess if the programme is suitable for the person.



**Pomoćnik u nastavi/Pomoćnica u nastavi**

Kategorija: Opći deficitarni program

Naziv potvrde po završetku: Uvjerenje o osposobljavanju za stjecanje djelomične kvalifikacije pomoćnik u nastavi/pomoćnica u nastavi

Pružatelj obrazovanja: **PUČKO OTVORENO UČILIŠTE VARAŽDIN**
E-mail kontakt: pou@pouvarazdin.hr

⊙ Lokacije održavanja programa: Varaždin

⊙ Online: NE

Trajanje programa: 250 sati

Završetkom ovog programa stječete **10 HRROO** (CSVET) bodova.  Što su HRROO bodovi?

**Maksimalni iznos vaučera za obrazovanje: 609,86 €**

Uvjeti upisa:

- Iznimno cjelovita kvalifikacija na razini 4.1
- Cjelovita kvalifikacija na razini 4.2
  (Kvalifikacija stečena završetkom srednjoškolskog obrazovanja u trajanju od četiri ili više godina)
- Status zaposlenosti: Zaposlen/a   Zašto je važno?

Program obrazovanja za stjecanje djelomične kvalifikacije pomoćnik u nastavi/pomoćnica u nastavi provodi se redovitom nastavom u trajanju od 250 sati, uz mogućnost izvođenja teorijskog dijela programa (vođeni proces učenja i poučavanja) putem online prijenosa u stvarnom vremenu, koristeći aplikacije za virtualno učenje.

Ishodi učenja ostvaruju se dijelom vođenim procesom učenja i poučavanja u trajanju od 90 sati, dijelom učenjem temeljenim na radu u trajanju od 122 sata, a dijelom samostalnim aktivnostima polaznika, u trajanju od 38 sati.
Učenje temeljeno na radu obuhvaća rješavanje problemskih situacija i izvršenje konkretnih radnih zadaća u manjem dijelu u simuliranim, a u znatno većem dijelu u stvarnim uvjetima - u školi. Kod polaznika se potiče razvijanje samostalnosti i odgovornosti u izvršenju radnih zadaća, kao i razvijanje suradničkih odnosa s ostalim sudionicima u zajedničkom radu.

VAŽNO: Program je dostupan isključivo korisnicima koji su zaposleni na poslovima pomoćnika u nastavi (priložen preslik Ugovora o radu).

SAZNAJTE KOLIKO VAM ODGOVORA OVAJ PROGRAM

*Figure 5. Information about the programme*

*Source: Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje*[195]

## Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

*Experiences with the introduction of ILA as a tool*

---

[195] https://vauceri.hzz.hr/katalog-vjestina/programi/pomocnik-u-nastavi-pomocnica-u-nastavi-2088

Croatia's efforts to implement ILAs have been shaped by its participation in the **Mutual Learning Programme**[196] together with Poland, which facilitated valuable international exchanges. Representatives noted that this programme helped them develop a clear national implementation roadmap and establish regular stakeholder consultations. Initially, as already mentioned, a voucher system was introduced in April 2022 to promote adult learning, particularly in digital and green skills. This system created **a strong foundation for transitioning to ILAs, with a target of 30,000 users by 2026**. Moving forward, **Croatia is focused on addressing funding challenges and boosting participation in the new ILA scheme**.

*Results with introducing ILA at the national level*

Croatia has no experience with the introduction of ILA as a tool, and therefore no results are available.

---

[196] Individual Learning Accounts: where are we now? - European Union (europa.eu)

## 1.2. Malta

### Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

#### Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE

Adult education occurred in different historical and ideological Maltese contexts. It was traditionally associated with adult literacy and basic education in the period ranging from the last part of the 19th century to the early part of the 20th century, at a time when there was no mass public education. Throughout most of the 20th century, it was linked with emigration and involved **literacy education**, especially in the **English language** intended to assist prospective emigrants in emigrating to settlement colonies. Vocational education, often with a strong **agricultural bias**, was also instrumental in this regard. Adult education was also associated with religious instruction and with social development with the latter initially often promoted by institutions with a strong Catholic orientation and that followed the social teachings of the Catholic Church. Later, there was the emergence of an academy connected with Christian Democratic politics while the 1980s saw the coming to the fore of NGOs having a socialist and labour-oriented view of adult education.[197]

Since the 1980s, Malta has provided its own adult education programmes first through **the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education** and later through the **Adult Learning Unit** within the **Directorate for Lifelong Learning** (DLLL), which is presently named the **Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE)[198]**.

After a period of public consultation, the **National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020[199]** was launched in July 2015 and focused on facilitating the participation of people aged 16 years and greater in post-compulsory education, VET, higher education, and adult education. The Strategy consolidated and built on ideas and processes already taking shape in different organisations and institutions in Malta, so as to ensure a single, coherent policy document to guide actions in lifelong learning.[200]

In 2014, a **National Diploma in Teaching Adults** was launched by the **Adult Lifelong Learning Unit** to improve the quality of adult education in Malta.[201]

In 2016, the Lifelong Learning Unit conducted a pilot project which was called **OUT REACH[202]** and had as its main focus the strengthening of **basic skills and workplace training**. This unit also introduced the adult learning awards to raise awareness about adult learning in Malta and award best practices.[203]

The first learning centre for disabled persons in **Gozo** was also launched with the aim of assisting disabled people to participate in the labour market by strengthening their skills. This centre is the result of an agreement between the government and the Roman Catholic Church.[204]

---

[197] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/malta/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

[198] https://lifelonglearning.gov.mt

[199] https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/malta_national_lifelong_learning_strategy_2020.pdf

[200] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/malta/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

[201] https://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/projects

[202] https://outreachrecruitment.net

[203] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/malta/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

[204] https://lifelonglearning.gov.mt

Between 2014 and 2017, the **Lifelong Learning Task Force Group** steering the **National Lifelong Learning Strategy for Malta 2020** was set up to ensure a single, coherent place to guide actions in lifelong learning.[205]

Today, Malta's framework for ALE is built on several key legislative acts and policies that provide a structured approach to continuous learning. The **Further and Higher Education Act**[206] establishes the foundation for lifelong learning by defining it to include all types of learning activities that an individual undertakes throughout life to gain skills, competencies, and qualifications. This Act mandates that all providers of adult education adhere to standards set by the **Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF)**[207], which categorises and recognises qualifications, facilitating mobility and progression across different education levels.

The **Employment and Training Services Act**[208] regulates the operations of **Jobsplus, Malta's Public Employment Service**[209]. This Act requires Jobsplus to deliver training programmes aimed at improving employability, particularly for unemployed individuals, those seeking to upskill or reskill, and other vulnerable groups. Jobsplus operates under this legislation to provide targeted training and employment services that align with Malta's economic needs.

The **National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030**[210] is the strategic policy document guiding adult education in Malta. It sets clear objectives to increase participation in adult learning, especially among low-skilled and low-qualified adults, and to improve access to education and training. The strategy includes measures to enhance digital skills, improve the quality of adult education, and promote flexible learning pathways. It also addresses barriers to participation, such as financial constraints and lack of awareness, by advocating for targeted support and outreach efforts.

Workshop insights underscored the need for greater flexibility and better marketing to reach underrepresented groups, such as women balancing work and family commitments. In addition, the interview highlighted concerns over the feasibility and funding of ILAs, stressing the importance of clear inclusion criteria for both accredited and non-accredited courses to meet emerging needs.

*National ALE governance structure*

Malta's governance framework for ALE is designed to ensure accessible and high-quality lifelong learning opportunities aligned with the country's socio-economic needs. The **Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation (MEYR)**[211] plays a central role in setting policies and strategic objectives, coordinating with various stakeholders, including public and private educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, and community groups.

At the strategic level, the **National Lifelong Learning and Upskilling Pathways Task Force**[212] oversees the alignment of lifelong learning initiatives with national goals. This inter-ministerial body integrates diverse perspectives, develops strategic plans, and monitors progress towards achieving set objectives.

---

[205] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/malta/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

[206] https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/607/eng

[207] https://mfhea.mt/research-and-policy/malta-qualifications-framework/

[208] https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/594/20210101/eng

[209] https://jobsplus.gov.mt

[210] https://education.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PDF-File-EN-National-LL-Strategy.pdf

[211] https://education.gov.mt

[212] https://education.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PDF-File-EN-National-LL-Strategy.pdf

Additionally, the **Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)**[213] is responsible for quality assurance, ensuring that adult education programmes meet national standards and align with the **MQF**. The MFHEA manages accreditation for new providers and conducts regular quality audits to maintain high standards across the sector.[214] Recent discussions from national workshops emphasised the need for greater transparency and coordination in the quality assurance process, especially for non-accredited programmes, to avoid fragmentation and ensure consistency.

The governance structure also includes a multi-tiered system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the **National Lifelong Learning Strategy**. **DRLLE** coordinates strategy implementation, supported by a **Policy Thematic Committee** and the **Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate**[215] within the MEYR, which provide oversight to ensure that targets are met, and policies are effectively implemented.

The **National Skills Council (NSC)** [216] works in partnership with the DRLLE to align adult education with labour market needs, involving stakeholders from various sectors to ensure responsiveness to economic changes. The NSC is currently conducting a feasibility study on ILAs to ensure integration with existing schemes and to avoid duplication. This governance framework is complemented by funding schemes that reduce financial barriers and encourage participation in lifelong learning, supported by coordinated efforts between Jobsplus and other key entities.

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

Financial support schemes, such as the **Training Pays Scheme** and **Get Qualified Scheme**, are key components of Malta's policy framework. Both are/were funded through the **European Social Funds**, which offers an important European incentive but also creates a somewhat temporary solution to the continuous need to provide crucial financial incentives for individuals to pursue further education and training.

**Training Pays Scheme**[217]: This scheme aims to assist individuals in Malta to develop or improve their skills by providing a grant that covers **75% of the training costs, up to a maximum of €1,000**. The scheme is available to individuals who have completed compulsory schooling, with the training delivered by accredited institutions. Participants are reimbursed after successfully completing their course and presenting valid documentation such as receipts and certificates. This initiative, managed by Jobsplus, is designed to enhance employability through vocational and non-vocational training.

**Get Qualified Scheme**[218]: This programme offered students a **tax credit of up to 70% on tuition fees** for a wide range of academic courses, including diplomas, degrees, and postgraduate qualifications. The tax credits are awarded upon completion of the course, allowing students to recover a significant portion of

---

[213] https://mfhea.mt

[214] https://mfhea.mt/overview

[215] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/malta/administration-and-governance-central-andor-regional-level

[216] https://nscmalta.gov.mt

[217] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/matching-skills/all-instruments/training-pays-scheme

[218] https://maltaenterprise.com/support/get-qualified-2017-2024

their educational expenses. Administered by Malta Enterprise, the scheme is aimed at improving the qualifications and skills of individuals in areas that are important for industry development.[219]

During the interviews, information was obtained that the NSC is currently assessing how ILAs can be integrated into these existing schemes to maximise their impact, ensuring there is no duplication of efforts, and that funding remains sustainable.

## Quality assurance in national ALE systems

### Quality assurance systems in ALE

The **MEYR** has organised its quality assurance, in adult education and training **MQF** levels 1-4, by making educational establishments responsible for their own internal quality assurance and delegating external quality assurance to the **Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)** [220].

In Malta, the quality assurance of ALE is managed through the **National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF)**[221], developed by the MFHEA The NQAF provides guidance to educational institutions that embark on the processes of Internal and External Quality Assurance in order to enhance the learning outcomes provided through their educational programmes.[222]



*Figure 6. National Quality Assurance Framework*

*Source: Malta Further and Higher Education Authority* [223]

---

[219] https://maltaenterprise.com/sites/default/files/Get%20Qualified%20%28Version%201%20-%202024%29.pdf

[220] https://mfhea.mt

[221] https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/National-Quality-Assurance-Framework-for-Further-and-Higher-Education-General-Public-1.pdf

[222] https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-National-Quality-Assurance-Framework-for-Further-and-Higher-Education-A5-Brochure-1.pdf

[223] Ibidem

The NQAF established the conceptual context and parameters for an **External Quality Assurance (EQA)** system that complements the **Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)** mechanisms of individual further and higher education entities. In view of this, the MFHEA has developed the **External Quality Assurance Provider Audit Manual of Procedures**[224] and **Step-By-Step Guide to Internal Quality Assurance**[225]. The EQA is a process for both development and accountability, which applies to all accredited further and higher education providers that are corporate entities. It examines that IQA systems are fit for purpose, are in fact functioning and effective, are sustainable and contributes to the fulfilment of the broad goals of Malta's Framework for the Education Strategy 2014-2024.

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

**Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)**[226]

Internal Quality Assurance is a flywheel of the whole QA process. Providers shall have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its quality assurance. Each IQA needs to be designed to be fit for purpose according to the provider's courses and service users.

The National Qualifications Framework has 11 Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) standards. These apply to further, higher and adult formal provision in Malta regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery, including transnational and cross-border provision. The IQA Standards:

- Set-up and publication of an effective policy for quality assurance;

- Institutional probity both financial and institutional;

- Appropriate design and approval of programmes;

- Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment that encourages students taking an active role;

- Published and consistently applied regulations for student admission, progression, recognition and certification;

- Competence and effectiveness of teaching staff;

- Appropriate learning resources and student support;

- Collection, analysis and use relevant information for the effective management of programmes and other activities;

- Appropriate public information;

- On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes;

- Cyclical external quality assurance.

**External Quality Assurance (EQA)**

---

[224] https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/External-Quality-Assurance-Provider-Audit-Manual-of-Procedures.pdf

[225] https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Step-by-step-guide-to-Internal-Quality-Assurance%E2%80%8B.pdf

[226] https://mfhea.mt/internal-quality-assurance

The EQA is designed to be conducted in a way which reflects the relevant European and International standards, guidelines and criteria for external quality assurance and respect for international treaties and agreements relevant to further and higher education provision as ratified or endorsed by Malta. MFHEA offers its full support to educational institutions in following this process.[227]

The **EQA** process complements **IQA** by ensuring that institutions' internal systems are functioning effectively. **MFHEA** maintains quality standards through audits carried out by EQA conducted **every five years**. The EQA assess compliance with internal systems, regulatory compliance, financial sustainability and corporate governance. The **EQA consists of external experts, students and MFHEA representatives**. The MFHEA publishes full audit reports with recommendations and formal decisions, and each institution must submit an action plan to address the audit findings.

**DRLLE**'s strategic objectives include improving the professional qualifications of adult education staff and strengthening internal quality assurance systems. DRLLE collects and analyses feedback from participants and strives for continuous improvement of course offerings.

**Jobsplus**' Training Design and Quality Assurance Unit designs educational programmes and monitors course delivery by conducting surveys and assessments to ensure quality and industry alignment. Jobsplus regularly collects feedback from learners to improve the quality and relevance of vocational training.

Together, MFHEA, DRLLE and Jobsplus form the backbone of Malta's QA system, enabling institutions to offer programmes that meet both national and international standards and the demands of the labour market.[228]

The standards are outlined in the NQAF for Further and Higher Education, and are the following:[229]

1. Policy for quality assurance: entities shall have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.

2. Institutional probity: entities shall ensure that they have appropriate measures and procedures in place to ensure institutional and financial probity.

3. Design and approval of programmes: self-accrediting providers shall have appropriate processes for the design and approval of their programmes of study.

4. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment: entities shall ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.

5. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: entities shall consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life-cycle'.

6. Teaching staff: entities shall assure the competence and effectiveness of their teaching staff.

7. Learning resources and student support: entities shall have appropriate funding for their learning and teaching activities and sufficient learning resources to fully support the students' learning experiences.

---

[227] https://mfhea.mt/research-and-policy/malta-qualifications-framework

[228] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/malta/quality-assurance-adult-education-and-training

[229] https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/External-Quality-Assurance-Provider-Audit-Manual-of-Procedures.pdf

8.  Information management: entities shall ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

9.  Public information: entities shall publish information about their activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.

10.  Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes: entities shall implement the 'Quality Cycle' by monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose.

11.  Cyclical external quality assurance: entities should undergo external quality assurance by, or with the approval of, the NCFHE on a cyclical basis.

## National ALE registries and information models for ALE

### Available registries (description, structure)

**Jobsplus**[230] is at the heart of the Maltese labour market and is the country's main Public Employment Service (PES), bringing jobseekers and employers together in a way that goes beyond traditional employment services. Jobsplus was originally founded in 1990 as the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC). The ETC was established in August 1990 by an Act of Parliament entitled the Employment and Training Services Act. Its legal status was that of a public corporation governed by a Chairman and Board of Directors appointed by Government, and by executive management personnel.
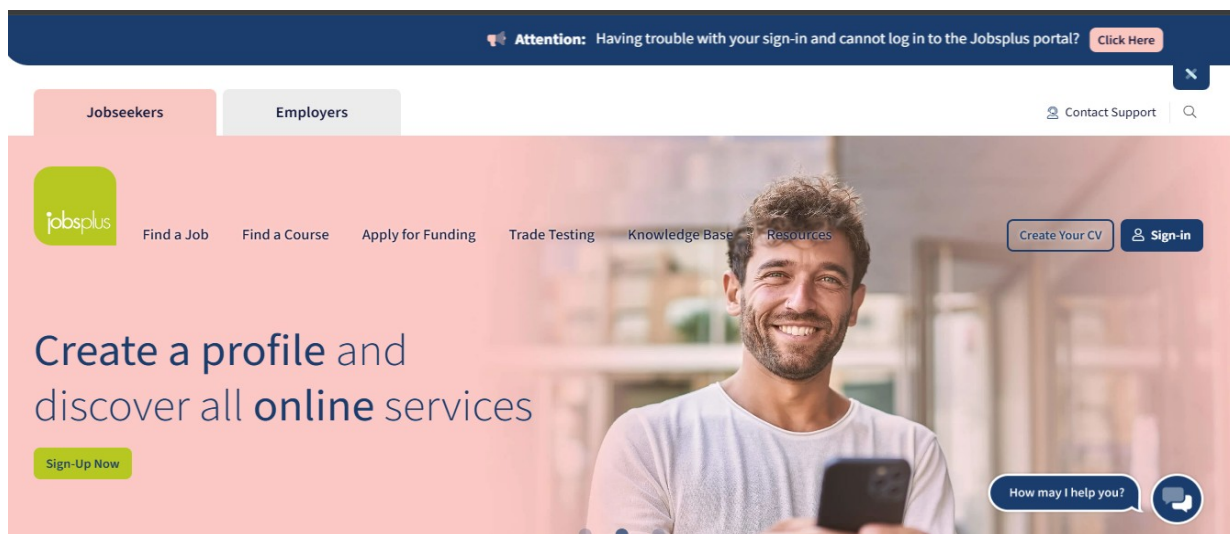


Figure 7. Jobplus portal

Source: Jobplus[231]

Jobsplus has evolved into a comprehensive employment hub that supports the Maltese economy and workforce through an ecosystem that promotes employment, skills building and career development. Jobsplus is committed to a human-centred approach, using active labour market policies, EU-funded

---

[230] https://jobsplus.gov.mt

[231] https://jobsplus.gov.mt

schemes, and industry-driven research to adapt to the dynamic changes of digitalisation and globalisation.[232]

Jobplus is the main platform utilises as an ALE registry in Malta. As they bring together their own course offering, external accredited and unaccredited course offerings and are the central point of offering adult learning opportunities through EFS funding, their information model is the most relevant for Malta.

*Information models for ALE*

Jobsplus, as the national employment agency in Malta, offers courses aimed at improving jobseekers' skills across various sectors.



*Figure 8. Jobplus platform search view*

*Source: Jobplus[233]*

### Course Data

**Course Name and Description**: Each course has a unique title and a detailed description outlining its objectives, content, and learning outcomes.

**Course Categories**: Courses are categorised into sectors like business skills, ICT, digital skills, healthcare, etc. This likely involves a hierarchical categorisation system to allow easy filtering and searchability across sectors.

**Course Type/Format**: The data model likely accommodates various formats (e.g., classroom, online, blended), with attributes specifying the mode of delivery.

---

**Duration**: The start and end dates for each course, as well as total duration (In training hours), are recorded.

**Schedule**: This field would capture the frequency and timing of sessions (e.g., weekly, daily).

**MQF Level**: Courses are mapped to specific MQF levels, requiring the platform to store the corresponding level (1–8) for each course.

**Course Providers**: Details about the organisation or institution delivering the course (e.g., Jobsplus or external training providers).

**Course Fees**: Some courses are offered for free, while others may have associated fees depending on the type and level of training provided.

**Eligibility Criteria**: Different courses come with specific eligibility requirements depending on the level and nature of the course. This information helps users understand what prior knowledge or qualifications they need to enrol.

**Certification:** Upon successful completion, learners receive certification. If the course is accredited by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), the certification will reflect the corresponding MQF level.

## User Data

**User/Trainee Profile**: Individuals' profiles may contain personal details (name, contact information), eligibility criteria (employment status, age), and prior educational qualifications.

**Enrolment and Attendance Data**: Each user's enrolment status for various courses, their attendance record (required for grant eligibility), and their progress towards course completion.

*Certification Data*

**Course Completion and Certification**: Information about whether a user/trainee has successfully completed a course, including the certificate issued and the MQF level awarded.

*Eligibility and Application Data*

**Eligibility Requirements**: Each course has its own set of prerequisites (e.g., age, prior education). This data is stored for reference when users apply for courses.

**Application Status:** The system stores the current status of applications (e.g., pending, approved, rejected) and track supporting documents required for registration, such as personal identification and prior certifications.

*Financial Data*

**Fees and Payment Information**: For courses requiring fees, the data model stores information on tuition, registration, and examination fees. It may also include payment status and records for each trainee.

**Links to applications:** External links to apply for funding where available

*Search and Filtering Capabilities*

**Search Filters:** The platform enables users to filter courses based on various attributes such as course type (online or in-person), sector, location, language, and MQF level. This functionality suggests a relational data model supporting multi-criteria filtering across the dataset.

Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

*Experiences with the introduction of ILA as a tool*

**Concept and Rationale**

**As indicated by the Ministry and the National Skills Council during the workshop and interview series,** ILAs are a proposed tool in Malta's strategy to promote lifelong learning and enhance workforce skills. ILAs should provide individuals with a dedicated fund to finance their education and training, allowing them to select courses that meet their specific needs. The goal is to increase adult participation in education, reduce skills gaps, and encourage continuous learning by directly addressing financial barriers to education.

They recognise that ILAs aim to make learning more accessible and flexible, especially for underrepresented groups, by empowering learners to invest in their own education. This approach is intended to better align educational opportunities with labour market needs, improve employability, and support career advancement. Stakeholders highlight the importance of ensuring clear definitions and monitoring mechanisms to prevent abuse of the ILA system.

**Current Plans and Strategic Direction**

Malta is currently assessing the feasibility of ILAs through a detailed cost-benefit analysis to integrate them into the existing adult education system. The focus is on determining how ILAs can complement existing programmes, such as the Training Pays Scheme and the Get Qualified Scheme, which already provide financial support for education and training. According to the NSC, a major focus of the feasibility study is exploring how ILAs can address upskilling priorities across different sectors, including non-accredited programmes that cater to emerging skills needs.

The strategic plan for ILAs involves close collaboration with stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, and employers, to ensure that ILAs align with labour market requirements and support national economic goals. Through the National Skills Council key stakeholders, such as the Chamber of SMEs and trade unions discuss broad input into the ILA design, while also considering the political and financial commitment necessary for successful implementation

**Building on Existing Measures and Programmes**

The government plans to build potential ILAs on existing adult education programmes and funding schemes. Current and past initiatives such as the Training Pays Scheme and the Get Qualified Scheme offer a foundation for the ILA model by providing financial support and incentives for adult learning. Expanding the scope of ILAs would allow for a more unified system that includes diverse learning opportunities, such as digital and non-traditional learning pathways.

While there seems to be broad agreement of the importance of integrating potential ILAs with existing schemes to avoid duplication and ensure a coherent approach to lifelong learning, there are also clear concerns around the need for a comprehensive governance structure that would need to oversee the integration of ILAs into existing frameworks while addressing state aid implications and avoiding an excessive burden on training service providers.

**Challenges and Considerations**

The implementation of ILAs in Malta presents several challenges. Concerns have been raised about the funding structure, particularly the potential for double funding and the need for upfront financial support.

It is crucial to consolidate existing mechanisms to prevent ILAs from causing confusion or overlapping with current programmes. Additionally, careful consideration must be given to the inclusion of non-accredited programmes. While these could offer flexibility in addressing emerging skills demands, they would require a solid and comprehensive governance to maintain quality and transparency.

Co-funded by
the European Union

## 1.3. Cyprus

### Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

*Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE*

The landscape of ALE in Cyprus has evolved significantly over the years, influenced by national and EU directives.

The emphasis on adult education in Cyprus began after its independence from the British Empire in 1960. During the 1960s and 1970s, the government, alongside various institutions, established programmes to address adult education needs. Significant milestones include creating the Cyprus Productivity Centre in 1973, aimed at enhancing workforce productivity through training programmes and establishing the **University of Cyprus**[234] in 1989, which provided higher education opportunities for both traditional and adult learners. Cyprus' membership in the EU in 2004 further influenced its ALE policies, promoting lifelong learning, skills development, and employability.

In 2007, Cyprus launched its **National Lifelong Learning Strategy for 2007-2013**[235]. This strategy focused on promoting access to education and training, linking education and training with the labour market, researching lifelong learning outcomes, improving infrastructure, and establishing efficient governance mechanisms. Another significant development was the establishment of the **Cyprus Qualifications Framework (CyQF)**[236] in 2012 by the Council of Ministers. The CyQF adopted the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework, facilitating the validation and comparability of qualifications across formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities. This framework improves the mobility of learners and the quality assurance of training programmes. The **National Committee for the Development and Establishment of a National Qualifications Framework in Cyprus**[237] oversees the the implementation of CyQF and foster stakeholder collaboration.

The **Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth (MoESY)**[238] provide pathways for adults to complete their secondary or basic education through Evening Gymnasia and Evening Technical Schools. Programmes like the New Modern Apprenticeship[239] cater to younger adults. In contrast, non-formal education programmes such as those offered by **Adult Education Centres**[240] and **State Institutes of Further Education**[241] provide various courses without official certification. The **Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA)**[242] has supported employed and unemployed individuals for enhancing their skills through various programmes. The HRDA provides subsidies for businesses to train new and existing employees, providing for the period 2015 - 2021 around €15 million.

---

[234] https://www.ucy.ac.cy/?lang=en

[235] National Lifelong Learning Strategy for 2007-2013

[236] https://www.cyqf.gov.cy/index.php/en

[237] https://www.cyqf.gov.cy/index.php/en/about/about-us

[238] https://www.moec.gov.cy/en

[239] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches/new-modern-apprenticeship

[240] https://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/en/index.html

[241] https://www.moec.gov.cy/en/state_institutes.html

[242] Human Resource Development Authority

These include subsidies for businesses to train new and existing employees, with over 45,000 trainees participating in HRDA programmes in 2018, for €15.7 million.[243]

Despite these developments, Cyprus faces challenges such as low adult participation in VET, limited digital literacy, and fragmented adult education systems. As described in the most recent report of **Cedefop for Cyprus[244]** (2020), Cyprus faces various challenges with students' basic skills, adults' digital literacy and digital skills, adult participation in VET and adult participation in lifelong learning activities, which all remain below the EU average level. Literature in the Cypriot context signifies the lack of an authority supervising all the activities on adult learning and the absence of a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating activities on a national level for lifelong learning[245]. In addition, the adult education sector seems fragmented, considering the absence of coherent assurance processes. Furthermore, it is reported a lack of collaboration between academia, research, and industry (knowledge triangle) to support the skills and employability of new graduates. At the same time, there are few career guidance and counselling services to support youth and adults with low qualifications.

The introduction of the **Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (2021-2027) (CyLLIS, 2022)[246]** aimed to address these gaps, aspiring to provide a long-term strategic framework towards the development of a knowledge-based society, where all citizens are provided with learning opportunities, to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will facilitate their personal and social growth, professional advancement, social inclusion, resilience, and well-being.

The CyLLIS 2021-2027 report sets four strategic priorities and objectives to achieve until 2027:

1. establish the governance, monitoring, and evaluation framework involving the development of action plans with clearly delineated stakeholders 'roles and responsibilities;

2. decrease youth unemployment and upskill/reskill youth and the workforce, providing learning opportunities associated with market needs, while putting emphasis on enhancing the skills of adults with low qualifications;

3. increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning, by providing incentives, eliminating barriers and strengthening communication;

4. enhance the professional practice of adult educators and trainers, while providing support to educators of all education levels to enhance lifelong learning skills.

Overall, the CyLLIS aims to create the necessary synergies amongst various stakeholders involved in adult learning to assist the implementation of strategic objectives. An Action Plan accompanies the CyLLIS, providing indicative actions and timelines for the authorities involved and a common framework for implementing the strategy. These advances are still in progress.

*National ALE governance structure*

---

[243] https://www.anad.org.cy/wps/wcm/connect/hrda/447ee1ec-024b-4adf-b1d2-d4b195118860/Summary+of+study.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_HHHAH9O0NGE980A7L632QJ0000-447ee1ec-024b-4adf-b1d2-d4b195118860-opPxNSr

[244] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/countries/cyprus

[245] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/cyprus-new-digital-portal-human-resource-development-authority-cyprus

[246] Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (2021-2027)

**Governmental Bodies**

In Cyprus, the governance structure for ALE is primarily managed by four governmental bodies: the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth (MoESY), the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC), and the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy.

**Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth (MoESY)**[247]: This ministry is the principal governmental authority responsible for formulating and implementing education-related policies, including ALE. MoESY oversees a wide range of educational programmes designed for adult learners. It provides pathways for adults to complete secondary education through institutions such as Evening Gymnasia and Evening Technical Schools and offers non-formal education programmes via **Adult Education Centres**[248]. Additionally, the Ministry administers the **State Institutes of Further Education**[249], which provide courses in ICT, bookkeeping, languages, and other subjects, often preparing learners for external certifications.

**European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Office**[250]: Within MoESY, this office is crucial in coordinating Cyprus' participation in European and international ALE initiatives. It is responsible for aligning national policies with EU directives and other international frameworks, ensuring Cyprus benefits from best practices and funding opportunities. This office also oversees the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and adult education programmes, facilitating collaboration with other countries and international organizations to enhance the quality and accessibility of adult education in Cyprus.

**Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA)**[251]: The HRDA plays a critical role in enhancing the skills and competencies of the Cypriot workforce through lifelong learning and vocational training programmes. It designs and implements various training initiatives aimed at improving employability and productivity. The HRDA is instrumental in offering subsidies to businesses for employee training and running programmes that help unemployed individuals gain new skills and re-enter the workforce. The authority also manages the system of vocational qualifications within the Cyprus Qualifications Framework[252] (CyQF) to validate and recognise skills acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal learning.

**Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC)**[253]: Established in 1963, the CPC is a public institution under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance dedicated to improving the productivity and efficiency of the workforce in Cyprus. The CPC offers a variety of training programmes focused on enhancing technical and managerial skills across different sectors. These programmes are designed to meet the needs of both private and public sector employees, contributing to the overall competitiveness of the Cypriot economy. The CPC also plays a role in conducting research and providing consultancy services to support productivity improvement initiatives.

---

[247] https://www.moec.gov.cy/en

[248] https://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/en/index.html

[249] https://www.moec.gov.cy/en/state_institutes.html

[250] https://www.moec.gov.cy/eiao/en

[251] Human Resource Development Authority

[252] https://www.cyqf.gov.cy/index.php/en

[253] Human Resource Development Authority

**Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy**[254]: The newly established deputy ministry (in 2020) plays an essential role in promoting digital skills and innovation in the ALE landscape in Cyprus. The Deputy Ministry aims to:

- design and implement the National Digital Policy and Strategy[255];

- design, coordinate and implement the National Policy and Strategy for Research & Innovation[256];

- design and implement an integrated Cybersecurity Strategic Policy Framework[257].

The Deputy Ministry collaborates with other governmental bodies, educational institutions, and the private sector to develop and implement digital initiatives.

The **National Coalition for Digital Skills and Jobs**[258], now called the "Coalition", is a collective of organizations from the public and private sectors and civil society dedicated to advancing digital literacy across all social and economic life areas. Its goal is to bridge the digital divide and foster an open, democratic, and inclusive society. The Coalition seeks to enhance coordination and foster trust and constructive collaboration among all stakeholders to maximize impact and avoid overlapping efforts and initiatives. The Coalition operates under the oversight of the Digital Champion, a role held by the Permanent Secretary of the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy, as designated by Decision No. 89,557[259] of the Council of Ministers on June 10, 2020. It forms part of the National Action Plan for Digital Skills 2021-2025[260], integrated into the national Recovery and Resilience Plan, *Cyprus_tomorrow*[261].

**Stakeholders**

Apart from the primary governmental bodies, several other stakeholders, including local authorities, educational institutions, NGOs, and private sector partners, play vital roles in the ALE landscape in Cyprus.

**Local Authorities**: Local governments support ALE by facilitating and promoting educational programmes within their communities. They often collaborate with national bodies to implement policies and initiatives at the local level, ensuring that educational opportunities are accessible to residents.

**Educational Institutions**: Universities, technical schools, and other educational providers are crucial in delivering ALE programmes. Institutions like the University of Cyprus and various vocational schools offer courses and training programmes that cater to adult learners seeking to enhance their skills or attain higher education qualifications.

**Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)**: NGOs contribute significantly to the ALE sector by providing specialized training and educational programmes tailored to specific groups, such as immigrants,

---

[254] https://www.gov.cy/dmrid/en

[255] https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/actions/national-initiatives/national-strategies/cyprus-national-digital-decade-strategic-roadmap

[256] https://www.nbri.gov.cy/strategy-plan/national-ri-strategy

[257] https://resilience.enisa.europa.eu/enisas-ncss-project/enisa-cyber-security-strategies-workshops/ OCECPR_NCSStrategy_English.pdf

[258] https://digitalcoalition.gov.cy/about

[259] Ibidem

[260] https://digitalcoalition.gov.cy/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Digital-Skills-National-Action-Plan-2021-2025-2.pdf

[261] https://cyprus-tomorrow.gov.cy/cypresidency/kyprostoavrio.nsf/home/home?opendocument

refugees, and other marginalized populations. They often fill gaps in the system by addressing the unique educational needs of these groups.

**Private Sector Partners**: Businesses and industries are key partners in the ALE ecosystem. They often collaborate with the HRDA, CPC, and other bodies to identify skill gaps in the workforce and develop training programmes that address these needs. Private companies also provide training opportunities for their employees and may offer support for broader educational initiatives.

In summary, the national ALE governance structure in Cyprus involves various stakeholders, which, to some extent, results in the fragmentation of the system. The Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth, the Human Resource Development Authority, the Cyprus Productivity Centre, and the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digital Policy are the main governmental bodies driving ALE policies and programmes. Local authorities, educational institutions, NGOs, and private sector partners play supportive and complementary roles in delivering and enhancing adult education and training opportunities across the country.

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

Funding for ALE in Cyprus comes from a combination of national and European sources.

**National Funding**

At the national level, the primary sources of funding for ALE are the Cypriot government and various public institutions. The Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth (MoESY) allocates a significant portion of its budget to support adult education programmes. This includes funding for Evening Gymnasia, Evening Technical Schools, and Adult Education Centres, which provide accessible educational opportunities for adults seeking to complete secondary education or gain new skills. Additionally, the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) uses the 'Human Resource Development levy' of 0.5% on every employer's payroll—government excluded. The HRDA's jurisdiction does not extend to self-employed people or civil servants.[262] These programmes often include subsidies for businesses to train their employees and support for unemployed individuals to acquire new skills. The Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC), funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, also contributes to national ALE efforts by offering training programmes and consultancy services to improve workforce productivity.[263]

*European Union Funding*

European Union funding is crucial in complementing national efforts and expanding the scope and reach of ALE programmes in Cyprus. Several key initiatives and programmes funded by the EU have been instrumental in supporting lifelong learning and adult education.

One notable EU-funded initiative is the **Erasmus+ programme**, which allows adult learners and educators to participate in mobility projects, professional development, and cross-border cooperation. Through Erasmus+, Cypriot institutions and organizations can access funding for projects that enhance the quality of adult education, promote innovation, and foster international collaboration.

---

[262] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/financing-adult-learning-db/search/human-resource-development-fund-human-resource-development-authority-cyprus-hrda

[263] https://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/kepa/kepa.nsf/services01_el/services01_el?OpenDocument

Another significant source of EU funding is the **European Social Fund (ESF)**. The ESF co-finances various projects and programmes to improve the skills and employability of adult learners in Cyprus. These projects often focus on upskilling and reskilling initiatives, targeting vulnerable groups, such as the unemployed, individuals with low qualifications, and those at risk of social exclusion. The ESF also supports measures to enhance digital literacy and promote lifelong learning, ensuring that Cypriot adults are well-equipped to navigate the evolving labour market.

**National Recovery and Resilience Plan(NRRP)[264]:** A significant recent development in the funding landscape for ALE in Cyprus includes educational programmes for adult education within the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. This plan, part of the EU's broader Recovery and Resilience Facility[265], aims to mitigate the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Coordinated by the HRDA, the NRRP funds numerous educational initiatives to boost adult learning and upskilling. These programmes focus on enhancing digital skills, promoting green skills, and fostering lifelong learning to support the resilience and adaptability of the workforce. The NRRP funding supports the immediate recovery efforts. It aims to ensure long-term sustainable growth and competitiveness for Cyprus by equipping adults with the skills needed for the future labour market. The HRDA, through this fund, offers the possibility for adult learners, especially the unemployed and with low qualifications, to participate in various trainings free of charge.

The EU's **Horizon 2020** and its successor, Horizon Europe, also provide funding opportunities for research and innovation projects related to ALE. These programmes support initiatives that explore new methods and technologies for adult education, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation to technological advancements.

In addition to these major funding sources, Cyprus also benefits from participation in other EU programmes and initiatives, such as the **Digital Europe Programme** and the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**. These programmes provide additional resources for projects that enhance digital skills, promote innovation, and support regional development through education and training initiatives.

## Quality assurance in national ALE systems

### Quality assurance systems in ALE

Quality assurance systems in Cyprus involve two main mechanisms: the **Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education[266]** and the **Professional Qualifications System[267]**.

The **Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA)** (n.d.) is the independent authority responsible for safeguarding standards and promoting continuous improvement within HEIs in Cyprus. Established under the **Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Law of 2015[268]**, CYQAA ensures HEIs comply with the European Standards and Guidelines and the broader European policy for mobility and mutual qualification recognition. The agency promotes a quality culture within HEIs by driving them to enhance their internal quality mechanisms and align with international standards.

---

[264] https://cyprus-tomorrow.gov.cy/cypresidency/kyprostoavrio.nsf/home/home?opendocument

[265] https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

[266] https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en

[267] Professional Qualifications System

[268] Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Law of 2015

CYQAA's competencies, as defined by law, include the institutional, departmental, and programmatic evaluation and accreditation of higher education, ensuring adherence to European quality assurance standards. The agency is also responsible for the evaluation and accreditation of cross-border education offered by local institutions abroad and foreign institutions in Cyprus. Additionally, CYQAA assesses inter-institutional cooperation among HEIs and provides information on quality assurance in higher education. These efforts support the continuous upgrading of HEIs and their programmes, promoting an environment of excellence and international compatibility in Cyprus's higher education landscape.

The **Professional Qualifications System (PQS) (2021)** in Cyprus is designed to enhance the skills and competencies of the workforce by providing a structured process for the evaluation and certification of professional qualifications. This system is a key component in the country's efforts to improve employability, productivity, and competitiveness across various sectors. The primary purpose of the PQS is to upgrade human capital by formally recognizing the skills and knowledge individuals have acquired through various learning experiences, including formal education, non-formal training, and informal learning. This system particularly targets employees, the unemployed, and economically inactive individuals, providing them with opportunities to validate their professional competencies and enhance their career prospects.

Despite these quality assurance systems, participants of the Discover Workshop emphasised a need for a transparent certification process for trainers. They addressed the challenges self-employed trainers face in obtaining qualifications, especially financial ones. As the representative of HRDA highlighted, adult education provider centres offer free certification for trainers, but self-employed trainers may need financial assistance. The representative of the Adult Education Centres also noted that there has been little change in the qualifications of educators, particularly those transitioning from employment to self-employment. Some trainers have HDRA certifications, but barriers exist, such as fees for certification processes.

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

**Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education CyQAA** (n.d.) uses a set of quality indicators and evaluation methods designed so that HEIs and their programmes meet high standards. These indicators include compliance with specific standards set by CyQAA, which align with the **European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)** for **Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area**. The ESG for quality assurance in higher education comprised three parts[269]: internal quality assurance, external quality assurance, and quality assurance agencies. These standards and policies cover many areas, including the design and approval of programmes, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, progression, recognition and certification, teaching staff, learning resources and student support, design methodologies, implementing processes, resources and others. Research and innovation are also important indicators, with assessments of research output, including publications, patents, and participation in research projects. The contribution of research to innovation and its impact on society and the economy are also evaluated. Furthermore, CyQAA considers the institutional capacity and resources, such as infrastructure and facilities, to ensure that HEIs have the necessary support to provide high-quality education. These comprehensive quality indicators and methods collectively support the continuous improvement and enhancement of higher education in Cyprus.

---

[269] https://www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area

**Professional Qualifications Assessment Centres (PQAC)**[270] approved by the HRDA assess and certify professional qualifications under the PQS. These centres assess candidates' learning outcomes by considering their formal, non-formal, and informal learning experiences. Certified Vocational Training Centres organise these evaluations and may partner with specialized Vocational Training Structures relevant to the specific professions being assessed.

Evaluations are carried out by a two-member team of **Professional Qualifications Evaluators** based on standards developed by the HRDA. The process involves thoroughly examining the candidates' competencies against established PQS. Successful candidates receive **Professional Qualification Certificates**, which are integrated into the CyQF and aligned with the EQF. These certificates are recognized as reliable and valid credentials that enhance the holders' career opportunities and facilitate their mobility within the European Economic Area.

The CyQF includes the system of vocational qualifications developed by the HRDA, enabling the validation and comparability of learners' qualifications in various lifelong learning activities (formal, non-formal and informal). Therefore, this adoption of CyQF facilitates learners' mobility while improving the quality assurance of training programmes and activities (Cedefop, 2020a). The **National Qualifications Authority** has been established, leading the implementation of CyQF at the operational level. In contrast, the CyQF Committee has been established at an advisory level to support stakeholder collaboration (Cedefop, 2020b). The CyQF Commitee focuses specifically on consulting stakeholders on developing and implementing the CyQF, promoting the dissemination of the CyQF and advising the MoESY.

## National ALE registries and information models for ALE

*Available registries (description, structure)*

Currently, three main platforms offer access to educational programmes and training:

- the Hermes[271] digital portal, coordinated by the HRDA;

- the Cyprus Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition[272], coordinated by the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy;

- the e-Gnosis Platform[273] of education and training programmes of the Cyprus Productivity Centre.

- the Cyos Learning Platform[274] of education and training programmes of the Cyprus Productivity Centre.

### 'Hermes' (Ερμής) Digital Portal, Human Resource Development Authority

The HRDA of Cyprus has developed the Hermes platform, released in 2022, a comprehensive digital tool designed to enhance the management and dissemination of information related to ALE in Cyprus. As mentioned in Cedefop (2022)[275], the Hermes platform is part of a more extensive ICT system of HRDA aiming to improve the organisation's operations. The Hermes platform provides access to schemes and

---

[270] Professional Qualifications Assessment Centres

[271] https://ermis.anad.org.cy/#/front

[272] https://digitalcoalition.gov.cy/home

[273] https://www.e-gnosis.gov.cy/training

[274] https://cyos-learn.gov.cy

[275] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/cyprus-new-digital-portal-human-resource-development-authority-cyprus

systems managed by the HRDA. With straightforward, user-friendly procedures that lead users through the registration process, application submission, processing, and progress tracking, including the payment of subsidies, the Hermes platform facilitates easy access to all HRDA schemes and systems.

Currently, external users can register on the Hermes platform as a physical person, a legal entity, a consortium, or a government body, depending on their specific status as an employer, a vocational trainer, a facility, a centre for vocational training, or a centre for evaluating vocational qualifications. The platform is only available in Greek.

**The Cyprus & Digital Skills Jobs Coalition platform, Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation & Digital Policy**

The Cyprus & Digital Skills Jobs Coalition platform is coordinated by the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation & Digital Policy. Its development is part of the Cyprus National Coalition for Digital Skills and Jobs, which consists of more than 50 members in the public and private sectors and aims to promote a digital society (Cyprus—Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, 2024).

The platform's development is part of a pan-European project funded by CEF. The platform includes an overview of available training opportunities and programmes on a national level, available to all citizens of Cyprus. At a later stage, as reported in the Jobs platform website (Cyprus—Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, 2024), the platform will provide access to e-learning resources on selected thematic areas. The platform is available in both English and Greek.

**Platform of education and training programmes of the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC)**

The CPC, a public institution monitored by the Cyprus Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, has developed two platforms:

- the e-Gnosis platform[276], which the CPC uses for several years;

- the newly established Cyos learn platform[277], that was developed within the framework of European Years of Skills.

Currently, the two platforms provide access to different training programmes and resources. During the Design thinking workshops, a representative of CPC informed us that the efforts are to gradually move all the training programmes to the Cyos learn platform and to stop using the e-Gnosis platform. The CPC implements training programmes in digital skills, technical Vocational Training (TVET), safety and health and modern professional development for the green and digital transition that have been included in the Action Plan for the European Year of Skills 2023. Most programmes are offered without a cost or at low cost for Cypriot citizens.

Participants of the Discover workshop, as well as the HRDA representative who participated in the interview process, raised concerns about the existence of different platforms. They agreed that it is important to have one national registry that includes all the training programmes and opportunities, without, though, implying that the current national registries should be abolished.

*Information models for ALE*

**Hermes Platform**

---

[276] https://www.e-gnosis.gov.cy/training
[277] https://cyos-learn.gov.cy

The Hermes platform provides services according to the different types of users:

- **Participation in training programmes and courses.** Details about the types of ALE programmes and courses available, their content, duration for employers, employees, unemployed. This category also includes some information about accredited training providers, including vocational training centres and other institutions offering adult education programmes.

- **Organising of training programmes.** Information and procedures for training providers on how to organize training programmes.

- **Professional Qualifications System.** Information about procedures for the assessment and certification of professional qualifications for Centres for the Assessment of Professional Qualifications, assessors, employees, unemployed or inactive persons.

- **Application Management.** A service that offers the possibility to users to manage or update applications concerning user roles, plans, the qualifications system, attendance, training plan and any tasks users may have as assessors.

- **Profile, roles information.** A service that offers the possibility to users to update or manage their profiles, apply for a role, register, manage or update financial information, submit a CV or change password.
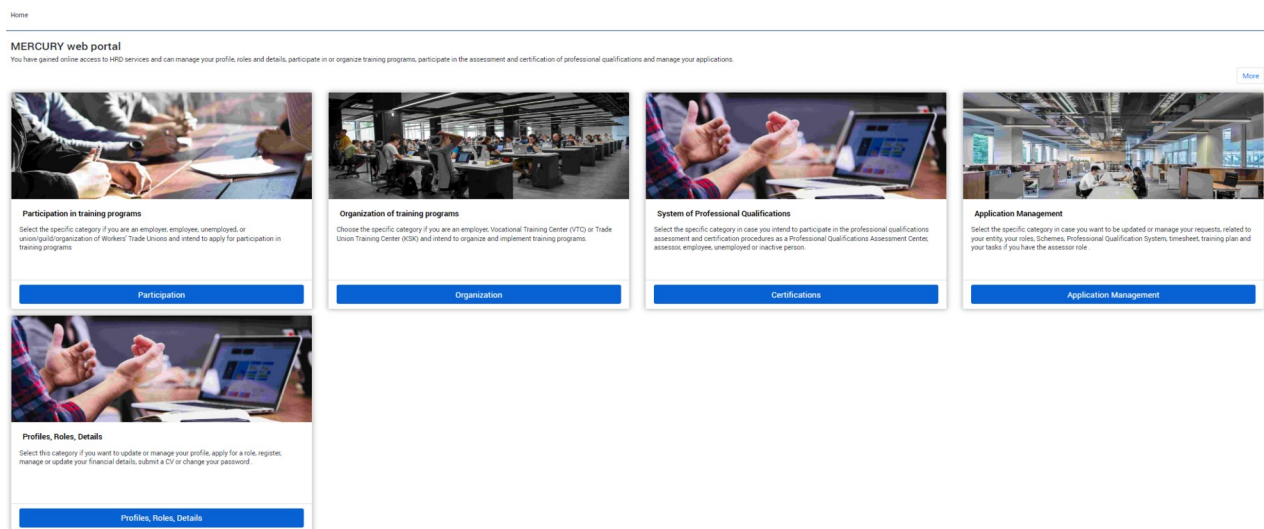


*Figure 9. Hermes platform*

*Source: Hermes[278]*

These services enable the minimise of bureaucracy and administrative costs, facilitating the participation in training programmes monitored by HRDA. Participants of the Discover Workshop, as well as the representative of HRDA participating in the interview process, expressed concerns about the user-friendliness of Hermes, noting that it requires some time to learn and navigate effectively. For the average user, the listing of programmes on Hermes can be difficult to browse and research. Efforts are underway to create a new site, as part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of Cyprus, which will be connected to the

---

[278] https://ermis.anad.org.cy/#/front

HDRA website to make it easier for users to find programmes. However, registering for a programme will still require users to create a profile on Hermes platform.

**The Cyprus & Digital Skills Jobs Coalition platform**

The platform's interface provides access to several key sections:

1. A search bar, that allow users to search on various sections like resources, training programmes, and job opportunities.

2. Information on the Coalition and explanation of its purpose.

3. Access to an e-learning library, that contains:

   a. Skill Assessment tools, which enable users to evaluate their digital skills. This service is not yet available, but as explained on the platform, it will be soon.

   b. Available training opportunities, which provides a detailed listing of available courses, workshops, and certifications offered by various institutions.

   c. Digital Skills Resources that enable users to enhance their digital skills through online learning material.

4. Information on upcoming events in relation to digital skills.

5. Information on funding opportunities, provided by different organisations and bodies.

6. Exploration of successful approaches and initiatives, bridging the digital skills gap (Innovation tab). The user may search based on three categories: good practices, which provides an overview of good practices in digital skills at national and European level; research, where users may review studies and data on digital skills related matters; digital skills resources, where users may explore tools on digital skills.

7. A News tab, that provides information on the latest digital trends on national, European and global level.

8. Information on the Strategic framework of the Coalition.

The Training Programmes section provides a detailed listing of, helping users identify suitable learning paths. Users may choose their level of interest to navigate to the available training programmes, selecting one of two available categories: to enhance their generic digital skills as a citizen, and to enrich professional digital skills as ICT professionals (Figure 10).
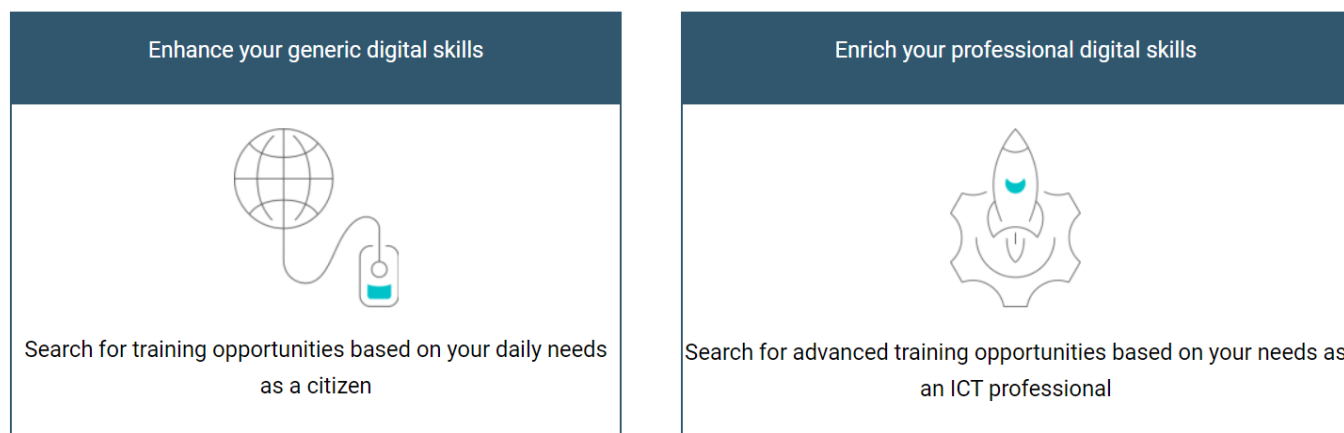
*Figure 10. Search for available training programmes*

*Source: Hermes[279]*

The first selection allows users to enhance their digital skills by choosing training programmes grouped into 5 competence areas across more than 30 topics.

Some limitations of the platform include the fact that users cannot apply directly to their interested training programmes, as the platform hosts information on available training opportunities organised by various organisations. Also, in most cases, there is insufficient information on the content and procedures of the programme, as well as the process of applying to the programme.

**Platform of education and training programmes of the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC)**

*Overview of the e-Gnosis platform*

The platform's interface provides, at first glance, the available training opportunities in digital skills, technical Vocational Training (TVET), safety and health and modern professional development for the green and digital transition that have been included in the Action Plan for the European Year of Skills 2023. Users, by selecting a category, e.g. digital skills for people over 55, have access to the available training opportunities that fall under this category (e.g. basic information on Microsoft Office, how to use a smartphone), the organiser, the type of the programme, date, location, duration, and whether there are available seats.

---

[279] https://ermis.anad.org.cy/#/front

*Figure 11. e-Gnosis platform*

*Source: e-Gnosis[280]*

When selecting a programme with available seats, the user has access to information on the cost of participation, schedule, length, place, time programme leader, organisation, enrolment, remaining seats available, and funding. Users may also directly apply to a training programme without creating an account or logging in.

## The Cyos-learn platform

The platform's homepage provides a brief explanation of the available training opportunities organised by CPC within the framework of the European Year of Skills and for the Development of a Modern Professional Culture. As the description explains, these programmes can be delivered either face-to-face or at a distance in the form of synchronous learning – webinars or asynchronous learning (online courses).

The platform provides access to different thematic sections:

1. The **Green Development and Environment** section, which focuses on the development of green skills to respond to environmental challenges.

2. The **Quality** section, which aims to promote continuous improvement and business sustainability.

3. The **Health & Safety** in employment section.

4. The **Digital Skills** section characterised as a key to more employment opportunities and increased productivity.

5. Brief reference to the main thematic sections, i.e. Green Development & Environment, Digital Skills, Health & Safety, and Quality.

6. Training programmes for the development of specific skills.

7. Resources on online presentations focusing on technology and digital skills

The platform is accessible only in Greek and English.

---

[280] https://www.e-gnosis.gov.cy/training/eskills55
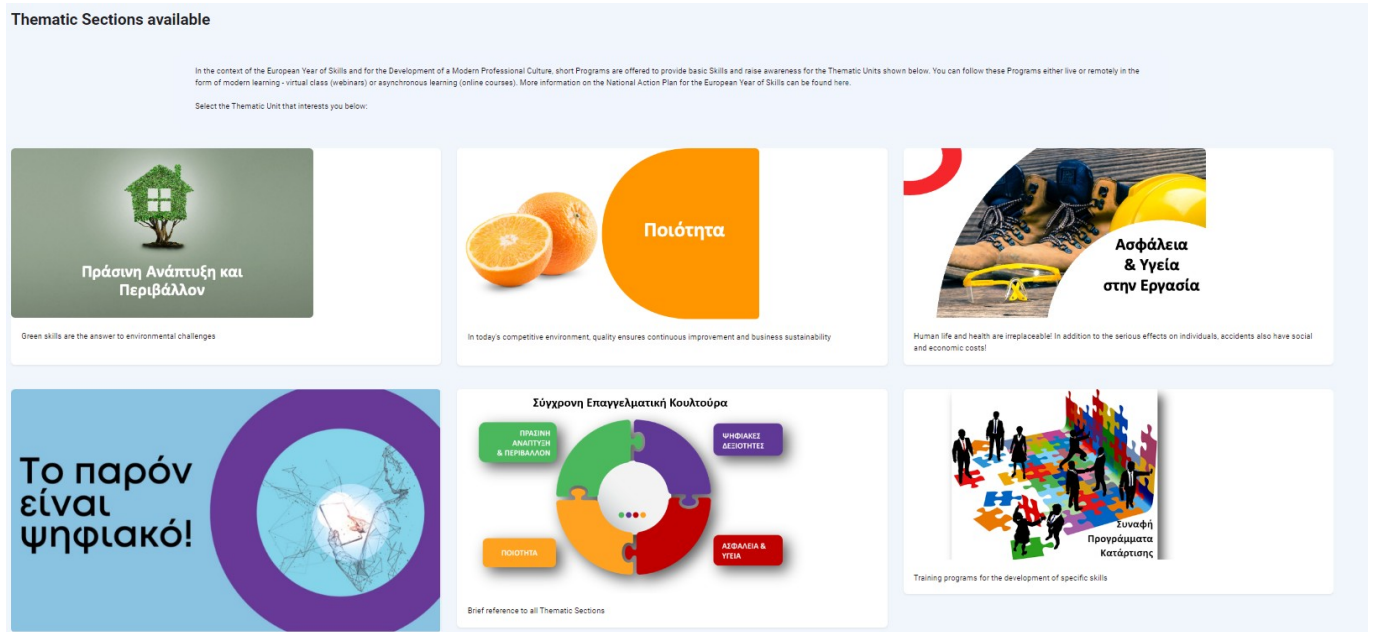
*Figure 12. Cyos learn platform*

*Source: Cyos[281]*

## Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

### *Experiences with the introduction of ILA as a tool*

The HRDA, within the framework of the **Cohesion Policy Programme THALIA 2021-2027**[282], has undertaken the implementation of the **Individual Learning Accounts** project (hereafter referred to as the ILAs), which is co-financed by the EU.

The introduction of ILAs involves their pilot implementation by providing credits to eligible groups of employees and unemployed individuals to attend training programmes aimed at acquiring new or upgrading existing knowledge and skills.

This project, launched on July 1st, 2024, introduces ILAs for selected employees and long-term unemployed individuals. These accounts provide them with credits to access training programmes that either develop new skills or enhance existing ones. A total of 1,800 people will receive these accounts, which will remain valid for three years.

The project's goal is to encourage lifelong learning by offering ILA holders the chance to improve their knowledge and skills through participation in approved training programmes under the Multi-Business Training Programmes – Standard Scheme[283].

Eligible participants include employees with a maximum education level of upper secondary (high school or technical/vocational school) and individuals unemployed for more than six months. After registering in

---

281 https://www.cyos.gov.cy/cyos/eys.nsf/home/home?openform

282 https://thalia.com.cy/en/home-en

283 Individual Learning Accounts project

the system, interested individuals can apply for an ILA via HRDA's Hermes platform. Upon approval, their account will be credited with €2,400, which they can use to pay for training programmes.

To inform those interested in participating in the Project and obtaining an ILA, the HRDA publishes an invitation on its website, in the media, and on social networks. The HRDA also issued a Policy and Procedures Guide that describes in detail the policy, procedures, and approval criteria/conditions at each stage of the Project's implementation.

The HRDA officer participating in the interview process noted that efforts are currently made to connect ILAs with the Hermes platform, which is expected to be launched in January 2025. The process for implementing the ILAs will begin with a call for eligible groups to create accounts. Participants will then apply for training programmes, with the respective costs deducted from their accounts and paid directly to the training centre (KEK). In exceptional cases, such as programme cancellations or if a programme is deemed irrelevant to the participant (with less than 25% completion), funds will be returned to the individual's account for future use. The existing procedure will apply if an employer sends an employee for training. Unemployed individuals can attend two programmes for free, which can be used in addition to the benefits they are entitled to under the THALEIA programme.

As the HRDA representative further explained, approved programmes are based on a combination of industry needs, research, and input from professional associations. The focus is on work-related skills for employed individuals rather than hobby-based classes, such as ceramics. The project's long-term goal is to observe participant interest, programme usage, budget sufficiency, and potential misuse. HDRA plans to evaluate the programme at the end of the three-year period and make improvements where necessary. They also hope to extend the programme.

A challenge noted by the Discover Workshop participants was that the current project is not open to the public but targets specific groups. As the participants explained, this comes in contrast to the framework of ILAs that aim to provide access to training opportunities to all working-age adults. Also, the fact that ILAs can be used only for specific categories of training opportunities, signifies a rather limited understanding of adult education mostly connected with employability. Therefore, this does not consider the social and personal benefits of the broader role of adult education, that promotes personal development and combats exclusion from the society.

*Results with introducing ILA at the national level*

Cyprus has no experience with the introduction of ILA as a tool, and therefore no results are available.

## 1.4. Slovakia

### Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

*Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE*

**The National programme for the development of education 2018 – 2027[284] (Národný program rozvoja výchovy a vzdelávania)**

The purpose of the **National programme for the development of education (NPDE)** is to provide a long-term framework for the content of education over a 10-year period, covering the strategic aims and objectives of the Slovak Republic in education. This spans from pre-primary through primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as further education aimed at personal development and acquiring relevant knowledge and skills necessary for graduates' success in the job market. The strategy's main goals are to enhance the quality of the educational system, expand access to quality education for all, and modernize the educational system in terms of content, management, funding, and evaluation.

**NPDE focuses significantly on adult education and lifelong learning, aligning with European strategies to foster skill enhancement and adaptability.** Recognizing lifelong learning as essential, the programme categorizes learning into formal, non-formal, and informal, each with distinct structures and objectives. Formal learning provides structured, credentialed education, while non-formal includes structured, uncertified programmes, and informal learning encompasses unstructured personal learning experiences.

To increase inclusivity and encourage continuous skill development, the programme emphasizes structured adult education and the recognition of qualifications. Key goals include aligning educational systems with labour market demands, reducing skill shortages, and enhancing the quality and flexibility of educational programmes.[285]

The programme also highlights the need to support skills development relevant to evolving economic conditions, such as digitalization and automation, while encouraging greater involvement from disadvantaged groups.

**Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 (LLCS)[286]**

LLCS was approved by the Slovak government on November 24, 2021. The LLCS responds to the **National Reform Programme of the Slovak Republic 2020[287]**, aiming to address challenges in education through lifelong learning initiatives suited to Slovakia's evolving labour market, including the impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

---

[284] https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/6987_uciace_sa_slovensko.pdf

[285] Ibidem

[286] Slovak translation: Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Guidance for 2021-2030; https://zakladnezrucnosti.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/EN_Strategia-CZVaP_fin.pdf

[287] https://mfsr.sk/files/en/finance/institute-financial-policy/strategic-documents/national-reform-program/npr_2020_final_en.pdf

The LLCS focuses on the most urgent topics that were not or were only partly covered by the **National recovery and resilience plan**[288]. It also paves the way for the replacement of the obsolete **Lifelong Learning Act (568/2009)**[289] with new legislation.

LLCS 2030 focuses on four thematic areas: qualification system; basic skills and civic education; lifelong learning and counselling, and motivation of citizens for lifelong learning; and building a system of skills management and identification of lifelong learning needs. It proposes 51 measures divided into 13 thematic units corresponding to topics in need of urgent intervention:

second chance education and **'F-type programmes' (ISCED 253)**[290] for low achievers in lower secondary general education;

a. increasing the attractiveness and quality of VET - Centres of excellence in VET;

b. a national skills improvement initiative and pilot intervention programmes;

c. the **Slovak Qualifications Framework (SQF)**[291] and **National Qualifications System (NSK)**[292];

d. a system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning;

e. increasing the flexibility of the qualifications system by 'smaller' qualifications and micro-credentials;

f. short-cycle tertiary programmes at the Slovak Qualification Framework level 5;

g. creating a comprehensive system for graduate tracking;

h. support for the sustainability of the sector council management system with a focus on the transfer of innovation processes and labour market requirements to lifelong learning;

i. support for adult civic education;

j. harmonisation of the lifelong guidance system;

k. development of professional counselling services within employment services;

l. individual learning accounts as a tool for individualised support in persons further education (retraining) and a pilot scheme for strengthening the motivation of adult participation in education.[293]

**Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF)**[294] and the **Sector Councils Alliance (SCA)**[295] are responsible actors, while the **Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth (MERDY)**[296][297] is a

---

[288] https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/slovakias-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en

[289] https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2009/568/20150901

[290] https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf

[291] https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/289_Narodny%20kvalifikacny%20ramec%20SR_final.pdf

[292] https://www.kvalifikacie.sk/co-je-nsk

[293] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/42193

[294] https://www.employment.gov.sk/en

[295] Slovak translation: Sector Councils Alliance; https://www.alianciasr.sk/en/homepage

[296] https://www.minedu.sk/about-the-ministry

[297] Pursuant to Act No. 7/2024 Coll. of 16.1.2024 amending and supplementing Act No. 575/2001 Coll. on the organization of government activity and the organization of central state administration, as amended, and amending and supplementing

supporting partner for measures related to two thematic units, i) and l). All other 11 thematic areas contain measures where the MERDY is a responsible actor, and in only one case (measure aimed at improving digital skills) the responsibility lies with the **Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation (MIRDI)[298]**, while the MESRS is among supporting partners.

**Lifelong learning and counselling strategy action plan 2022-24 (Action Plan)[299]**

In November 2021, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the LLCS 2021-30 with the aim of defining forward-looking measures in the field of education policies that will enable "responding to the dynamically changing labour market, the nature of work in the context of the fourth industrial revolution and systemic changes in the field of education for all".

The LLCS outlined its subsequent elaboration in the form of action plans in three three-year time phases. In January 2022, the **State Vocational Education Institute[300]** was entrusted with the preparation of an initial draft of the Action Plan, which involved experts who also participated in the preparation of the first draft of the LLCS in 2021.

The Action Plan contains a roadmap of activities, based on the defined thematic areas of the LLCS and the actions proposed therein. Each measure includes a proposal for a set of activities aimed at achieving the objectives of that measure as well as the overall goals of the LLCS, output indicators, the institutions involved in their implementation and an indication of possible financial resources. The financing of the activities is planned to a large extent from EU funds from the programming period 2021- 2027 through the **Programme Slovakia[301]**.[302]

**OECD Skills Strategy Slovak Republic[303]**

was developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) during 2019 and was officially presented to the Slovak public, with high-level OECD officials and European Commission representatives in attendance, by the **Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MESRS)** in January 2020. This document was created based on findings and recommendations from interactive workshops, group and bilateral discussions with nominated experts, primarily from the MESRS, the MLSAF, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization, as well as other government agencies.[304]

The OECD Skills Strategy states that Slovakia continues to face numerous complex challenges in the skills sector. The skills of the younger generation lag behind the OECD average in reading and sciences, with a long-term negative trend. A significant skills mismatch between supply and demand is evident in the labour market, and a shortage of qualified workers is particularly pronounced in sectors with a high

---

certain acts, the name "Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic" is automatically changed and adapted in all internal regulations and documents of VEGA and KEGA. From 1.2.2024, the new name "Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic" will be used in the appropriate grammatical forms. https://www.minedu.sk/zmena-nazvu-ministerstva-od-122024/

[298] https://mirri.gov.sk/en/ministry

[299] Slovak translation: Action Plan of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Guidance 2022 – 2024 https://zakladnezrucnosti.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Akcny-plan-2022-24-EN-final.pdf

[300] Slovak translation: State Institute of Vocational Education; https://siov.sk/en

[301] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_22_7151

[302] https://zakladnezrucnosti.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Akcny-plan-2022-24-EN-final.pdf

[303] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-skills-strategy-slovak-republic_bb688e68-en.html

[304] Ibidem

demand for science and technology skills. The adult education culture is underdeveloped and underfunded, with low participation rates, especially among those who would benefit from it the most.

The document is based on the NPDE and defines key areas:

- Equipping younger and older generations with the right skills for the future,
- Ensuring inclusiveness in the development of skills,
- Strengthening the governance of skills policies.

**Referencing Report of The Slovak Qualifications Framework To The European Qualifications Framework 2017** [305]

The Report outlines Slovakia's alignment of its **Qualifications Framework (SQF)**[306] with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This report details the integration of Slovak qualification levels with the EQF, facilitating transparency, comparability, and recognition of Slovak qualifications across Europe. It emphasizes Slovakia's commitment to fostering mobility and lifelong learning by establishing a clear and structured system where national qualifications can be understood in the context of European standards. The alignment helps individuals and employers better understand and value qualifications across different European countries, thus supporting international labour mobility and educational advancement.

SQF serves as a tool to develop a typology of qualifi cations in the national context. For this purpose, the approach based on four "sub-frameworks" was adopted (below). The structure of SQF contains information on a learning pathway, authorised institution and evidence of a qualifi cation (e. g. diploma, certifi cate etc.). SQF sub-frameworks correspond to respective parts of the educational system and are characterised by common type of qualification:

1. General education qualifications' sub-framework
2. Vocational qualifications sub-framework
3. Higher education qualifications' sub-framework
4. Occupational qualifications sub-framework

---

[305] https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/dd6/15015.416492.pdf
[306] https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/289_Narodny%20kvalifikacny%20ramec%20SR_final.pdf

Figure 13. The structure of SQF

*Source: Referencing Report Of The Slovak Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework [307]*

### National ALE governance structure

The governance of ALE in Slovakia is primarily overseen by various state authorities, with key responsibilities allocated across ministries and agencies. **The National Council of the Slovak Republic[308]** enacts legislation, including laws prepared and proposed by the Government, which are then further reviewed by relevant working bodies.

Significant milestones in Slovak ALE include the development of the Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance Strategy 2021-2030, along with the establishment of policies and frameworks that align with European Union standards.

---

[307] https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/dd6/15015.416492.pdf
[308] https://www.nrsr.sk/web/default.aspx?SectionId=3

**Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic (MERDY)[309]**

MERDY plays a central role in managing and operationalizing ALE policy[310]. This ministry is responsible for proposing legislation, preparing strategic development documents, approving accredited ALE programmes, and overseeing institutions involved in adult education. Within this ministry, the **Department of Adult Education** (Odbor vzdelávania dospelých) ensures compliance with national educational standards and the effective implementation of lifelong learning initiatives.

**Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family of the Slovak Republic (MLSAF)[311]**

MLSAF also has a significant role in ALE, particularly regarding programmes that support active employment policies. This ministry coordinates and funds training programmes aimed at enhancing workforce skills, aligning ALE with the labour market's evolving demands.[312]

Local and regional authorities also play a role in Slovakia's ALE governance. These authorities often establish public institutions that provide adult education, manage these institutions' activities, and may offer funding for various educational programmes to meet community needs. Through this multi-level governance structure, Slovakia aims to enhance accessibility, quality, and alignment of ALE with the labour market and societal needs, supporting lifelong learning as a key component of personal and professional development.

**Sector Councils Alliance (SCA)[313]**

SCA was established as an interest association of legal entities on the 1st of February, 2023. Its activities and goals are defined in the Employment Services Act which institutionalized the previous 10-years work of the sectoral councils.

SCA members reflect the composition of the Economic and Social Council of the Slovak Republic, with state representatives including the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Youth.

The goal of the SCA is to introduce optimal institutional and systemic solutions to the organisation of occupations, qualifications, and lifelong learning (formal and informal) so that they correspond to the current requirements of the labour market as well as to the development and anticipated innovation trends.

The established SCA has the task of formalizing and intensifying cooperation between central state administration bodies, representatives of employers and representatives of trade unions in determining changes in the labour market and setting up responsive education systems. This cooperation will provide improved employability of the inhabitants of Slovakia and more effective expenditure of the public financial resources that are spent on education for the labour market in the departments of education and labour.[314]

---

[309] https://www.minedu.sk/about-the-ministry
[310] https://www.minedu.sk/celozivotne-vzdelavanie
[311] https://www.employment.gov.sk/en
[312] https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/praca-zamestnanost/podpora-zamestnanosti-sluzby-zamestnanosti/pomoc-obcanom
[313] https://www.alianciasr.sk/en/homepage
[314] https://www.alianciasr.sk/en/our-mission

Until the adoption of the Adult Education Act 292/2024 Coll. (30.10.2024)[315] the governance of the system was very fragmented. From 1.1.2025 responsibility is distributed between:

- **MERDY** – responsible for the certification of educational institutions (Register of ALE institutions).

- **SCA** which also manages 24 Sectoral Councils – responsible for SQF, accreditation of programmes and for validation.

*ALE funding*

### National Project Skills for Labour Market[316]

The project, initiated by the MLSAF, provides individuals with financial contributions to enable them to take part even in more expensive learning opportunities and motivate them to follow sophisticated learning pathways. The support is aimed mostly at more vulnerable groups to increase their participation in the labour market through targeted skill development.

Eligible Applicants: The project is open to registered job seekers. Recently, mainly as an aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, also employed people who are actively seeking career change or their current job is highly threatened by digitalisation/automatization, have been added to the project as eligible target group. Through this project, Slovakia seeks to promote inclusivity and accessibility in education, enabling individuals to gain qualifications that enhance their chances of long-term employment.

The Project funds various types of educational activities, including:

- Professional and vocational training tailored to labour market needs,

- Skill enhancement courses to update or broaden existing qualifications,

- Certifications and accredited programmes that provide recognized qualifications for employment,

- Soft skills and digital skills training to improve employability.[317]

### Individual Learning Account (ILA) [318]

ILA is a mechanism through which the state or employers in Slovakia cover the education-related costs of citizens aged 16 and older, as well as individuals with permanent, temporary, or tolerated residence in Slovakia, upon their request via an electronic platform. Costs are budgeted in the state budget and paid directly to certified educational institutions or eligible individuals. ILA key features:

1. Purpose:

    - Personal Development Needs: Covers education in basic skills, key competencies, leisure education, digital skills, green skills, and career counselling services for adults.

    - Labor Market Needs: Supports gaining, deepening, or broadening qualifications, career counselling, and validation of learning outcomes.

2. Eligibility:

---

- Available to citizens and residents aged 16 and above.

- Costs can only be covered for certified educational institutions or registered career counselling providers.

3. Conditions:

- Expenses must align with individual or labour market needs.

- Employer approval is required if co-financing is involved for market-oriented qualifications.

- Costs related to formal education qualifications, except for accredited programmes, are excluded.

4. Limitations:

- Each calendar year, ILAs can be used:

   o Once for the maximum annual amount set by the competent state authority, or

   o Multiple times for smaller expenses, not exceeding the annual limit.

5. Electronic Platform:

- Managed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the alliance, the platform facilitates access to eligible activities and conditions for ILA use.

- Other ministries, central state authorities, and employers can also utilize the platform.

This innovative tool enhances access to lifelong learning and aligns educational opportunities with personal and labour market demands, fostering skills development and career growth for all Slovak citizens.

**Slovakia Programme 2021-2027 for Objective No. 4 of EU Cohesion Policy[319]**

**National Project I: Electronic Platform for Individual Learning Accounts (EPIVU)**

- Implementation Period: August 2024 – July 2027

- Allocation: €2,285,353.31

**National Project II: Support for the Creation and Implementation of Individual Learning Accounts**

- Responsible Authority: Ministry of Education, , Research, Development and Youth

- Implementation Period: 2nd Quarter 2025

- Allocation: €12,750,000

These projects aim to enhance education accessibility and support individual learning through targeted funding aligned with EU cohesion objectives.

Quality assurance in national ALE systems

---

[319] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/whats-new/newsroom/18-07-2022-eu-cohesion-policy-commission-adopts-eur12-8-billion-partnership-agreement-with-slovakia-for-2021-2027_en

*Quality assurance systems in ALE*

**The Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on lifelong learning (further as Act on LLL)**

For accreditation of the programmes of further education is responsible The **Accreditation Commission for further education[320],** established by the Ministry Of Education, Research, Development and Youth.

It´s further responsibilities are:

- monitoring of the compliance with the requirements on quality assurance of provided programmes of further education, including the compliance of these programmes with qualification and assessment standards;

- on-site checks of the above mentioned;

- statistical data in further education.[321]

SQF is also envisaged partly as an quality assurance measure, as it aims at the improvement of quality assurance at all levels of LLL by introducing the objective procedures of validation and recognition of adult learning, its relation to initial VET, and transparency of development of qualifications.

Registers for Adult **Education** Data

From 1.1.2025 the new Adult Education Act 292/2024 Coll[322] enters into effect and under § 9 (1)(a-h), adult education data is processed and maintained in the following registers:

1. Registers for educational institutions and programmes:

   - Certified educational institutions (a),

   - Accredited educational programmes (b),

   - Non-accredited educational programmes (c),

   - Providers of educational programmes leading to micro-certificates (k).

2. Registers for Graduates:

   - Graduates of accredited educational programmes (d),

   - Graduates of non-accredited educational programmes (e),

   - Graduates of programmes leading to micro-certificates (l).

3. Registers for authorized bodies:

   - Authorized institutions (f),

   - National guarantors (i),

   - Authorized persons (h).

4. Registers for qualifications and counselling:

---

[320] https://www.minedu.sk/akreditacie-v-oblasti-celozivotneho-vzdelavania
[321] https://www.minedu.sk/statut-akreditacnej-komisie-pre-dalsie-vzdelavanie
[322] https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2024/292/vyhlasene_znenie.html

- Individuals who gained professional qualifications through validation (j),

- Providers of career counselling for adults (m).

5. Enterprise-specific register:

- Cross-business educational centres (g).

These registers are part of the public administration information systems managed and operated by the MERDY.

Certified educational institutions are responsible for providing data to the registers for non-accredited educational programmes and their graduates.

This system ensures comprehensive tracking, quality assurance, and alignment of adult education with labour market and societal needs.

### Registry of Certified Institutions

An institution wishing to provide education funded through Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) must be registered in the **Registry of Certified Institutions[323]**, maintained by the MERDY.

To be included in the Registry of Certified Institutions, the institution must submit documentation proving the existence of a quality assurance system within the educational institution (for example ISO, CAF, EFQM). This ensures that the programmes and services offered meet the required standards for education and training supported through the ILA mechanism.[324]

### Accreditation of Educational Programmes[325]

Certified educational institutions can apply for the accreditation of an educational programme by submitting a request electronically to the SCA.

The accreditation application must include:

1. Applicant Identification Details:

- Name and registered address of the institution,

- Name and surname of the statutory representative,

- Organizational identification number.

2. Proposed educational programme:

- A detailed plan and structure of the programme to be accredited.

3. Profiles of key personnel:

- Programme Supervisor (Odborný garant): Information about their professional and teaching qualifications.

- Lecturers: Information about their professional and teaching qualifications.

---

[323] https://www.kvalifikacie.sk/register-autorizovanych-institucii
[324] http://isdv.iedu.sk/InstititutionRegistration.aspx
[325] https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky-fe/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2024/292/vyhlasene_znenie.html#paragraf-13.nadpis

4. Supporting documents:

- Certificates or evidence proving the professional and teaching qualifications of the programme supervisor and lecturers.

This process ensures that only programmes meeting the required professional and quality standards are accredited, aligning them with national educational goals and labour market needs.

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

**Implementation of Quality Management in VET and ALE project[326]**

This national project led by the **State Vocational Education Institute**, started in March 2024. The project aims to establish a comprehensive quality management system within VET and adult education, enhancing the effectiveness and alignment with labour market needs. It will involve developing quality standards, training for education providers, and systematic evaluation mechanisms to improve outcomes for learners and institutions alike.

**Adult Education Institutions(AIVD)**

The Quality Assurance System for Adult Education Institutions (AIVD) comprises two levels:

**LEVEL 1: Basic Compliance Based on Ethical Standards**

This level ensures compliance with the **AIVD Ethical Code**[327], requiring verification of all member institutions. The requirements are inspired by the Estonian Adult Education Act, mandating institutions to publish required information transparently on their websites to provide clear and truthful information to clients.

Institutions must provide the following detailed information to meet LEVEL 1 standards:

- Educational activity title: A precise title that clearly reflects the activity's content and objectives.

- Educational activity description: A concise overview of the activity's content, goals, and educational outcomes.

- Curriculum and content: A detailed outline of the educational activity, including its content and difficulty level.

- Date and venue: The exact location and date of the activity.

- Duration: The total duration of the activity specified in hours or days.

- Target audience: Identification of the intended participants, such as project managers, employees in a specific sector, unemployed individuals, etc.

- Lecturers and trainers:

  o Names of lecturers, trainers, or programme guarantors leading the educational activities.

  o Details of their expertise and professional experience.

---

[326] https://siov.sk/en/projekty/aktualne-projekty/narodny-projekt-zavedenie-manazerstva-kvality-v-ovp-a-vd
[327] https://aivd.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Eticky-kodex-AIVD-SR_2023.pdf

- Pricing and payment methods: Clearly state the participation fee and available payment methods (e.g., bank transfer, cash payment on-site).

- Participant capacity: Maximum number of participants allowed for the event.

- Certification: Information about the possibility of obtaining a certificate or other proof of attendance upon successful completion.

- Complaint policy: A complaint procedure aligned with the appendix of the AIVD SR Ethical Code.

- Contact information: The contact details of a responsible person or department for further inquiries regarding the activity.

## LEVEL 2: Advanced Quality Assurance with AIVD's Own Model

Model utilizes AIVD-developed frameworks like ONE and QualTrack[328], includes a self-assessment questionnaire for institutions to evaluate their processes and performance and employs trained external evaluators to provide objective assessments and feedback.

To qualify for Level 2 certification, organizations must meet the following:

Entry requirements

- Existence: The organization must have operated continuously for at least three years.

- Educational activities: Maintain detailed records of implemented educational programmes.

- Financial stability: Provide current financial statements and evidence of debt settlement.

- Compliance with legal regulations: Hold valid authorizations and certificates for conducting educational activities.

- Intellectual property: Use legally obtained teaching materials and programmes.

Institutional background requirements

- Strategic documents: Clear mission, values, and strategic plans.

- Non-discrimination: Policies promoting non-discrimination and evidence of their implementation.

- Data protection: Principles and documentation ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.

- Fair remuneration: Transparent salary policies and records.

- Record keeping: Examples of maintained documentation.

- Software licensing: Proof of legal use of software.

- Accurate information: Samples of published materials or evidence of fact-checking.

- Public information access: Provide public access to course-related information.

Requirements for the teaching team

---

[328] https://qualtrack.eu

- Trainer qualifications: Provide qualification certificates and relevant analyses verifying the expertise of trainers.

- Communication records: Evidence of informing trainers about the learning needs of participants.

- Needs analysis: Documentation demonstrating the assessment and analysis of learners' needs.

- Course evaluation: Use evaluation forms and reports to assess the effectiveness of the course and gather feedback.

Requirements for education and measuring Its effectiveness

- Needs analysis reports: Documented analyses and reports identifying learning needs.

- Educational activity objectives: Clearly defined objectives and access protocols.

- Initial assessments: Use of entry assessment forms to evaluate participants' starting points.

- Monitoring reports: Reports on results and the application of knowledge and skills.

- Educational materials: Materials that include practical examples.

- Adaptive documents: Adjustments made to align with the analysis of educational needs.

- Evaluation forms: Forms used to assess learning outcomes at the end of the educational activity.

- Feedback evidence: Forms and documentation providing evidence of feedback collected.

- Final evaluation reports: Reports tracking progress and results in achieving educational objectives.

Material, technical, and didactic resources

- Compliance of facilities: Certificates or reports confirming that the facilities meet regulatory requirements.

- Equipment inventory: Detailed lists of basic equipment used for educational purposes.

- Teaching materials: Samples of educational materials, including references to their sources.

- Transparency of information: Screenshots or documents demonstrating the clarity and availability of information.

- Online education: Evidence of platforms and tools used for distance learning.

Access to education participants

- Terms and conditions: Documents outlining detailed commercial terms and complaint procedures.

- Course catalogue: Comprehensive lists of available educational programmes.

- Compliance with accessibility regulations: Documentation demonstrating adherence to accessibility requirements for participants.

This two-tiered system supports continuous quality improvement and ensures that adult education institutions uphold high ethical and operational standards.

## National ALE registries and information models for ALE

*The Further Education Information System[329] (Informačný systém ďalšieho vzdelávania – ISDV)*

The ISDV is managed by the MERDY and provides open access for citizens, employers, public administration, and institutions to information on further education. ISDV serves to accredit programmes and collect data on programme implementation. The users of ISDV claim that it is not user friendly and is not sufficiently known to the public. ISDV contains information that relates exclusively to accredited programmes of the MERDY (not other ministries). ISDV includes:

- A register of educational institutions offering accredited programmes,

- A register of accredited educational programmes,

- A register of participants in further education,

- Information on exams for verification of professional competence.

Institutions providing further education must legally submit annual statistical data (DALV report) to the MERDY by February 15th for the previous year.

*Portal www.education.sk[330]/ www.kurzy.sk*

The largest private **adult education portal in Slovakia** offers a wide range of learning opportunities, featuring over **15,000 courses, training sessions, and seminars**, provided by **1,583 educational institutions**. The portal covers various topics, divided into the following categories:

- Low Courses

- Courses by Sector

- Economic Courses

- Hobby, Beauty, Health

- Language Courses

- Personal Development

This comprehensive portal makes it easy to find education tailored to personal, professional, or legal requirements across various sectors and interests.

The portal kurzy.sk (education.sk) provides the following information about educational institutions:

1. Name of the institution

2. Logo

3. Telephone

4. Email

---

[329] http://isdv.iedu.sk
[330] https://www.education.sk

5. Website

6. Company registration number (IČO)

7. Address

8. Location on the map

9. Description of the institution

10. List of the institution's courses

Portal **kurzy.sk**[331] provides comprehensive information about educational programmes and courses, including:

1. Course Title: The official name of the course.

2. Description: A detailed overview of the course content and objectives.

3. Categories: Classification of the course into specific fields or industries.

4. Location: The venue or city where the course is conducted.

5. Dates and Duration: Scheduled start and end dates, along with the total length of the course.

6. Price: The cost associated with enrolling in the course.

7. Organizer Information: Details about the institution or organization offering the course, including contact information.

8. Target Audience: Identification of the intended participants or professionals for whom the course is designed.

9. Accreditation: Information on whether the course is accredited and recognized by relevant authorities.

10. Registration Process: Guidelines on how to enrol, including application procedures and deadlines.

11. Additional Resources: Access to supplementary materials, such as brochures, schedules, or links to further information.

This structured presentation enables users to effectively search for and select courses that align with their educational and professional development needs.

*Information models for ALE*

**The Further Education Information System[332] (ISDV)**

---

[331] www.kurzy.sk
[332] http://isdv.iedu.sk

The ISDV managed by the MERDY – to ensure consistency and transparency, the following details of the educational programmes are published[333]:

1. Name of the educational institution: Official name of the organization providing the programme.

2. Address of the educational institution: Complete physical address, including street, city, and postal code.

3. Name of the educational programme: Full title of the programme being offered.

4. Name of the module: Specific module or component of the programme (if applicable).

5. Total scope: Overall duration of the programme, expressed in hours or days.

6. Accreditation certificate number: Unique number assigned to the programme's accreditation.

7. Date of accreditation issuance: Date when the accreditation was officially granted.

8. Target group: Description of the intended audience (e.g., professionals, students, unemployed individuals, etc.).

9. Graduate profile: Competencies, skills, or qualifications the graduate will acquire upon completion.

10. Programme supervisor (Odborný garant): Name and qualifications of the person responsible for the programme's content and quality.

11. Trainers/lecturers (Lektori): Names and qualifications of the trainers or lecturers delivering the programme.

This format ensures clear communication about the educational offering and complies with quality assurance and accreditation requirements.

## Experiences and results with ILA

### Experiences with the introduction of ILA as a tool

ALE in Slovakia has evolved significantly over the past 30 years, focusing primarily on upskilling unemployed individuals through retraining programmes. Since 1993, these efforts have been supported by the Employment Fund and state budget.[334] From 1997 onwards, pre-accession funds like **PHARE**[335] and later the **ESF**[336] have played a key role in financing retraining initiatives. Programmes such as **REPAS**[337], launched in 2014, allowed individuals to select their preferred training courses and institutions, covering 100% of costs for recommended courses to meet labour market needs. However, areas like managerial and soft skills development were not included in the funding. For 10 years by REPAS programme Slovakia has been moving toward the introduction of ILAs as part of the broader European Union framework. The concept supports personalized education for all working-age individuals-employed, self-employed, unemployed, or engaged in atypical work forms. Funded through national and EU programmes, ILAs aim

---

[333] http://isdv.iedu.sk/EligibleInstitutions.aspx

[334] https://www.employment.gov.sk/en

[335] https://www.mfsr.sk/en/european-international-affairs/financial-relations-eu/mf-sr-projects-supported-eu

[336] https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en/support-your-country/esf-slovakia

[337] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/hr/tools/financing-adult-learning-db/search/supporting-re-qualification-jobseekers-repas

Co-funded by
the European Union

to provide secure, virtual accounts with annual training entitlements, especially targeting individuals most in need.[338]

How It Works[339]: Participants independently select their desired courses and providers. Funding covers 100% of training costs for eligible programmes, emphasizing alignment with labour market needs. The initiative also includes validation of learning outcomes, career guidance, and paid training leave.

Alignment with EU Models: The Slovak model draws inspiration from EU best practices, including national digital portals and secure authentication mechanisms for accessing quality-assured training registries. The aim is to create a comprehensive and accessible adult education framework to address emerging skills needs and ensure labour market relevance.

*Results with introducing ILA at the national level*

The **10-year experience with the REPAS programme** in Slovakia has significantly contributed to the development and design of **ILA** in the Adult Education Act 292/2024 Coll[340].

**Key contributions of REPAS to ILA development:**

1. **Personalized learning approach**: REPAS allowed unemployed individuals to independently select retraining courses and education providers based on their career goals and labour market requirements. This concept of individual choice has been integrated into the ILA system.

2. **Comprehensive cost coverage**: REPAS provided 100% funding for approved retraining courses within budget limits, ensuring equitable access to education. This funding model inspired the financial structure of ILA.

3. **Market-driven education**: REPAS aligned training programmes with labour market needs, focusing on professions in demand. Similarly, ILAs prioritize education and skills development in areas such as digitalization, automation, and the green economy.

4. **Flexibility in learning formats**: REPAS supported in-person, distance, and hybrid learning models, laying the groundwork for ILA's adaptable approach to various educational formats.

5. **Administrative framework**: The REPAS programme's operational mechanisms, including application processes, participant selection, and monitoring, provided valuable insights for structuring the administrative and operational aspects of ILAs.

**Integration into the** Adult Education Act 292/2024 Coll[341] **:**

- The ILA system builds upon REPAS by extending its benefits to both employed and unemployed individuals, addressing broader workforce adaptability and career development needs.

- The Act introduces a digital platform for managing ILAs, enabling participants to access certified education providers and track their training entitlements seamlessly.

---

[338] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovakia/national-reforms-related-adult-education-and-training
[339] https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/buxus/docs/SSZ/OAOTP/ZpTP_UoZ/Oznamenie_o_moznosti_predkladania_ziadosti_o_poskytnutie_prispevku_na_podporu_rekvalifikacie_UoZ_5.pdf
[340] https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2024/292/vyhlasene_znenie.html
[341] Ibidem

- By leveraging REPAS's proven practices, the ILA framework ensures a user-centred, transparent, and efficient mechanism for lifelong learning in Slovakia.

## 1.5. France

Adult education in France is **a key component of the lifelong learning framework, promoting the continuous development of skills and competencies throughout an individual's life**. The French system is characterized by its integration of formal and informal education, allowing individuals over 18 years of age to pursue various learning opportunities, including vocational training, adult literacy programmes, and professional development courses. The Law for the Freedom to Choose One's Future Profession, enacted in 2018, **emphasizes the importance of accessible training and supports lifelong learning initiatives aimed at enhancing employability**.

The current landscape of employment and education in France presents both opportunities and challenges. According to **the European Semester 2024 Country Report for France[342]**, the employment rate for individuals aged 20 to 64 reached 74.4% in 2023, slightly below the EU average of 75.3%. Gender disparities in employment persist, with the gender employment gap being 5.5 percentage points. The unemployment rate has decreased to 7.3%, reflecting a recovery in the labour market post-pandemic. However, significant challenges remain, particularly regarding youth employment and the integration of marginalized groups into the workforce.

Regional disparities are evident, with employment rates varying significantly across metropolitan and rural areas. The Île-de-France, Franche-Comté, Midi-Pyrénées and Rhône-Alpes regions, for instance, show higher employment rates in innovation and technology-related activities than other regions, highlighting the need for tailored interventions to address regional imbalances. The rise of the NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) population has prompted the French government **to implement various programmes aimed at fostering engagement among young people and enhancing their employability through training initiatives**.

Moreover, a significant skills mismatch exists, particularly in sectors such as industry, construction, information and communication, education and health, where demand for skilled labour continues to outpace supply. To tackle these issues, France has prioritized adult learning through initiatives like the CPF (Compte Personnel de Formation), which allows individuals to fund their training and development.

### Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

*Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE*

In France, adult learning is governed by many laws which are closely related to the labour laws, career security, and social security, creating a rich, but complicated policy framework. **The French Labour Code** (Code du Travail)[343] is a foundational element of the ALE legal framework. It mandates that all employers contribute to vocational training funds, which ensures employees have ongoing opportunities for skill development. This requirement is specified in various articles within the Labour Code, emphasizing the role of continuous vocational training as a right for employees.

**Law on the Freedom to Choose One's Professional Future** (Loi pour la Liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel)[344], enacted in 2018, introduced several reforms to enhance the vocational training system:

---

[342] https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/33a41e1a-8528-4f1e-a6ad-04880f3593e2_en?filename=SWD_2024_610_1_EN_France.pdf

[343] https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/dossierlegislatif/JORFDOLE000036847202/

[344] https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/dossierlegislatif/JORFDOLE000036847202/

- **Individual Learning Account (CPF)**: This system allows individuals to accumulate training credits that can be used to fund approved training programmes. Each employee receives annual credits to spend on training, thus promoting continuous skill development.

- **Expanded Access**: The law extends training benefits to job seekers, self-employed individuals, and employees, making vocational training more inclusive.

- **Quality Assurance**: Measures were introduced to ensure the quality of training providers, ensuring that the courses offered are effective and relevant.

- **National Collective Agreements**[345] set vocational training standards within specific sectors, negotiated between employers' associations and trade unions, ensuring sector-specific needs are met.

- **Lifelong Learning Rights and Professional Transition** is supported through initiatives like the Professional Transition Fund[346], which aids workers transitioning to new careers by providing financial support and career guidance.

The strategic framework for ALE in France is comprehensive and aims to foster a culture of lifelong learning while addressing the evolving needs of the workforce and society. The key components and strategies include:

**France 2030 Strategy**[347] is a forward-looking initiative that seeks to enhance educational and vocational training systems to prepare the workforce for future challenges. This strategy emphasizes innovation, digital transformation, and the development of key skills needed in the 21st century.

The **"Enseignement et Numérique" initiative**[348] within France 2030 aims to integrate advanced digital tools and innovative educational practices into the learning process. This includes expanding digital territories and supporting EdTech solutions, i.e. educational technologies designed to enhance teaching and learning processes, to make learning more accessible and effective.

The French government places a strong emphasis on lifelong learning, ensuring continuous professional development through various programmes and initiatives:

**Individual Learning Account** (Compte Personnel de Formation, CPF)[349]: This programme allows individuals to accrue credits for training throughout their career, which can be used to fund various educational and vocational courses.

**Professional Transition Fund** (Fonds de Transition Professionnelle)[350]: This fund supports employees looking to change careers or industries, providing financial assistance and career guidance.

France's strategic framework also includes sector-specific and regional approaches to ALE, ensuring that training programmes are tailored to the needs of different industries and local labour markets. **Sector-**

---

[345] LOI n° 2019-1479 du 28 décembre 2019 de finances pour 2020 (1) - Légifrance (legifrance.gouv.fr)

[346] https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/section_lc/LEGITEXT000006072050/LEGISCTA000029535679/2020-11-01

[347] Press kit - France 2030 - Innovation at the service of school education | Ministry of National Education and Youth

[348] https://www.education.gouv.fr/strategie-du-numerique-pour-l-education-2023-2027-344263

[349] https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/R46472

[350] https://www.economie.gouv.fr/plan-de-relance/mesures/financement-des-projets-de-transition-professionnelle

**specific Skills Operators** (Opérateurs de Compétences, OPCOs)[351] manage vocational training funds and develop programmes that cater to the specific needs of regional economies, thereby aligning training with local employment opportunities.

The strategic framework is designed to be dynamic, regularly updated to reflect changes in the economy, technology, and societal needs. The government continuously assesses and revises its policies to ensure that they meet the current and future demands of the labour market. This involves collaboration with various stakeholders, including educational institutions, businesses, and trade unions.

*National ALE governance structure*

The governance structure for ALE in France is organized through a combination of national and regional bodies, designed to ensure coordination and effective implementation of policies and programmes[352]. The key components include:

**Ministry of National Education and Youth** (Ministère de de l'Éducation nationale et de la jeunesse, MENJ)[353]: The MENJ oversees the overall education policy, including adult education. It coordinates with other ministries and sets national standards and objectives for ALE.

**Ministry of Labour and Employment** (Ministère du Travail et de l'Emploi)[354]: This ministry focuses on vocational training and employment, managing initiatives that support lifelong learning and skills development for the workforce. It works closely with regional and sectoral bodies to ensure training meets labour market needs.

**Regional Academic Delegations for Youth, Engagement, and Sports** (La Délégation régionale académique à la jeunesse, à l'engagement et aux sports, DRAJES)[355]: These regional bodies, under the Ministry of National Education, are responsible for implementing and monitoring educational policies at the regional level. They coordinate local ALE initiatives, ensuring they align with national goals and local needs.

**Regional Public Training and Employment Services** (Pôle emploi)[356]: These services provide career guidance, job placement assistance, and training programmes. They play a crucial role in connecting adult learners with employment opportunities and relevant training.

**Skills Investment Plans** (Plan d'investissement dans les compétences, PIC)[357]: Each region in France develops a PRIC to address specific local labour market needs. These plans involve collaboration between regional authorities, employers, and training providers to tailor ALE programmes that support regional economic development.

---

[351] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/france/distribution-responsibilities

[352] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/france/distribution-responsibilities

[353] https://www.education.gouv.fr/organisation-de-l-ecole-12311

[354] https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/

[355] https://www.reunion.gouv.fr/Services-de-l-Etat/Delegation-regionale-academique-a-la-Jeunesse-a-l-engagement-et-aux-sports-DRAJES2/Delegation-regionale-academique-a-la-jeunesse-a-l-engagement-et-aux-sports-DRAJES

[356] https://www.vie-publique.fr/fiches/37982-quest-ce-que-le-service-public-de-lemploi

[357] https://www.centre-inffo.fr/site-regions-formation/actions-dans-les-territoires/pactes-regionaux-dinvestissement-dans-les-competences/01-de-quoi-parle-t-on

**Sectoral Training Bodies** (Opérateurs de Compétences, OPCOs)[358]: OPCOs are sector-specific organizations that are responsible for financing apprenticeships, helping sectors build professional certifications and supporting SMEs in defining their training needs. .

**France Compétences[359]**: Established in 2019, France Compétences is the national agency responsible for regulating and funding the vocational training system. It also manages the governance of France's Individual Learning Account (*Compte Personnel de Formation*, CPF).

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

Continuing vocational training in France is financed by **a mix of State, regional, company, and European Social Fund (ESF)** contributions[360]. **The State** primarily funds training for disadvantaged groups such as disabled individuals, prisoners, foreigners, and illiterate people, along with initiatives to disseminate information about training opportunities. **Regional governments** are primarily responsible for financing training programmes for jobseekers.

**Companies are legally obligated to finance the training of their employees**. This funding is collected through a single contribution managed by a skills operator (OPCO). Companies with fewer than 11 employees contribute 0.55% of their wage bill, while companies with 11 or more employees contribute 1%. There is also a conventional contribution for companies in sectors with specific training agreements, which supplements the mandatory contribution. Additionally, companies can voluntarily contribute beyond these requirements to enhance their workforce's skills.

**The European Social Fund (ESF)** provides significant funding aimed at promoting employment and social inclusion. For the 2014-2020 programme, the ESF allocated 5.924 billion EUR in France, managed 65% by the State and 35% by the regions. The programme focuses on three main areas: aiding jobseekers and inactive individuals in finding employment and supporting professional mobility and entrepreneurship (453 million EUR), anticipating economic changes and securing career paths (707 million EUR), and combating poverty and promoting social inclusion (1.6 billion EUR).

Within **the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)[361]**, the EU plans to invest 6.7 billion EUR in France in the period from 2021 to 2027, to promote economic development combining social and employment support. The ESF+ will also promote access to education and life-long learning by facilitating access to up and re-skilling measures, quality education and vocational training and career guidance, supporting the green and digital transitions.

Funding of ALE in France also includes fees paid by **learners**. The registration fees for jobseekers vary by age. Young people aged 16-25 can access free training under the **Youth Guarantee scheme[362]**, provided they meet certain conditions such as financial independence from parents and not being in employment or training. For those over 25, training costs, including educational and mobility expenses (e.g., transport, accommodation), can be fully or partially covered by **France Travail** (formerly known as Pôle employ) if the training is agreed upon with the learner. If France Travail only partially funds the training, the learner can use their Individual Learning Account (ILA) to cover additional costs. The ILA tracks training rights acquired

---

[358] https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/ministere/acteurs/partenaires/opco

[359] https://www.francecompetences.fr/

[360] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/france/adult-education-and-training-funding

[361] The ESF+ in France | European Social Fund Plus

[362] https://fse.gouv.fr/actualites/dossiers/tout-savoir-sur-la-garantie-europeenne-pour-la-jeunesse

throughout an employee's working life and lists eligible training courses, with the balance available on the My Training Account website[363].

**Employees** have several mechanisms for financing their training. Companies may fund training to ensure employees adapt to their jobs and keep their skills current, especially in response to technological changes. This is typically done through a skills development plan, which includes mandatory training required by collective agreements and optional training. Other actions, such as skills assessments, validation of acquired experience (VAE), and literacy programmes, may also be included.

**Sector-specific Skills Operators** (OPCOs) also support training, particularly for companies with fewer than 50 employees, by developing skills, analysing training needs, and adjusting professional qualifications.

Employees can also finance their training independently using their ILA, which accumulates training rights throughout their career. **The ILA is available to any employee throughout their working life, including periods of unemployment**. It records the training rights acquired and the training programmes eligible for funding. The account is automatically credited annually based on the previous year's work, with a general accrual rate of 500 EUR per year up to a 5.000 EUR maximum. These rights remain with the individual even if they change employers or lose their job.

## Quality assurance in national ALE systems

### *Quality assurance systems in ALE*

In France, the evaluation of continuing education is primarily overseen by key governmental bodies, ensuring the quality and efficacy of adult learning and education structures nationwide.

One such body is **the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports**, which administers the prestigious **EDUFORM quality label**[364]. This label, awarded to both public and private vocational training entities serves as a hallmark of excellence within the national education vocational training network. Beyond public institutions, it extends its reach to all providers preparing individuals for national education vocational diplomas. Following a rigorous evaluation process, including a national audit and review by the national labelling commission, the EDUFORM label is bestowed for a three-year duration. Its attainment also automatically leads to the acquisition of the QUALIOPI quality certification, further validating the institution's commitment to delivering high-quality vocational education.

Introduced in 2020, **the Qualiopi certification**[365] is a mandatory quality label for training providers in France. As of January 2022, the **Qualiopi certification** became mandatory for all training providers seeking public funding or the use of Individual Learning Account (CPF) credits. Qualiopi is a national certification standard that guarantees the quality of processes implemented by training providers. It covers several key criteria, including:

- Clear identification of training objectives.

- Customization of training content to meet the learner's needs.

- Appropriateness of the training facilities and resources.

---

[363] Adult education and training funding

[364] https://www.education.gouv.fr/eduform-le-label-qualite-de-l-education-nationale-pour-la-formation-professionnelle-41585

[365] https://annuaire-entreprises.data.gouv.fr/faq/qualiopi-organisme-formation

- Evaluation of training outcomes and learner satisfaction.

It ensures that providers meet national quality standards and are eligible for public funding. Training providers must undergo a rigorous evaluation process to receive and maintain this certification. The certification process includes an external audit conducted by accredited bodies. Providers are assessed on various criteria, including the clarity of their training objectives, the relevance of the training content, the qualification of trainers, and the methods used to evaluate learner satisfaction and outcomes.

Additionally, the **General Inspectorate of Education, Sport, and Research** (L'inspection générale de l'éducation, du sport et de la recherche, IGÉSR)[366] contributes significantly to the evaluation landscape. Tasked with assessing in-service teacher training schemes, IGÉSR plays a crucial role in ensuring the professional development of educators across the country. Furthermore, it evaluates the implementation of training engineering within academic settings, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of in-service teacher training initiatives. Recent evaluation reports by IGÉSR, such as the one from October 2020, underscore ongoing efforts to refine and optimize continuing education practices in France

### *Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

France employs a comprehensive framework of quality indicators and evaluation methods to ensure the effectiveness and continuous improvement of its ALE systems.

One key component is the accreditation and certification of training providers, which is managed by recognized bodies such as **France Compétences**[367]. Providers must meet specific criteria related to the quality of educational content, instructor qualifications, and organizational capacity. This accreditation process ensures that only providers who meet high standards are allowed to offer training programmes. Regular evaluations are conducted to maintain accreditation, assessing the effectiveness of training programmes, learner satisfaction, and the achievement of learning outcomes. These evaluations involve both internal audits and external reviews to ensure objectivity and comprehensive quality assessment.

France uses a set of key quality indicators to monitor and evaluate the performance of ALE programmes. These indicators help identify areas for improvement and ensure that training meets the needs of learners and the labour market. Learner satisfaction is a primary indicator, measured through **surveys and feedback forms**. France participates in the European Adult Education Survey (AES)[368], which collects data on adult participation in education and training measures participation rates, training characteristics (level, field, duration), and learner profiles. The survey also explores barriers to participation, identifying difficulties and reasons adults avoid training. This data helps improve the quality and accessibility of adult learning opportunities in France.

## National ALE registries and information models for ALE

### *Available registries (description, structure)*

France has several registries and information systems dedicated to ALE.

---

[366] https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/fr/inspection-generale-de-l-education-du-sport-et-de-la-recherche-igesr-49898

[367] https://www.francecompetences.fr/reguler-le-marche/qualite/

[368] https://www.insee.fr/en/metadonnees/source/serie/s1192

Co-funded by
the European Union

**France Compétences** is the overarching authority responsible for managing this registry along with other aspects of vocational training in France. It was established to regulate and coordinate the funding, certification, and quality of vocational training programmes.

The **National Directory of Professional Certifications** (Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles, RNCP)[369] is a central registry that lists all state-recognized vocational qualifications in France. It was created to provide transparency and ensure that qualifications meet the needs of the labour market. Managed by **France Compétences**, the RNCP includes detailed information on each certification, including the skills, the level of qualification (aligned with the European Qualifications Framework) and competencies covered, the assessment methods, and the sectors of activity concerned. The primary purpose of the RNCP is to ensure that all listed qualifications are relevant to the labour market and provide clear pathways for career development. It also helps employers and individuals identify the value and applicability of different certifications. The RNCP is publicly accessible online, allowing individuals, employers, and training providers to search for and review qualifications. Training providers must submit detailed documentation and undergo rigorous evaluation to have their qualifications included in the registry. The RNCP is publicly accessible through an online portal, where learners can search for qualifications based on their career interests, professional field, or educational background.
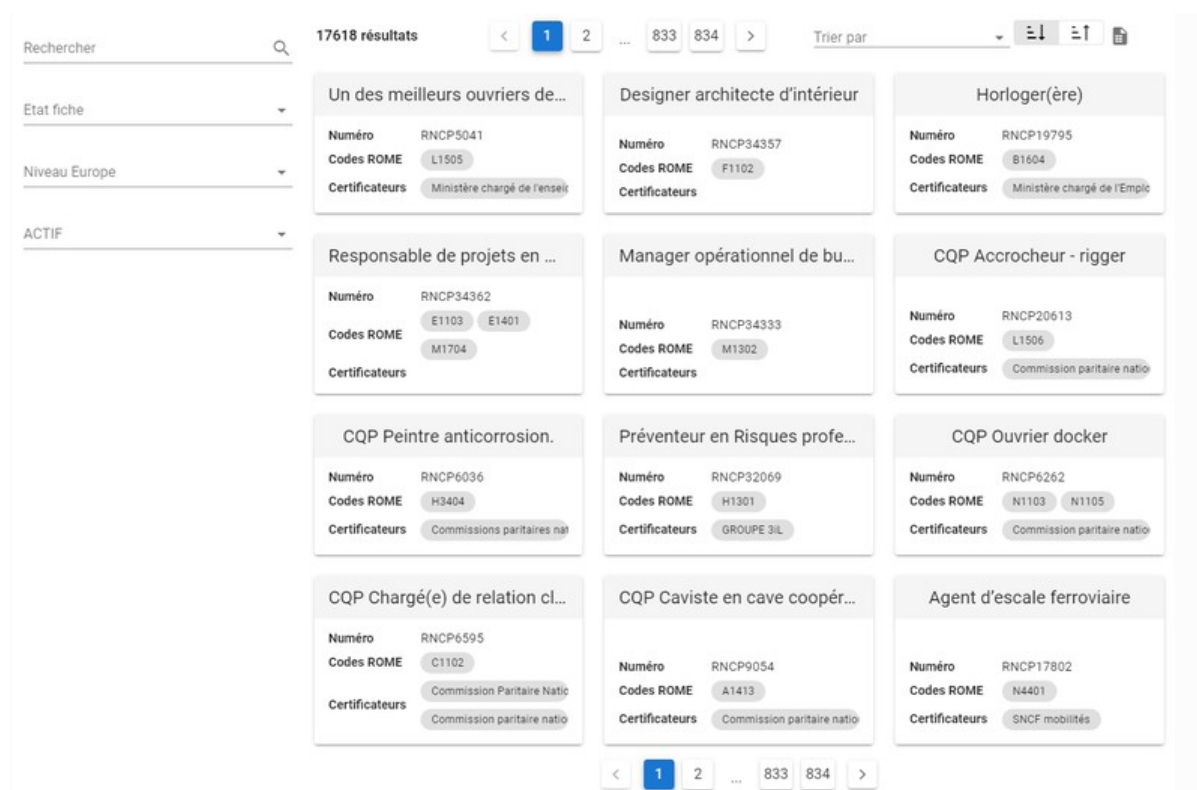


*Figure 14. RNCP search example*

*Source: National Directory of Professional Certifications[370]*

---

The **Répertoire Spécifique (RS)**[371] is a registry for certifications and qualifications that are not part of the formal education system but have professional value. It includes certifications related to specific skills and competencies required in various professions. Similar to the RNCP, the RS provides detailed descriptions of each certification, including the skills covered, the intended professional context, and the certifying body. The RS aims to recognize and validate specific professional skills that are not covered by formal educational qualifications, thus enhancing the employability of individuals. This registry is also publicly accessible, enabling stakeholders to search for and review the certifications listed. Learners can search the RS through the France Compétences online portal. Training providers can apply to have their certifications listed in the RS if they meet the required standards. The RS provides individuals and employers with a way to validate skills that may not require a formal degree or certification but are nonetheless important for professional development and employability.



*Figure 15. RS search example*

*Source: Répertoire Spécifique[372]*

*Information models for ALE*

---

[371] https://www.dendreo.com/lexique/rs-repertoire-specifique

[372] https://www.data.gouv.fr/fr/reuses/liste-des-certifications-rs

Co-funded by
the European Union

Each **RS** and **RNCP** record contains a comprehensive description of certifications and qualifications across several distinct sections[373]. The first section includes the title, clearly identifying the certification or qualification.

Next, the record outlines the *nomenclature of the qualification level*, which indicates the level within the French qualification framework. This is followed by a section specifying the *level* of the qualification, such as Level 5 or other applicable categories. Another critical element is the *NSF Code*, which corresponds to the French National Classification of Activities (NSF), providing a unique identifier for the certification's categorization within the national system.

Additionally, the record includes the *registration expiration date*, marking when the certification's registration in the RS is set to expire. It also provides details about the *certifier*, including the certifying authority's legal name, SIRET number (the unique business identification number in France), commercial name, and website, ensuring transparency and traceability.

The *certification summary* is another vital component, offering an overview of the certification. This summary highlights the *targeted activities* covered by the certification, the *attested competencies* that it validates, and the *activity sectors* where it is applicable. It also specifies the *accessible job types* that individuals with the certification can pursue and includes the relevant *ROME codes* from the French directory of occupations, aligning the certification with specific professional roles.

To ensure compliance with national regulations, the record includes *legal references for activity regulations*, outlining the legal framework that governs the activities associated with the certification. It also lists the *access pathways to certification*, detailing the various routes to obtain the certification, such as through formal education, apprenticeships, continuous professional training, or individual applications.

The record further elaborates on *links with other professional certifications, qualifications, or accreditations*, noting any equivalencies or connections with other credentials. The *legal basis* for the certification is also provided, citing official decrees or decisions published in the *Journal Officiel* (the French Official Gazette), which serve as the legal foundation for the certification.

Finally, the record may contain *statistics* relevant to the certification, offering insights into its usage and impact. A section titled *For more information* provides additional resources or links for those seeking further details about the certification, ensuring that all essential information is readily accessible.

Overall, this structured approach ensures that each RS and RNCP record comprehensively captures the critical aspects of certifications and qualifications in France, facilitating a clear understanding of their scope, legal framework, and potential career pathways.

## Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

### Experiences with the introduction of ILA as a tool

France has been at the forefront of implementing ILAs, known as **Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF)[374], or Personal Training Account**. They serve as the primary tool for individual learning accounts (ILAs), and for promoting lifelong learning, upskilling, and reskilling. Introduced as part of the Law on the

---

[373] https://www.francecompetences.fr/recherche-resultats/

[374] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/301041f1-en.pdf?expires=1718359150&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7E2B92ADB4ECB6B86E503741654A72C6

Freedom to Choose One's Professional Future in 2018, the CPF aims to enhance lifelong learning opportunities and empower individuals to take charge of their professional development.

One of its central elements is the **Credit Accumulation mechanism**, wherein employees accrue training credits annually. These credits can be utilized to finance a diverse array of training programmes, ensuring that individuals can continually enhance their professional competencies. The allocation of credits varies: employees receive a fixed amount each year, with higher allocations granted to those with lower qualifications or specific vocational needs.

Integral to the CPF's functionality is its robust **digital platform**[375], which serves as a user-friendly interface for managing training credits and exploring educational pathways. The platform offers extensive accessibility, allowing individuals to effortlessly access their CPF accounts, review available training options, and enrol in courses that align with their career aspirations and development goals. Moreover, it ensures transparency by providing comprehensive details on training programmes, including costs, curriculum content, and expected outcomes.

The CPF has led to a significant increase in the number of individuals engaging in training, with many taking advantage of the flexibility and accessibility of the system. Participants report improvements in their professional skills and career prospects, demonstrating the CPF's effectiveness in fostering lifelong learning[376].

*Results with introducing ILA at the national level*

Since its introduction, France's experiences with the CPF system have yielded valuable insights into both the benefits and challenges of using ILAs as a tool for lifelong learning.

One of the most significant successes of the CPF in France has been its **widespread adoption** and the **increase in participation** in adult learning programmes. The CPF has made lifelong learning more accessible, enabling individuals across a wide range of industries and skill levels to engage in training and upskilling.

- **Participation Rates**: Since the introduction of the CPF in 2015, millions of individuals have utilized their learning accounts to access training. According to government reports, more than 4 million CPF accounts were activated by 2021, with a significant increase in the number of people using their CPF credits to enrol in training programmes.

- **Diverse User Base**: The CPF system has been successful in reaching a broad spectrum of workers, including employees, jobseekers, and self-employed individuals. This inclusivity has contributed to France's goal of democratizing access to education and training.

The CPF has empowered individuals to take control of their own learning and professional development by providing them with **personalized learning accounts**. This flexibility has been one of the key advantages of the system:

- **Autonomy in Learning Choices**: Unlike traditional training programmes, which are often employer-driven, the CPF allows individuals to choose from a wide range of training options. This autonomy has encouraged workers to pursue courses aligned with their personal career goals, enabling more targeted and effective skill development.

---

[375] https://www.moncompteformation.gouv.fr/espace-prive/html/#/

[376] France: series of reforms to transform vocational training | CEDEFOP (europa.eu)

Co-funded by
the European Union

- **Portability and Lifelong Access**: CPF credits are fully portable, meaning that individuals retain access to their accounts throughout their careers, regardless of changes in jobs or sectors. This portability supports lifelong learning and allows workers to use their credits when they need them most.

Another success of the CPF system has been its **alignment with labour market demands**. The flexibility of the CPF allows individuals to focus on developing skills that are relevant to current and future employment opportunities.

- **Targeting Skills Gaps**: The CPF has been particularly effective in promoting training in sectors facing skills shortages, such as technology, digital transformation, healthcare, and green industries. This has helped address France's evolving labour market needs, ensuring that workers are equipped with the skills necessary to thrive in emerging fields.

- **Focus on Digital Skills**: A significant number of CPF users have enrolled in digital skills courses, such as programming, data analysis, and IT security, reflecting the growing demand for digital competencies in the workforce.

The CPF has had a positive impact on **employability** and **career progression** for many users. By facilitating access to training, the CPF has helped individuals improve their job prospects, change careers, or advance in their current positions.

- **Employment Outcomes**: Studies have shown that CPF-funded training has led to better employment outcomes, with many participants reporting that the skills acquired through their training helped them find new jobs, secure promotions, or increase their earning potential.

- **Career Transitions**: The CPF has been particularly useful for workers looking to change industries or transition to new roles. By enabling individuals to reskill and adapt to new sectors, the CPF has supported labour mobility and career flexibility.

Despite its successes, the implementation of the CPF system has also revealed several challenges that need to be addressed to improve its effectiveness:

- **Awareness and Accessibility**: While participation in the CPF has grown, there are still challenges related to **awareness**. Many individuals, particularly low-skilled workers and older employees are either unaware of the CPF or unsure of how to use it effectively. Targeted awareness campaigns are needed to reach underrepresented groups and ensure that everyone can benefit from the system.

- **Complexity and User Experience**: Some users have reported difficulties navigating the CPF platform and understanding the range of available training options. Simplifying the platform and providing better guidance to users would help improve access and usability.

- **Employer Engagement**: While the CPF is designed to be an individual-driven tool, **employer engagement** has been lower than expected. Many companies have been reluctant to invest in co-funding training through the CPF, which has limited opportunities for employees to access more comprehensive training programmes. Encouraging stronger collaboration between employers and the CPF system could enhance its impact.

- **Quality of Training Providers**: Ensuring the **quality of training** provided through CPF funding is an ongoing challenge. Although the introduction of the **Qualiopi certification** has improved

quality assurance, there have been concerns about the relevance and effectiveness of certain training programmes. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms could help maintain high standards.

The CPF has embraced **digitalization**, providing users with access to a wide range of **online and blended learning** options. This has proven particularly beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many workers turned to online learning to develop new skills during lockdowns.

- **Online Learning Growth**: The availability of online courses through the CPF platform has allowed individuals to engage in training from anywhere at their own pace. This flexibility has been instrumental in enabling workers to balance learning with professional and personal commitments.

- **Mobile Access**: The CPF platform's **mobile app** has further enhanced accessibility, allowing users to manage their accounts, search for training programmes, and enrol in courses directly from their smartphones.

**The types of training chosen under CPF have also evolved notably**. There has been a notable rise in demand for courses related to transport (such as driver's licenses), career orientation and integration services, and information technology. Conversely, traditional language courses have seen a decline in popularity. The shift towards distance learning has been particularly pronounced, reflecting broader trends towards digital education modalities.

In line with broader EU goals, France's ALE system emphasizes **digital literacy** and the development of digital skills for all citizens. Many of the training programmes available through the CPF focus on enhancing digital competencies, as the French government recognizes the importance of digital skills in today's labour market. Digital skills training is available to workers in all sectors, with a particular emphasis on those working in industries impacted by digital transformation. The CPF also supports the acquisition of **Certificat Informatique et Internet (C2i)**, which certifies digital literacy skills.

France's ALE policies aim to promote **social inclusion** by providing targeted support for disadvantaged groups, including low-skilled workers, the unemployed, migrants, and individuals with disabilities. The PIC programme, for instance, allocates significant funding to jobseekers and young people, ensuring that those most vulnerable to unemployment have access to upskilling opportunities. Special initiatives exist to support older workers, women returning to work after a career break, and migrants, helping them reintegrate into the workforce.

Despite the increase in training uptake, there has been **a positive trend in reducing both the average duration and cost of training sessions facilitated by CPF**. This trend suggests improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness in delivering educational programmes through the platform, enhancing its appeal and accessibility to a wider audience.

However, alongside its successes, **CPF has faced challenges related to fraudulent practices**. Cases of identity theft, aggressive sales tactics, fraudulent claims, misleading advertising, and even instances where registered training courses turned out to be non-existent have been reported. To combat these issues, measures have been implemented including legal prohibitions on cold calling and aggressive marketing, stringent controls on training organizations seeking accreditation on the platform, and enhanced security measures for CPF holders accessing the platform.

Looking forward, efforts are underway **to further promote CPF, foster partnerships with co-financing entities, and steer the training offer towards future-oriented professions**. Regulating the training

market to empower CPF holders and ensure quality and relevance remains a priority, aiming to sustain CPF's effectiveness as a tool for lifelong learning and professional development in France[377].

---

[377] https://www.earlall.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/EARLALL_webinar_Understanding-Individual-Learning-Accounts_202302.pdf

## 1.6. Netherlands

### Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

Adult education in the Netherlands is **firmly anchored in the principle of lifelong learning, which is an integral part of both its education and employment policies**. The Dutch system encourages individuals to continuously acquire new skills and knowledge throughout their lives, combining formal and informal education opportunities. Adult learning is open to individuals over 18 years of age, with various pathways to develop professional, personal, and civic competencies. The system is supported by a legal framework designed to ensure inclusivity and flexibility, allowing adults to re-enter education or upskill through multiple programmes such as vocational training or higher education.

In the Dutch labour market, there is an emphasis on **reskilling and upskilling**, particularly as technological advancements drive shifts in required skills. According to the **European Semester 2024 Country Report**[378] for the Netherlands, the employment rate for individuals aged 20 to 64 reached 83.5% in 2023, well above the EU average of 75.3%. The gender employment gap is relatively low, with 7.8 percentage points of total population. Unemployment has remained low at 3.6%, supported by policies aimed at improving work-life balance and offering flexible employment conditions.

However, challenges persist, such as **labour shortages in services, ICT, technical jobs and construction**. Additionally, there is a notable skills mismatch between the available workforce and job market requirements, particularly among low-skilled workers. Regional disparities in employment rates and participation in lifelong learning are also evident, with the Randstad area outperforming other regions.

Participation in **lifelong learning among Dutch adults was 24.4% in 2023, one of the highest rates in the EU**. However, to meet the EU's 2030 adult learning target, the Netherlands continues to invest in adult education, particularly targeting low-skilled and older workers.

### *Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE*

The legal framework for ALE in the Netherlands is designed to promote lifelong learning and ensure that education is accessible to all adults.

The **Adult and Vocational Education Act**[379] (Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs – WEB) is the primary legislation governing adult education and vocational training in the Netherlands. This act structures the organization, administration, and funding of institutions providing adult education and vocational training. It encompasses quality assurance measures, accreditation standards, and delineates the rights and responsibilities of students. The fundamental aim of the WEB is to enhance the skills and employability of adults, ensuring access to high-quality education and training opportunities. The act represents a commitment to providing adults with the tools necessary for successful participation in the labour market.

Another critical component of the Dutch ALE framework is the **Participation Act**[380] (Participatiewet), which targets the inclusion of individuals with limited access to the labour market, such as those with disabilities or long-term unemployed. This act provides municipalities with a framework to offer tailored support and training to help these individuals secure and retain employment. The Participation Act is

---

[378] https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/c3a6d1e0-8289-4fb9-91ab-3f3fb1ba6dee_en?filename=SWD_2024_619_1_EN_Netherlands.pdf

[379] http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0007625/2013-09-01#Opschrift

[380] https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0015703/2024-07-01

pivotal in promoting social inclusion and equipping adults with the necessary skills to participate in the labor market.

**The Higher Education and Research Act**[381] (WHW) regulates higher education institutions, including universities and universities of applied sciences, which offer adult learning programmes. The WHW ensures that these institutions provide high-quality education, adhere to accreditation standards, and support lifelong learning opportunities. This act aims to facilitate access to higher education for adults, promoting continuous professional and personal development.

The **National Skills Strategy**[382] focuses on improving the skills of the Dutch workforce to ensure they are well-prepared for the demands of the modern labour market. Its objectives include reducing skills mismatches, increasing employability, and supporting economic growth by enhancing the quality and relevance of education and training programmes. The strategy includes initiatives such as upskilling and reskilling programmes, career guidance services, and the promotion of digital literacy.

The **Lifelong Learning Agenda**[383] outlines the government's vision and goals for lifelong learning in the Netherlands. It emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development and personal growth, aiming to create a culture of lifelong learning. The agenda includes measures to increase participation in adult education, provide financial incentives for learners, and encourage collaboration between educational institutions and employers.

*National ALE governance structure*

The governance structure for Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in the Netherlands is characterized by decentralization and close cooperation between public and private entities.

The **Ministry of Education, Culture and Science**[384] (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap ) acts as the central governing body for education in the Netherlands, and as such, plays a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of ALE. Their responsibilities encompass setting the national agenda for adult learning by developing strategies and policy frameworks. The OCW also ensures the quality and accessibility of adult education programmes throughout the country by allocating funding and resources for ALE initiatives. Finally, they monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes to inform future strategies.

**Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment**[385] (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid) works closely with the Ministry of Education to develop policies that link lifelong learning to the labor market, employment opportunities, and social inclusion.

**Regional Training Centers**[386] (Regionaal Onderwijscentrum, ROC) are public institutions offering vocational education and training (VET) for both young students and adults. ROCs are a central part of the ALE system, providing a range of reskilling and upskilling opportunities.

---

[381] http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0005682/2017-01-01

[382] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/data-insights/skills-anticipation-netherlands

[383] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/netherlands/lifelong-learning-strategy

[384] https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science

[385] https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-social-affairs-and-employment

[386] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/netherlands/organisation-vocational-upper-secondary-education-mbo

**Employee Insurance Agency**[387] (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen, UWV) plays a key role in providing support to jobseekers and workers looking to retrain. The UWV collaborates with the Ministry of Social Affairs to fund retraining programmes and match individuals with relevant learning opportunities.

**Local municipalities** play a significant role in the governance of ALE by implementing national policies at the local level and addressing specific regional needs. Under the Participation Act[388] (Participatiewet), municipalities are tasked with offering tailored support and training programmes to help individuals with limited access to the labour market, such as those with disabilities or long-term unemployed. Municipalities collaborate with local educational providers, employers, and social organizations to design and deliver programmes that meet local labour market demands. This local governance structure ensures that ALE programmes are responsive to the specific economic and social contexts of different regions.

Educational institutions, including regional training centres (ROCs), universities, and universities of applied sciences, are key actors in the delivery of ALE programmes[389]. These institutions are responsible for developing curricula, providing training, and ensuring the quality of educational offerings. The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) provides the framework within which these institutions operate, emphasizing the need for quality assurance and accreditation. The Accreditation Organization of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) plays a crucial role in maintaining educational standards by accrediting programmes and institutions, ensuring they meet national and international quality benchmarks.

**Social partners**, including employer organizations and trade unions, bring valuable perspectives to the table in ALE governance. Their participation ensures that ALE policies and programmes cater to the needs of both employers and employees. Social partners actively contribute to the development and implementation of ALE policies and programmes. They provide valuable input on current and anticipated labour market needs, guaranteeing that training programmes are aligned with industry requirements. Additionally, social partners play a crucial role in fostering a culture of continuous learning within workplaces by supporting workplace learning initiatives and promoting continuous professional development among employees[390].

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

The funding of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in the Netherlands is supported by a combination of national and European Union (EU) resources. This multi-source funding approach ensures the availability of diverse and comprehensive ALE programmes tailored to the needs of adult learners.

The primary source of funding for ALE in the Netherlands comes from the national government, specifically through the **Ministry of Education, Culture and Science**[391] (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap). The ministry allocates funds to various educational institutions, including regional training centres (ROCs), universities, and universities of applied sciences, to support the development and delivery of adult education programmes. Additionally, specific initiatives like the Levenlangleren Krediet (Lifelong Learning Credit) and the STAP Budget receive substantial government funding to provide

---

[387] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/contact/contactgids/uitvoeringsinstituut-werknemersverzekeringen-uwv

[388] https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0015703/2024-07-01

[389] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/netherlands-2019

[390] https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcms.13270?
__cf_chl_tk=6J6JMDei2wgDL6bq.qbnVQqB9XqdHusvQH69aUEDZWA-1721373094-0.0.1.1-4158

[391] https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science

Co-funded by
the European Union

financial support to adults seeking further education and training. These initiatives help to lower financial barriers and encourage continuous professional development among the Dutch workforce.

**Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment**[392] (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid) provides funding for retraining and upskilling programmes, particularly for unemployed individuals and workers at risk of redundancy. The ministry focuses on linking adult education with labour market needs, especially in sectors undergoing economic transitions.

The **Levenlangleren Krediet**[393] is a national initiative designed to make lifelong learning financially accessible to adults. Under this scheme, adults can apply for loans to cover the costs of accredited education and training programmes. The loans can be repaid under favourable conditions, thus providing a financial safety net for those looking to upgrade their skills or pursue new career opportunities. This initiative is crucial in promoting lifelong learning and ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder adults from seeking further education

The **STAP Budget**[394] ("Stimulering Arbeidsmarkt Positie" or Incentive for Employment Market Position) is a key initiative that provides individuals with funding for professional development and learning. This personal training budget replaces the previous tax deduction for education costs and is available to all Dutch residents. Eligible individuals can receive up to €1,000 per year to finance training and education programmes that improve their employment prospects. The STAP Budget is open to employed individuals, self-employed workers, and jobseekers. It is designed to encourage participation in lifelong learning and to make education more accessible for adults at various stages of their careers. Individuals can apply for the STAP Budget through a national portal and select from an extensive list of accredited training programmes.

**Regional Adult Learning Programs**[395] (Regionale Aanpak Laaggeletterdheid, or RAL) are focused on addressing the specific learning needs of adults at the regional level. These programmes are particularly aimed at reducing low literacy and improving basic skills. The RAL programmes provide targeted support for groups at risk of social exclusion, such as individuals with low literacy, immigrants, and older workers. The aim is to improve basic literacy and numeracy, as well as other foundational skills that are necessary for full participation in society and the workforce. Regional programmes are developed in collaboration with municipalities, local employers, and educational institutions to ensure they address the specific needs of the community. RAL programmes also encourage the development of community-based learning initiatives, offering adult education in libraries, community centers, and other accessible venues.

In addition to national funding, the Netherlands benefits from various EU funding programmes aimed at enhancing adult education and vocational training. One of the key programmes is the **European Social Fund**[396] (ESF), which co-finances numerous ALE initiatives in the Netherlands. The ESF aims to improve employment opportunities, promote social inclusion, and invest in education and skills development. Through this fund, the Dutch government and educational institutions can implement projects that address skills gaps, support workforce transitions, and enhance employability among adult learners.

---

[392] https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-social-affairs-and-employment

[393] https://duo.nl/particulier/levenlanglerenkrediet/

[394] https://www.stapbudget.nl/

[395] https://basisvaardigheden.nl/sites/default/files/2021-08/AMRStedendriehoek%20en%20Noordwest%20Veluwe%20_Regioplan_laaggeletterdheid.pdf

[396] https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en/support-your-country/esf-netherlands

**Learning and Working Desks**[397] (Leerwerkloketten) project establishes regional learning and work desks throughout the Netherlands, providing comprehensive support for adults seeking to improve their education and employment opportunities. These desks offer career counselling, training programmes, and job matching services, facilitating the transition from learning to employment.

**Digital Skills for Adults**[398] initiative aims to enhance the digital literacy of adults in the Netherlands through targeted training programmes. The project focuses on equipping learners with essential digital skills needed for modern workplaces, thus improving their employability and career prospects.

## Quality assurance in national ALE systems

The Netherlands has a well-established quality assurance system for ALE that ensures high standards in educational provision, aligning it with both learner needs and labour market demands.

### *Quality assurance systems in ALE*

The Dutch **Ministry of Education, Culture and Science** (OCW) is the main body responsible for overseeing education, including ALE, in the Netherlands. It develops national policies and regulations to ensure educational quality and coordinates with other governmental bodies, local authorities, and educational institutions to implement these policies effectively. The ministry sets the standards and provides the framework within which quality assurance operates.

The Netherlands has established a comprehensive **Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF) for Adult Education**[399]. This framework outlines the standards that all ALE providers must meet to ensure the quality and effectiveness of their programmes. The NLQF covers various aspects of adult education, including:

- **Curriculum Design:** The framework establishes criteria for developing curricula that are relevant to learner needs, aligned with labour market demands, and incorporate effective learning methodologies.

- **Teaching and Learning:** The NLQF sets quality standards for teaching practices, including educator qualifications, learner engagement strategies, and appropriate assessment methods.

- **Learner Support Services:** The framework emphasizes the importance of providing adequate support services for adult learners, such as guidance counselling, career coaching, and learning resource access.

- **Internal Quality Assurance:** The NLQF promotes the development of internal quality assurance systems within ALE providers. These systems involve regular self-evaluation processes to identify areas for improvement and implement necessary changes.

The NLQF aligns with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and sets the standards for qualifications in the Netherlands, ensuring transparency and comparability of qualifications across Europe. All accredited training programmes are mapped to the NLQF, making it easier for learners and employers to understand the level and quality of each qualification. The NLQF serves as a national benchmark for quality in ALE, ensuring that adult learners can be confident in the credibility and effectiveness of the programmes they choose.

---

[397] https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&projectId=312

[398] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details/#project/2019-1-NL01-KA204-060456

[399] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/netherlands/national-qualifications-framework

The primary body responsible for accrediting higher education institutions and programmes in the Netherlands is the **Accreditation Organizatio of the Netherlands and Flanders**[400] (De Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie, NVAO). The NVAO conducts rigorous evaluations of educational institutions and their programmes to ensure they meet the requirements of the NLQF. Accreditation is a prerequisite for institutions to offer recognized qualifications and receive public funding. The NVAO continuously updates and refines its accreditation standards in line with evolving educational practices and industry needs. Furthermore, the NVAO offers feedback and support to ALE providers throughout the accreditation process. This helps institutions identify areas for improvement and strengthen their quality assurance practices.

Lastly, **Inspectorate of Education**[401] (Inspectie van het Onderwijs) monitors and evaluates the quality of adult learning programmes, particularly those offered by public institutions, such as the Regional Training Centers (ROCs). These inspections assess compliance with national standards, the effectiveness of teaching methods, and the quality of educational outcomes. The Inspectorate plays a crucial role in maintaining high educational standards across the board.

**Blik op Werk Certification**[402] is a national quality mark focused on providers of adult education for vulnerable groups, such as immigrants and low-skilled workers. The **Blik op Werk** certification ensures that these providers offer high-quality programmes in areas such as Dutch language learning, literacy, and employability training.

Many industries in the Netherlands have sector-specific accreditation bodies that certify training providers. These certifications ensure that the programmes offered are aligned with the specific skills needed in those sectors, such as ICT, healthcare, and construction.

The **Foundation for cooperation on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market**[403] (Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven, SBB) is a public-private partnership organization that helps bridge the gap between vocational education and the labour market. It plays a key role in the quality assurance of work-based learning programmes and ensures that ALE providers align their curricula with industry standards. The SBB accredits companies that provide internships and work-based learning opportunities as part of vocational and adult education. It ensures that learners in adult vocational training receive high-quality, practical experience in relevant sectors. SBB maintains a registry of accredited companies and tracks the availability of internships, job placements, and apprenticeships. By providing quality assurance for work-based learning, the SBB ensures that adult learners are receiving training that is directly applicable to the labour market. Learners and training providers can access the SBB's online registry to find accredited companies offering work-based learning opportunities.

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

To ensure and evaluate the quality of ALE, the Netherlands employs a range of quality indicators and evaluation methods that provide a comprehensive overview of educational quality and effectiveness.

---

[400] https://www.nvao.net/

[401] https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/

[402] https://www.blikopwerk.nl/

[403] https://www.s-bb.nl/en/

The **Inspectorate of Education**[404] plays a crucial role in monitoring the quality of educational institutions in the Netherlands. Established under the Education Inspection Act (WOT), the Inspectorate conducts external evaluations of institutions offering adult and secondary vocational education (MBO). These evaluations focus on key areas outlined in the inspection framework[405]. The Inspectorate assesses the **effectiveness of teaching methods**, ensuring they are engaging, appropriate for the subject matter, and cater to diverse learning styles. Moreover, the Inspectorate safeguards the integrity and **effectiveness of examinations** used by ALE institutions. This includes reviewing examination instruments and processes to ensure they accurately measure student learning outcomes. For government-funded institutions, the Inspectorate monitors **financial management practices** to ensure proper allocation and use of resources. The Inspectorate publishes the results of its inspections on its website, providing transparency and accountability within the ALE system. These publicly available inspection cards allow potential learners to assess the performance of institutions before enrolling in programmes.

The Dutch ALE system emphasizes **self-regulation and continuous improvement**. As mandated by the WEB[406], institutions are required to establish and maintain a quality assurance system. Institutions regularly evaluate their teaching practices, curriculum design, and learning resources to identify areas for enhancement. Moreover, institutions gather feedback from learners through surveys and focus groups to understand their experiences and identify areas for improvement in programme delivery. Regular performance reviews for teaching staff can identify professional development needs and ensure educators possess the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality instruction.

The framework for quality assurance in Dutch ALE extends beyond the Inspectorate and internal evaluations. The **Foundation for Cooperation on Vocational Education, Training and Labour Market**[407] (SBB), supervised by the Inspectorate, plays a vital role in maintaining the quality of vocational education by developing and maintaining qualification structures for MBO programmes, ensuring the adequacy of internship placements for vocational training, and evaluating the quality of training companies involved in vocational education.

While not explicitly mandated by MBO, institutions often conduct surveys like the **JOB monitor**[408] to gather feedback from students on the quality of teaching. This feedback can be used to inform professional development opportunities for instructors.

## National ALE registries and information models for ALE

The Netherlands maintains several registries that are integral to the management and quality assurance of Adult Learning and Education (ALE). These registries help in organizing information about qualifications, training providers, and educational programmes, ensuring transparency and accessibility.

*Available registries (description, structure)*

---

[404] https://english.onderwijsinspectie.nl/

[405] https://english.onderwijsinspectie.nl/binaries/onderwijsinspectie_eng/documenten/publications/2023/11/08/inspection-framework-special-education/Inspection+framework+special+education+2023.pdf

[406] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/eurydice/index.php/Netherlands:Legislation#The_Adult_and_Vocational_Education_Act

[407] https://www.s-bb.nl/en

[408] https://www.jobmbo.nl/monitor/

The **National Qualifications Framework** (NLQF) is the Dutch framework for qualifications. It categorizes qualifications based on levels of knowledge, skills, and competencies, aligning with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The NLQF has eight levels, each corresponding to a specific EQF level, ranging from basic education to doctoral level qualifications. It includes qualifications from both formal education and professional qualifications. The framework aims to facilitate lifelong learning, promote the transparency of qualifications, and support mobility in education and employment within Europe. The **NLQF database**[409] is accessible to the public, providing detailed information about the qualifications and the criteria they meet.
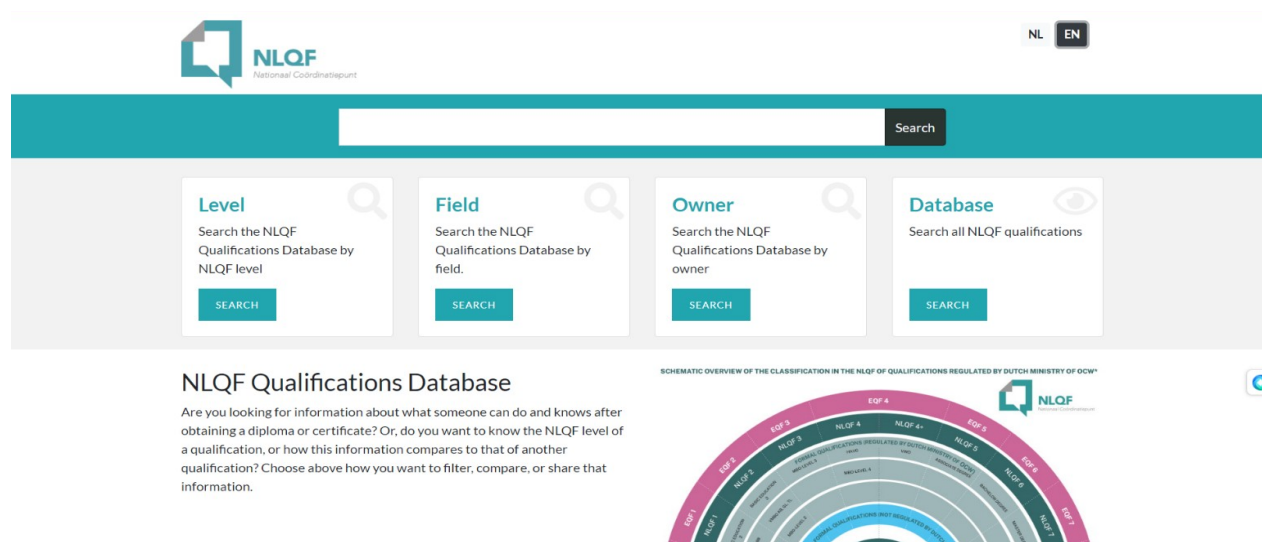


*Figure 16. NQF Database*

*Source: National Qualifications Framework[410]*

The **Learning and Development Budget Registry**[411] (Stimulering Arbeidsmarkt Positie, STAP) system is a digital registry and funding model for adult education in the Netherlands, providing individuals with access to financial resources for their learning. The registry lists eligible programmes and tracks the allocation of the STAP Budget for individuals seeking to upskill or reskill. The STAP Budget allows individuals to receive up to 1.000,00 EUR annually to fund courses and training programmes that improve their employability. The platform also maintains a registry of accredited training providers and programmes that individuals can choose from when using their STAP funds. The registry is updated regularly with a list of certified training providers and programmes that are approved for STAP funding. These programmes span across various sectors, from digital skills to healthcare and green energy. The STAP registry makes it easier for individuals to find high-quality training programmes that align with their career goals. The system ensures that only accredited providers can access government funding, maintaining the quality of ALE programmes. The STAP platform is publicly accessible and allows individuals to apply for funding and search for relevant courses. As of January 1, 2024, there will no longer be any budget available. In the spring memorandum of 2023, the government announced that the STAP budget will be abolished. The My STAP budget portal will be discontinued on 31 December 2024.

---

[409] https://database.nlqf.nl/

[410] https://database.nlqf.nl

[411] STAP-budget voor scholing en ontwikkeling | UWV

*Figure 17. STAP portal*

*Source: Stimulering Arbeidsmarkt Positie [412]*

The **Blik op Werk[413]** registry is a national certification and information model focused on adult education for vulnerable groups, particularly migrants and individuals with low literacy levels. It is part of the broader effort to promote social inclusion and labour market integration. The registry provides a list of certified institutions that offer high-quality courses in Dutch language learning, literacy improvement, and employability training. It plays a vital role in helping migrants and other disadvantaged groups access learning opportunities that help them integrate into Dutch society and the labour market. The registry also includes detailed information on each provider, including learner satisfaction scores, programme effectiveness, and alignment with national standards. Furthermore, the registry ensures that learners from vulnerable backgrounds have access to trusted, high-quality education providers. It helps government agencies and municipalities direct resources toward programmes that are proven to be effective. The registry is available online, allowing learners, employers, and policymakers to search for certified providers and courses.

---

[412] https://www.stapuwv.nl/p/voorportaal

[413] https://www.blikopwerk.nl/
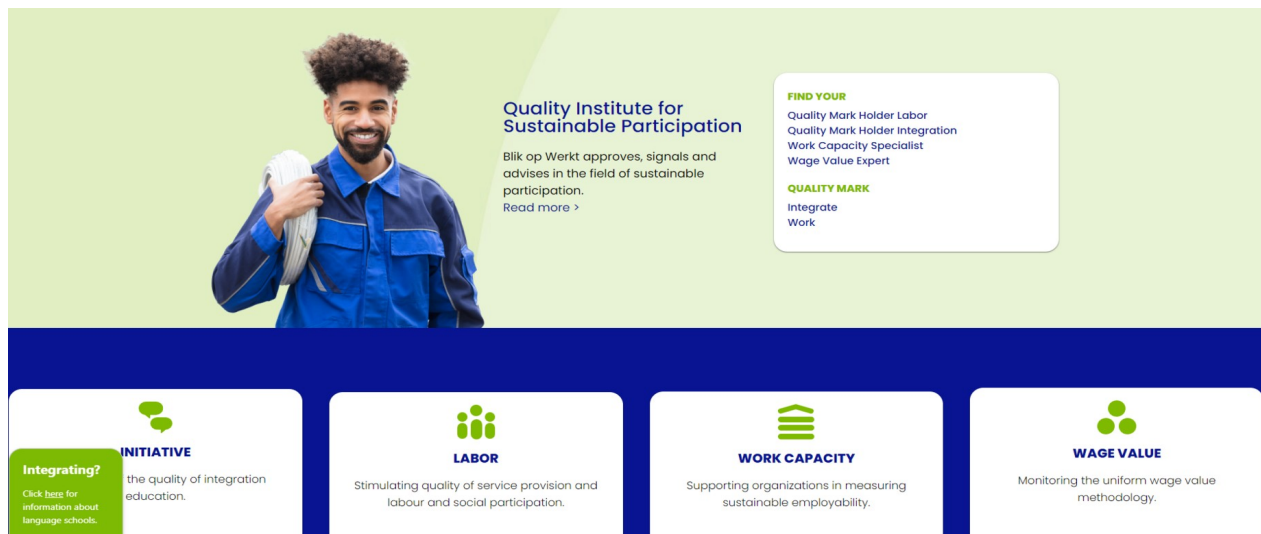
*Figure 18. Bilk op Werk portal*

*Source: Blik op Werk [414]*

**DUO**[415] (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs) is the executive agency of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. It manages data related to educational institutions, student registrations, and qualifications. The registry includes comprehensive data on educational programmes, student enrolment, funding, and qualifications awarded. DUO supports the administration of education at all levels, providing essential data for policy-making, research, and public information. Educational institutions, policymakers, and the public can access certain datasets through DUO's online portal.

---

[414] https://www.blikopwerk.nl

[415] https://www.duo.nl

*Figure 19. DUO Database*

*Source: Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs[416]*

**BRON[417]** (Basisregister Onderwijs) is the central education register in the Netherlands, maintained by DUO. It records detailed information on students and educational institutions. The register includes data on student enrolments, progress, and qualifications across different levels of education, from primary to tertiary and adult education. BRON ensures accurate and up-to-date information for educational management, policy-making, and quality assurance. Data from BRON is used by educational institutions, governmental bodies, and researchers. Access is regulated to protect student privacy.

The Netherlands has developed sophisticated information models for monitoring labour market trends and skills demands, which play a key role in informing the development of adult learning programmes.

**Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek**[418] (Central Bureau for Statistics, CBS) collects and analyses data on employment, skills gaps, and workforce trends, providing valuable insights for the development of ALE policies. This data is crucial for aligning education programmes with labour market needs.

**Research Center for Education and the Labor Market**[419] at Maastricht University conducts research on the relationship between education and employment. It produces detailed labour market forecasts and skills reports that help inform the design and evaluation of ALE programmes in the Netherlands. The Dutch

---

[416] https://www.duo.nl/particulier

[417] https://www.noraonline.nl/wiki/Basisregister_Onderwijs_(BRON)

[418] https://www.cbs.nl/

[419] https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/research/research-centre-education-and-labour-market

government uses data from CBS and ROA to implement its National Skills Agenda, which ensures that training programmes in ALE are designed to meet the current and future needs of the economy.

*Information models for ALE*

The Netherlands has established comprehensive information models for Adult Learning and Education (ALE) registries, aimed at providing a transparent and accessible overview of available training courses, financial schemes, and career counselling resources. The **Learning Overview website**[420] plays a central role in this system, supported by several key data sources and collaborative efforts among national and sectoral stakeholders.

The Learning Overview website (Leeroverzicht) serves as a central hub for information about training courses and financial schemes in the Netherlands. This independent platform is a collaborative initiative involving the national government, trade unions, employers' organizations, and educational institutions. The website's primary goal is to support lifelong learning by offering a comprehensive overview of educational opportunities and associated financial arrangements.

The Learning Overview website provides detailed information on a wide range of training courses, including practical learning, vocational training, and accredited programmes. It consolidates information from various sources to offer a complete picture of available education options. Users can access details about both government-funded and commercially provided training programmes. Additionally, the website features an overview of financial schemes that can support learners in financing their education. For those seeking personalized advice, the site also lists career counselling organizations by region.

The website is commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. It also involves contributions from various employers' and employees' organizations, including VNO-NCW, MKB-Nederland, LTO Nederland, VCP, FNV, and CNV, as well as educational umbrella organizations such as the MBO Council, the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, Universities of the Netherlands, and the Dutch Council for Training and Education. This broad collaboration ensures that the website reflects the needs and perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders in the ALE sector.

For the formal training offer, the Learning Overview website integrates data from three primary sources:

- **EDU-DEX Foundation**: This foundation maintains a comprehensive register of educational programmes and institutions, providing detailed information on accredited courses and qualifications.

- **Register of Institutions and Programmes (RIO)**: RIO is another critical source of data, offering information about various educational institutions and their programmes.

- **Higher Education Information (HOVI)**: HOVI provides data specifically related to higher education institutions, enhancing the breadth of information available on the website.

---

[420] https://www.leeroverzicht.nl
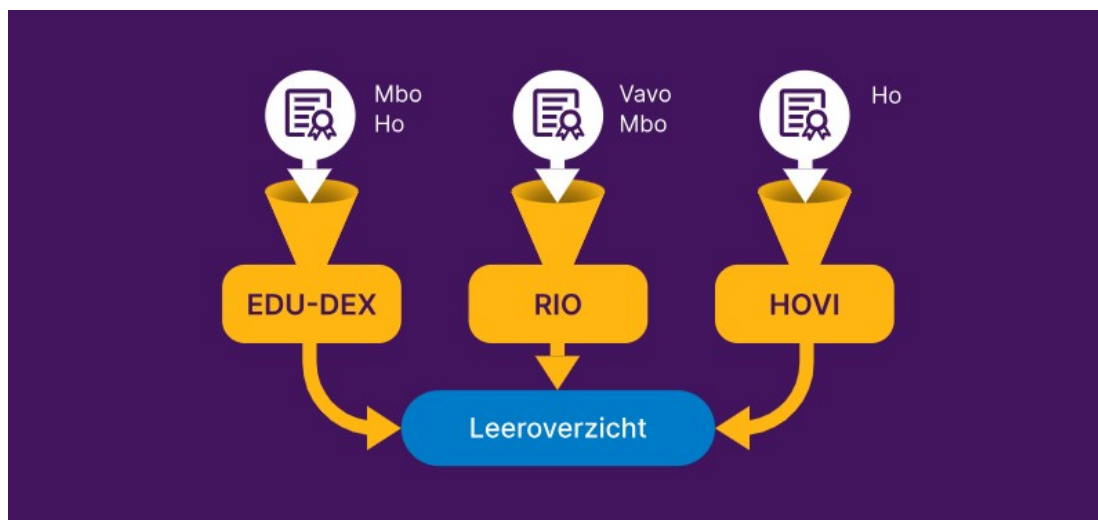
*Figure 20. Model for formal education*

*Source: Leeroverzicht [421]*

Non-formal training courses, which may not be formally accredited but still offer valuable learning opportunities, can be registered in EDU-DEX or the STAP training register to be included in the Learning Overview. This system allows non-formal training providers to contribute their offerings to the comprehensive overview, ensuring that learners have access to a wide range of educational options. Courses funded by Research and Development (R&D) funds can also be collectively submitted to EDU-DEX for inclusion.



*Figure 21. DUO Database*

*Source: Leeroverzicht[422]*

---

## Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

The Netherlands has considered Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) as a potential tool to enhance access to adult learning, but there's no evidence of a nationwide implementation. Studies and European initiatives have explored the concept, highlighting both potential benefits and challenges.

### Experiences with the introduction of ILA as a tool

In 2024, the Netherlands is part of the second edition of the one-year mutual learning programme on ILAs[423], participating **as an observer** along with Germany. This involvement signifies a growing interest in the adoption and refinement of ILAs within the country.

The 2024 programme, named the **"Year of Skills"**, aims to enhance the skills and competencies of the European workforce through various initiatives including ILAs. As an observer, the Netherlands is actively engaged in understanding and implementing best practices from other participating countries, such as Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Malta. This collaboration helps in tailoring the ILAs to better fit the Dutch labour market and educational landscape.

The Netherlands **has been exploring a public-private funded model for ILAs**. A study conducted by IZA[424] examined the costs and benefits of such a model for the Dutch labour force. The findings highlight the potential advantages of a collaborative approach between public institutions and private entities in funding ILAs. The IZA study provides an in-depth cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of a public-private funded ILA system in the Netherlands. This analysis is crucial for understanding the economic viability and potential impact of ILAs on both individuals and the broader economy. The study found that ILAs could significantly boost economic productivity by enhancing the skill sets of the workforce. Skilled workers are more likely to find employment, stay employed, and earn higher wages, which in turn boosts economic growth, and by involving both public and private sectors in funding, the burden on public finances is reduced, making the system more sustainable. Study also found that employers also benefit from a more skilled and adaptable workforce since ILAs provide individuals with greater control over their learning paths, allowing them to pursue education and training that align with their career goals. This empowerment leads to higher job satisfaction and retention rates. The analysis also highlighted some challenges, such as the administrative complexity of managing ILAs and ensuring equitable access to funds. Effective digital infrastructure and clear guidelines are essential for overcoming these challenges.

### Results with introducing ILA at the national level

The Netherlands has no experience with the introduction of ILA as a tool, and therefore no results are available.

---

[423] Year of Skills

[424] https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/15649/costs-and-benefits-of-an-individual-learning-account-ila-a-simulation-analysis-for-the-netherlands

Co-funded by
the European Union

## 1.7. Slovenia

### Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

*Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE*

Although the need for adult education in Slovenia has been acknowledged and discussed since before World War II, it wasn't until 2007 that the Minister responsible for education adopted the Lifelong Learning Strategy, a political document that now serves as the guiding principle for modern education and learning.[425]

The **Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007** aims to address the fast growth of knowledge and technological change, particularly since most Slovenian education systems, particularly the school system, have been slow and organisationally unprepared to respond to these issues. Limiting education to childhood, and adolescence only, leads to many educational needs not being met. Lifelong learning has the potential to achieve equal opportunities for education for all people.[426]

Adding to this notion of lifelong learning, the **New Adult Education Act was adopted in 2018,** providing a specific legal framework that governs the provision of adult education in Slovenia. The Act was unanimously adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia and it establishes rights and responsibilities of learners, educators, and educational institutions. It determined the public interest in adult education, as well as programmes and activities in the field of adult learning. It is based among others on the principles of lifelong education and learning, equitable and equal access to learning opportunities, freedom of choosing their own educational pathways, quality education, and linking formal, non-formal and informal learning, as well as striking a balance with vocational education.[427]

The new Adult Education Act regards non-formal education, which does not lead to officially recognised qualifications and is not included in any other educational legislation, except the officially recognised programme of elementary school for adults.

The short programmes for elementary school, which are adapted for adult education and that are included in this act, aims to support young people and adults in obtaining their primary education. They are rather short programmes, which are adapted to fit the standards of adult education. This opens up the possibility for them to access further secondary education programmes. As these programmes are financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, they are free for adult learners.[428]

The New Adult Education Act furthermore clearly provides a "systemic definition and placement of the public interest, public service and public network of providers, activities and programmes".[429] It aims to ensure the long-term stabilisation of financing adult education activities and services, particularly focussing on vulnerable target groups. The Act is the result of multiple years of consultations and coordination by the key stakeholders in adult education in Slovenia, to adopt changes and updates on the previous edition of the Adult Education Act from 1996.

---

[425] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/lifelong-learning-strategy

[426] https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/articles/slovenia-lifelong-learning-strategy-issued-2007

[427] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

[428] https://www.mocis.si/elementary-school

[429] https://enovicke.acs.si/en/new-sl-aea

The public interest in adult education is determined by the relevant national programme, usually for 10 years.

The **Resolution on the National Programme of Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2013-2020 (ReNPIO 2013–2020)** guides "adult education policy at the national level contributes to the systemic regulation of the field, including stable financing and determining priority areas and content-related tasks for the development of adult education".[430] As an instrument for the systemic regulation of adult education, ReNPIO 2013–2020 encompasses education, training, further training, and learning for individuals who have completed their legal compulsory education. It places key emphasis on obtaining officially recognized educational qualifications, focusing on basic education, upper secondary vocational-technical and general education, and short-cycle higher vocational education for adults.

The strategic document has been updated with the **Resolution on the National Programme of Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2022–2030 (ReNPIO 2022–2030)**, which is based on the Act on Adult Education. It serves the same purpose of defining the national programme of ALE in Slovenia and determining public interest in this area. The document encompasses "goals and indicators of the national programme, priority areas of adult education, measures to ensure and implement adult education, the approximate scope of public funds for the field of adult education, ministries that they are the bearers of individual measures, as well as the method of coordination in the realization of goals and the method of monitoring the implementation of the national programme."[431] The resolution was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia on the government's proposal. It was prepared by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport, in collaboration with other ministries., also collaborating with the Professional Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Adult Education.[432]

The actual implementation of the resolution is determined by **the annual programme of adult education**, "adopted by the self-governing local community or several self-governing local communities". These programmes are financed from the funds for the realisation of public interest, which are provided from the state budget, from self-governing local communities, and other sources.[433]

ReNPIO 2022-2030 guides state-level adult education policy, contributing to the systematic regulation of the field. It ensures ongoing financing and defines measures and tasks for the development of adult education in the country. As both the ReNPIO document and the Act for Adult Education foresee, local communities are obliged to prepare these annual adult education programmes for the implementation of ALE programmes on the local level in Slovenia.

The goals for the 2022-2030 ReNPIO version are:

1. increasing the participation of adults in life-long learning;

2. raising the level of basic skills and improving general education of adults;

3. raising the educational attainment of adults;

4. increasing the capacity of adults to respond successfully to labour market needs;

5. strengthening research and development in the field of adult education;

---

[430] https://www.gov.si/en/policies/education-science-and-sport/adult-education

[431] https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=RESO138

[432] Ibidem

[433] Ibidem

6.  improving and strengthening support activities in adult education.

Along with the goal, the ReNPIO 2022-30 provides three indicators to monitor the increase of adult participation in life-long learning (target age group 25-64 years old):

1.  from 8.4 % in 2020 to 19 % in 2030 according to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) (4 weeks before measure);

2.  from 46 % in 2016 to 66 % in 2030 in the 12 months prior to the survey (Adult Education Survey, AES);

3.  from estimated 40.3 % in 2016 to 60 % in 2030, according to LFS (12 months before measure).[434]

The annual programmes consider the national and international background documents and recommendations, as well as the socio-economic situation and the impact on the development of adult education regarding demographic changes, technological development, changing labour market needs, etc. Considering the educational structures and activities of citizens, as well as recent results of international research on adult skills through the PIAAC study, the purpose of the annual programmes is to reach the goals and indicators of the previous relevant resolution in the national programme. They aim to:

1.  Increase the inclusion of adults in lifelong learning,

2.  Raise the level of basic stills in the Slovenian public and improve the general education of adults,

3.  Raise the educational level of adults,

4.  Improve skills of citizens to better respond to (changing) labour market needs, enhancing the development and research in adult education and overall improving and facilitating activities in adult education.[435]

Concrete target groups include:

1.  Adults with low basic skills irrespective of employment situation, age and/or other characteristics

2.  Adults who need to improve general education for personal needs and respond to the challenges of community

3.  Adults who need to continue vocational or professional education and training in line with the labour market needs

4.  Younger adults who leave early education and training, and dropouts

5.  Adults over 65 years of age, and

6.  Adults with limited access to social, cultural, economic and educational goods.[436]

Apart from the resolution and policy documents targeting adult education specifically, major changes are planned for the modernisation of vocational and professional education and legislative changes within the "**renovation of the education system of the Republic of Slovenia, for the period of 2023-2033**"[437]. The proposed strategic goal for this policy document is to implement a high quality and sustainable,

---

[434] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/39921

[435] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

[436] Ibidem

[437] https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/prenova-sistema-vzgoje-in-izobrazevanja-v-sloveniji/#e237106

scientifically based education system, which builds upon good practices within the country and can flexibility adapt to the various challenges of modern society. It defines 21 strategic goals, 51 sub-goals and 284 measures, which are divided into six priority areas:

1. Social development and the role of education,

2. Ensuring a safe and stimulating environment for the optimal development of the individual,

3. Teaching, learning, monitoring progress and testing assessment of knowledge,

4. Professional and career development of profession and managers in education,

5. Quality assurance and identification system,

6. Educational system.[438.]

While the new **National education Programme 2023-2033** does not focus directly on ALE or higher education, with the reasoning that the ReNPIO programme has already been established in 2022, it does mention adult education in some specific parts: adults in formal education programmes will receive ongoing professional support for literacy development; appropriate teaching methods for Slovene will be implemented; the right to adaptations for adults with disabilities will be included in the Adult Education Act; and programmes on digital addiction, cyber security, and ethical use of digital technologies will be organised[439].

Supplementing the Slovenian adult educational system is the unified system for the classification of qualifications into levels by learning outcomes – **The Slovenian Qualifications Framework (SQF)[440]**. The SQFs main objectives include supporting lifelong learning, integrating and harmonising Slovenia's qualifications subsystems and improving the transparency, accessibility and quality of qualifications with regard to the labour market and civil society. It was adopted through the Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act in 2015[441], introducing the SQF as a tool for developing and classifying qualifications into a unified system. Within this framework, qualifications are classified through statutory criteria, learning outcomes and descriptors. It includes three categories of Qualifications, including:

- Education, in which the completion of education is demonstrated by a public document;

- Vocational qualification, which is demonstrated by an **National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)** certificate. This can be issues following the regulations governing NVQ, or another document certifying the completion of a further training programme, which can be issued in accordance with the regulations governing vocational and higher education;

- Supplementary qualification, with a certificate of acquired supplementary qualifications.

The SQF divides qualifications into 10 levels regarding the learning outcome, which are linked to 8 the EQF levels (the European Qualifications Framework), through the level descriptions of the frameworks. The core

---

[438] https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/prenova-sistema-vzgoje-in-izobrazevanja-v-sloveniji/#e237106

[439] https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MVI/Dokumenti/Nacionalni-program-vzgoje-in-izobrazevanja-za-obdobje-2023-2033-predlog.pdf

[440] https://www.nok.si/en

[441] https://www.nok.si/files/documents/sokbrosura_strokovna_155x295_eng_potrditev2.pdf

institutions responsible for the SQF are the interdepartmental working group, the NC SQF-EQF expert panel and the national coordination point (NCP SQF-EQF).[442]

*National ALE governance structure*

At national level, adult learning in Slovenia is mainly overseen by **the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport**, in cooperation with its Upper Secondary, Higher Vocational and Adult Education Directorate.

The Ministry of Education is officially responsible particularly for adopting recognised programmes, such as ReNPIO, specifying conditions for requirements, and keeps a list of officially accredited educational institutions and programmes.

The Ministry of Education additionally co-funds many programmes and supporting activities. However, while the Ministry of Education is the governmental actor with the largest involvement in the adult learning system, **other ministries in total have current legislative responsibilities of adult learning**.

Other ministries responsible for ALE in Slovenia, which contribute to the development of ALE include the following.

- **The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities** provides lifelong learning scholarships, facilitating access to education for adults and supporting their continuous development.

- **The Ministry of Culture** promotes non-formal education through cultural organizations, enhancing the cultural and creative competencies of adults in Slovenia.

- **The Ministry of Health** focuses on health education, aiming to improve the overall well-being and health literacy of the adult population.

- **The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food** offers educational programmes targeting the development of the countryside and its human resources. It facilitates the transfer of knowledge and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and food production, crucial for rural development and sustainability.[443]

Apart from the Ministries responsible for offering adult education within their respective sectors, according to the annual adult education plans, another national non-governmental key player in the field of lifelong learning and ALE is the **Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (Andragoški center Republike Slovenije – ACS)[444]**. This national institution supports research and development, quality assurance, education, guidance, validation, and promotional activities in adult education. It plays a central role in ensuring that adult education in Slovenia is effective and meets international standards. The ACS is responsible for developing the field of ALE in Slovenia in line with the ReNPIO plan and other national and European documents. Additionally, they act as the national coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL), working on research, programmes, projects and events. Apart from the policy work, the ACS is also a training provider, with more than 40 educational programmes developed, with a primary focus on adult educators training[445]. Furthermore, the Institute contributes significantly to the adult education landscape

---

[442] Ibidem

[443] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/distribution-responsibilities

[444] https://www.acs.si/en/

[445] https://www.acs.si/en/about-us/

through its catalogue of formal and non-formal adult education offer, updated every year, which includes information about available programmes and adult education providers.

Additionally, **several other bodies play a role in adult education and lifelong learning**, including the **National Institute for Vocational Education and Training**[446], the **National Education Institute Slovenia**[447], the **National School for Leadership in Education**[448] and the **National Examination Centre**[449]. They are responsible for conducting research and development, quality assurance, guidance, validation and promotional and informative activities, specifically for ALE and vocational education. Apart from the research institutions specifically mentioned, many other organisations support and contribute to this cause, e.g regarding further research (including on PIAAC data), developing programmes and teaching and recognition of prior learning.[450]

The regional implementation of adult education is overseen by the **Municipalities**. They are responsible for establishing public institutions that provide adult education programmes which respond to the goals detailed in the annual programmes they are required to develop[451]. They provide the premise of educational programmes, owning the country's **Adult Education Centres** [452](ljudske univerze), and are responsible for funding adult education services and programmes.[453]

While Slovenia does not have regional governments, there are 12 **Regional Development Agencies** (Regionalne razvojne agencije) implementing their Regional Development Plans, most of which include also some kind of adult-learning related goals.[454]

**Adult education providers in Slovenia are also diverse**, including public secondary schools, higher vocational colleges and tertiary education institutions provide formal education to adult learners in Slovenia. There are also over providers of non-formal adult education and training, specialised adult education institutions, school-based units, company-based units, educational centres at business chambers and NGOs.[455]

Adult education units are also integrated within formal educational institutions, usually for specific qualifications (Matura exam or for specific vocational paths) or for opportunities on strengthening language and digital skills, etc.

In March 2023, there were 27 publicly subsidized Adult Education Centres, or Folk High Schools (ljudske univerze) across the country.[456] They provide a variety of educational offers, including formal, and non-formal trainings, basic skills education and foreign language courses.

---

[446] https://cpi.si/en/about/company-id

[447] https://www.zrss.si/en

[448] https://en.solazaravnatelje.si/index.html

[449] https://www.nrpslo.org/en/partners/national-examinations-centre

[450] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-strategy-implementation-guidance-for-slovenia_9789264308459-en

[451] Ibidem

[452] https://www.acs.si/en

[453] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-strategy-implementation-guidance-for-slovenia_9789264308459-en

[454] https://www.gov.si/en/policies/state-and-society/local-self-government-and-regional-development/regional-development

[455] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-strategy-implementation-guidance-for-slovenia_9789264308459-en

[456] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/main-providers

Other adult education and training providers also include educational centres in business companies and other organisations whose main activity is not education, privately owned ALE institutions or non-profit organizations, associations, libraries, museums, galleries, as well as chambers, which focus on commerce and industry or crafts and small businesses and driving school (the latter are under the domain of the Ministry of Interior Affairs).

Employers may be involved in the adult education by providing education and training programmes themselves, study leave or informal learning or their employees, as may be required by collective agreements or according to business needs. Job-related non-formal adult education can be sponsored by the employer, which about one-third of adult employees in Slovenia take advantage of.

Additionally, adult learning is supported by various social partners in Slovenia. It's 49 trade unions and 5 major inter-sectoral employers' associations contribute to adult education and lifelong learning by negotiating adult learning provisions in collective agreements. These collective agreements cover about 65% of Slovenian employers, which oftentimes support their employee's training financially.[457]

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

The principle of lifelong learning underpins the funding of adult education and training in Slovenia. Public funds are allocated by the state to create extensive learning opportunities for the adult population, ensuring that education is accessible and continuous throughout an individual's life.

The funding mechanisms in adult education and training are governed by several key laws and regulations[458]:

- Adult Education Act[459]

- Organisation and Financing of Education Act[460]

- Public Finance Act[461]

- Implementation of the Republic of Slovenia Budget for 2022 and 2023 Act[462]

- Rules on norms and standards for funding and provision of public service in adult education[463]

The provisional outline of funds for each period is defined by the **ReNPIO** in the Republic of Slovenia, adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia in the form of a resolution document, by recommendation of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, as a rule for ten years.[464]

Additionally, the **annual programme** contains specific information on the financial aspects of adult education in a given year. The programme outlines the implementation of the **ReNPIO** as developed by

---

[457]

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-strategy-implementation-guidance-for-slovenia_9789264308459-en

[458] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/adult-education-and-training-funding

[459] http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO7641

[460] https://zakonodaja.sio.si/predpis/zakon-o-organizaciji-in-financiranju-vzgoje-in-izobra-zevanja-zofvi

[461] http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO1227

[462] https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO8461

[463] http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV14115

[464] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/adult-education-and-training-funding

the relevant ministries within 30 days after the adoption of the annual budget. This programme is then forwarded to the ministry responsible for education to create a consolidated document. The ministry seeks approval of the draft document from the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Education. Finally, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopts it. The annual programme sets the goals and indicators of the national programme, identifies priority areas, outlines actions for delivering adult education, specifies the provisional scope of public funds, assigns responsibilities to various ministries for individual actions, and establishes monitoring provisions. It also determines the scope of funding for activities and public services in adult education. The funds are then distributed directly to providers through calls for applications.[465]

The **Annual Plan for the Adult Education Master Plan** reports the expenditure on adult education programmes. For this, in 2018 over half of these expenditures were sourced from the European Social Funds (ESF).[466]

In 2018, an analysis based on the **OECD Survey of Basic Skills (PIAAC)[467]** database provided per capita estimates of **public funding for adult learning** in Slovenia. Central government funding for adult learning has seen considerable fluctuations since 2005. The amount and continuity of public expenditure on adult learning in Slovenia vary depending on the form and level of education. Public funding is highly concentrated in non-formal, predominantly job-related education and training. It is largely project-based, relying on European Social Fund (ESF) support, which means availability can differ significantly over time and across different types of learning. Permanent public funding is available to fully cover the costs of second-chance basic education (ISCED 1-2). However, for second-chance secondary education (ISCED 3), public funding is mainly project-based and sporadically available, while for tertiary education and training (currently only ISCED 5), it is rarely available. Most major publicly funded programmes for non-formal education and training are project-based and rely heavily on ESF funding.[468]

While limited **data on business expenditure** for ALE in Slovenia is available, the available data suggests that enterprises in sectors such as manufacturing, information and communication, and financial and insurance services may invest significantly in continuing vocational training. Businesses in construction on the other hand spend relatively little. Data from 2018 suggests that on average, Slovenian enterprises spend 688 Euro per employed person on CVT, which was over the EU-average of 585 Euro at the time.[469]

Slovenia's Employment Relationship Act (2013) mandates that employer support for adult education and training be specified in a contract or collective agreement. About 65% of employers are covered by collective agreements that were negotiated by the Slovenian social partners. While this number is still significantly higher than the OECD average, it has significantly declined from the share of 100% in 2005, when membership in an employers' association became voluntary. The generosity of provisions for workers' education and training varies significantly between agreements.[470]

**Regarding individual expenditure on adult learning, there is no concrete data available.** The Slovenian government does not collect specific information on this, and existing surveys do not distinguish adult

---

[465] Ibidem

[466] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-strategy-implementation-guidance-for-slovenia_9789264308459-en

[467] https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/piaac.html

[468] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-strategy-implementation-guidance-for-slovenia_9789264308459-en

[469] Ibidem

[470] Ibidem

education spending, making it impossible to isolate this data. Additionally, sectoral education and training funds are now uncommon in Slovenia.[471]

**Table 4.6. Public funding of adult learning in Slovenia (2018)**

Per capita approximations

| | |
|---|---|
| Total public funding (2018) | EUR 82 728 953 |
| Number of low-skilled adults (approx., 2015) | 397 000 |
| Public funding per low-skilled adult (approx.) | **EUR 210** |
| Total population of adults (2017) | 1 171 055 |
| Public funding per adult (approx.) | **EUR 70** |

*Figure 22. Public founding of adult learning in Slovenia*

*Source: OECD library[472]*

## Quality assurance in national ALE systems

*Quality assurance systems in ALE*

In general, quality assurance in adult education aims to internally evaluate ALE programmes and guide the development of their quality.

According to the Adult Education Act, **ALE programmes can be officially recognised by the Ministry of Education** (education programme for basic school for adults, officially recognised education programmes for adults that do not give formal educational qualification, and non-formal education programmes for adults). For adult education organisations delivering these recognised ALE programmes carrying out a self-evaluation is a legal requirement, while the law does not specify in detail the process to carry out the self-evaluation.[473] Furthermore, education providers offering officially recognized adult education programmes must register with the Ministry of Education. Providers of non-formal education programmes that receive public funding must either be registered for adult education activities or have these activities specified in their own foundation act.[474]

Quality assurance is the responsibility of the central coordinating body **Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE)[475]**, a non-governmental organisation. The Institute systematically develops initiatives and approaches to quality assessment in adult education and promotes the **development of internal systems of quality in educational organisations for adults**. Specifically, it conducts research on ALE, develops programmes and methods of non-formal education, develops learning material, staff, assessment and quality.

---

[471] Ibidem

[472] Ibidem

[473] https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO449

[474] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/quality-assurance-adult-education-and-training

[475] https://www.acs.si/en

Co-funded by
the European Union

The **external quality assurance** in the delivery of officially recognised programmes for adult education, as well as supervision apply the same methods and approaches as they apply for the evaluation of mainstream education, namely with evaluation studies and research projects, monitoring of innovations introduces and inspection, as well as accreditation of programmes and providers.[476]

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

As mentioned above, **the SIAE is responsible to develop methods and tools to evaluate the quality of adult education**. Since by law educational providers who offer adult education programmes need to have a system of internal assessment in place, if they are partially publicly funded, the SIAE also offers professional support for organizations and individuals for the implementation of this quality system.

In this sense, the two main initiatives of the Institute are the **Approach to self-evaluation offering quality education to adults – OQEA[477]** (firstly introduced in 2001, developed based on the "Let us provide quality education for adults" model, in Slovenian *Ponudimo odraslim kakovostno izobraževanje – POKI* model[478]); and the programme for capacity building and training **Mosaic[479]**.

The OQEA approach guides an organisation in its deliberation of the definition of quality (What do we want to be like?), assessment of quality (What are we like?) and the maintenance and development of the quality of one's own work (How can we become even better?). The approach was then reviewed and an updated version of the quality indicators was released in 2013, which can be used for internal and external quality assessment[480].

The system was complemented further with new training and support programme for ALE educators in 2017, to support the introduction and upgrading of an internal quality system for adult education organisations – **Quality Mosaic**[481] (Mozaik kakovosti). Mosaic collects recommendations and good practices, including all the models and tools related to quality assurance developed by the Institute. The tool covers the following aspects:

1. Professional starting points of assessing and developing quality of ALE

2. Placement of quality, including QA in the regular activities of the organisation of educational institutions,

3. Defining quality indicators

4. Quality Assessment practices, and

5. Developing quality, encouraging the planning of new measures to maintain and continuously improve quality and develop new solutions.

---

[476] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/quality-assurance-adult-education-and-training

[477] https://www.acs.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Approach_to_Self-Evaluation_Offering_Quality_Education_to_Adults-OQEA.pdf

[478] https://kakovost.acs.si/vsebina/projekti-in-naloge/ponudimo-odraslim-kakovostno-izobrazevanje-poki

[479] https://mozaik.acs.si

[480] https://kakovost.acs.si/knjizna-polica/kazalniki-kakovosti-izobrazevanja-odraslih

[481] https://mozaik.acs.si

It also contains a searchable collection of Widgets and good practices, which can be scoured for various different tools and approaches, based on individual needs.[482]

The process of defining quality includes 5 factors:

- the interest groups of the educational organisation,
- the mission,
- the vision,
- their values and
- declaration of quality.

**Interest group:** Educational organisations, before they address what kind of quality it would like to promote, have to identify which interest groups are directly identified in an activity or what group will be influenced by it. To decide which groups should be included in the process of defining quality, they need to determine

1. Who is the concern for quality in the organisation intended for?
2. Who is interested in developing the quality in the organisation?
3. Who assesses the quality?
4. Who influences the quality level of the organisation?
5. Who limits the development of quality?[483]

**Mission:** "The organization's mission is a short and concise description of the organization's essence, which allows others to recognize what the organization does and how it does it and gives its employees a sense of stability and a clear identity." It gives employers a general guideline for planning and evaluating their actions and behaviours and allows others to judge whether the organisations mission matches their values and believes. In includes answers to the questions of who the organisation is and who their users are, what they do exactly and why, what services they provide and how they perform their services.[484]

**Vision:** "The vision is the image of the organization as we would like it to be in the future. It is a representation of the desired future. It strengthens the sense of belonging and gives meaning to work."[485]

**Values:** Clarifying values and beliefs, which guide an organisations action is often an important step to achieving better performance of the organisation. Thinking about their values can guide organisations to determine what is important to them at work. "However, if their work and behaviour are in any way contrary to their inner values, or if their personal values differ greatly from those of the organization, this can cause stress, negativism, pessimism and even anger and feelings of frustration - another reason that indicates how important it is to initiate an honest discussion about values in organizations."[486]

---

[482] Ibidem

[483] https://mozaik.acs.si/kazalnik/interesne-skupine-izobrazevalne-organizacije#opis-kazalnika

[484] https://mozaik.acs.si/kazalnik/poslanstvo-izobrazevalne-organizacije

[485] https://mozaik.acs.si/kazalnik/vizija-izobrazevalne-organizacije#opis-kazalnika

[486] https://mozaik.acs.si/kazalnik/vrednote-izobrazevalne-organizacije

**Declaration of quality:** The quality statement contains a set of quality standards, that organisations provide to its participants, financiers and all other partners and interest groups. It is a commitment to a certain set of standards, which serves as a guideline for conduct. It is suggested that a declaration of quality includes an introductory text, address, specific written quality standards, information about who accepted the statement, the signatures of the responsible persons and a stamp logo of the educational organisation.[487]

The other important milestone of the system developed by the SIAE is represented by the setup of a **national network of quality counsellors for the area of adult education**. The aim of the network is to train professional staff for the highest possible quality of professional counselling aimed at effective, comprehensive, systematic and continuous assessment and development of the quality of adult education at an educational organisation. A conceptual scheme of a counselling network was developed, within which the SIAE coordinates the work professionally.[488]

Finally, the SIAE has also developed **tools and methods for external quality assurance processes**, in which the educational organisations take part by choice, such as the **Zeleni znak kakovosti** (Green Quality logo), Ekspertna zunanja evalvacija (Expert External Evaluation[489]), Kolegialna presoja kakovosti (Peer Quality Review).[490]

The **Green Quality logo[491]** is presented by the Slovenian institute for adult education to the organisation for adult education that meets the defined standards of quality. The organisation must give evidence that it integrated internal processes of quality in education of adults in its basic strategic documents, and that it has been systematically, methodically, and periodically conducting self-evaluation. The organisation has the right to use the sign for three years. After the right expires, the organisation must provide relevant evidence of periodic quality assessment and in-depth self-evaluation to renew it.

Apart from the quality assurance self-evaluation processes, a separate process is in place to be admitted to the **registry of educational providers[492]** managed by **the Ministry of Education.** To manage this process of admitting (and deleting) providers from the "list of providers of publicly valid education and training programmes", a **Rulebook on keeping records of providers of public education programmes** was provided based on the Act of Organization and Financing of Education and Training. The Rulebook[493] addresses various types of educational institutions at once, including adult education. It determines the process to apply and enrol in the providers registry, the provision of the appropriate documentation, including the act of establishment, a decision on the allocation of the programme, and other relevant data as per the regulations such as the registry data (Information about the operator, public validity of the programme, etc.). Some basic conditions and qualitative standards need to be fulfilled to be admitted to the register, such as evidence to ensure that the provider has the necessary staff, space and appropriate equipment to conduct the programme. The verification is done by the ministry or by specifically appointed experts to conduct the assessment.[494]

National ALE registries and information models for ALE

[487] https://mozaik.acs.si/kazalnik/izjava-o-kakovosti#namen

[488] Ibidem

[489] https://kakovost.acs.si

[490] Ibidem

[491] https://kakovost.acs.si/en/content/projects-and-activities/green-quality-logo#tabgeneral-overview

[492] https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-za-vzgojo-in-izobrazevanje/storitve

[493] https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV9234

In Slovenia, ALE opportunities are publicly available through two main registries: one managed by the Ministry of Education for accredited programmes; and one managed by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, which offers a broader overview of providers and courses, also not recognized.

In addition, a registry of the national qualifications under the Slovenian National Qualification Framework is available publicly.

*Available registries (description, structure)*

As mentioned before, publicly subsidised adult education organisations must be registered in the **Adult Education Programmes Registry in Slovenia,** which is managed by the **Ministry of Education**.

These organisations must comply with formal requirements concerning staffing, premises, and equipment to be eligible for registration. If the conditions for entry in the register are fulfilled, the minister issues a decision on the entry into the register.[495]

While the registry is not embedded in an information system, nor is it searchable by different indicators or includes information about funding, quality assurance, etc, it does provide a basic list of adult education providers and programmes and essential information about each registered organisations and their programmes. These providers mainly consist of upper secondary schools (including adult education units) private institutions and schools and adult education centres.[496]

To be accredited by the state and there for to be included in the catalogue, these organisations have to fulfil certain criteria relating to the premises, equipment, and professional staffing.

Applications for entry into the registry therefore must include[497]:

- name and company name, head office and identification number of the founder or name and surname, birth date, residence and identification number, if the founder is a natural entity;

- name and head office of the kindergarten or school;

- number and date of the act of incorporation;

- the name of the programme implemented by the kindergarten or school;

- public validity of the programme;

- statement of the managerial authority on ensuring the fulfilment of spatial, staff and equipment conditions of the statement by the management that the condition referring to ensuring professional staff with required education will be fulfilled until the start of the activity.

The management of the educational organisation is accountable for the accuracy of the data and statements, with potential criminal and damage liability for inaccuracies. The Ministry may request additional evidence or appoint experts to verify the conditions and the information provided, if there are any doubts about compliance. Educational institutions must report about any changes in the data within

[494] https://spot.gov.si/en/activities-and-professions/activities/private-adult-education-with-state-approved-programmes/#entry-in-the-register-of-providers-of-publicly-valid-education-and-training-programmes

[495] Ibidem

[496] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/main-providers

[497] https://spot.gov.si/en/activities-and-professions/activities/private-adult-education-with-state-approved-programmes/#entry-in-the-register-of-providers-of-publicly-valid-education-and-training-programmes

30 days, and they can be deleted from the registry if they no longer meet the required conditions or cease to exist.[498]

While the Adult Education Programmes Registry is more of a catalogue, the **Slovenian Institute for Adult Education** regularly monitors and records adult education providers and their offerings through the **KAM PO ZNANJE web portal[499]**, a national hub for adult education and learning information that provides an overview of ALE providers and programmes, also beyond the accredited ones.

In the KAM PO ZNANJE portal, there are information available for organisations for adult education, programmes in formal and informal ALE and additional information and content in adult education and lifelong learning. The data is also analysed annually and presented in a reports.[500] This endeavour by the SIAE is supported financially by the Ministry of Education.[501]

According to the **Annual Report 2023/2024** that was published by the SIAE about the adult learning provision in Slovenia, the portal listed **304 providers** and **3940 training programmes**, showcasing the portals continuous growth in the past year.[502]

The system is updated annually and manually by providers. The contribution to the portal information is voluntary for providers, while the Institute launches a campaign every year to motivate providers to send their updated information.

The full process includes the following steps:[503]

- archiving the database for the previous season

- setting up a database for entering new data on adult education providers and training programmes

- preparing an application for entering new data in the online forms (ANAI), updating and completing the code lists

- assigning usernames and passwords for data entry

- collecting data on adult education providers and training programmes

- editing the data received (ANA)

- publishing the data on the portal on an ongoing basis. [504]

ALE providers are invited via email and other ACS communication channels to showcase their adult education and training offer on the portal for the new season. Providers are also invited to present or regularly update their already published training offer on the portal in the following months. Data on

---

[498] https://spot.gov.si/en/activities-and-professions/activities/private-adult-education-with-state-approved-programmes/#entry-in-the-register-of-providers-of-publicly-valid-education-and-training-programmes

[499] https://kampoznanje.si

[500] https://kampoznanje.si/porocila

[501] https://kampoznanje.si/predstavitev

[502] https://kampoznanje.si/porocilo-2023-2024/

[503] https://kampoznanje.si

[504] https://kampoznanje.si/porocilo-2023-2024

providers who have chosen to register in the portal using the online form are also automatically stored in the central register.

The portal also includes:

- multimedia content from the providers, to improve the programmes presentations, and testimonials from learners

- information on skills and competences

- content items dedicated to relevant topics related to education (for example, civic, media, personal (emotional) and interpersonal, and financial skills etc.

- presentation of educational programmes that offer the possibility to acquire or strengthen each skill from the whole range of educational offerings in the search engine.[505]

The **Slovenian Qualifications Framework (SQF)** represents a unified system of qualifications in the Republic of Slovenia for the classification of qualifications into levels with regard to learning outcomes[506]. Qualifications are classifieds into levels with regard to statutory criteria, learning outcomes and descriptors, linking to the levels of the European Qualifications Framework. The **register of SQF qualifications** represents the publicly accessible information system of the Framework, providing insight into all individual qualifications that can be obtained in Slovenia through state-approved education/study programmes. The register is searchable by the name of the qualification, the category of qualification, type of education and qualification. ISCED 2013 field (&subfield), as well as SQF, EQF, and QF-EHEA Level, and awarding body.

Additionally, there is a **catalogue of National Vocational (NVQ)**[507] providers and qualifications.

*Information models for ALE*

The information contained in the list of **Adult Education Programmes managed by the Ministry of Education** includes the following.

- N. of Entry in the register

- Registration number

- Registration Number of Adult Education Organisation

- Registered office/Location of delivery

- ENID of Programme

- Public Validity of Education and Training Programmes

- Expiring/New Programmes

- Registration decision number

- Date of Decision[508]

---

[505] https://kampoznanje.si/porocilo-2023-2024/

[506] https://www.nok.si/en

[507] https://npk.si/en/catalogues/

The **KAM PO ZNANJE portal** metadata for each programme are summarised as following[509].

- Name of Programme

- The program is intended for *[target audience]*

- Method of execution

- Necessary conditions for enrolment in the programme *[for example previous education: at least 4 years of high school]*

- Other necessary conditions *[for example that you can only enrol in post-secondary studies if adults have passed a general or vocational high school diploma or have passed a master's, supervisors or management exam and have three years of work experience and have passed a knowledge test in general education subjects to the extend specified for a vocational high school diploma in secondary professional education.]*

- Name of acquired professional/professional education

- Public validity of the programme *[yes the programme is public / no the programme is not publicly available]*

- Type of education *[e.g. additional education (non-formal), or higher professional education (formal)]*

- Content area of education: *[e.g. Agriculture, forestry, or social sciences, librarianship and information science, etc.)*

- Contact person

- Name of the institution

- Place of the implementation of the programme

- Duration of the programme

- Date of implementation of the programme

- Other costs

---

[508] https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-za-vzgojo-in-izobrazevanje/storitve/

[509] https://kampoznanje.si/zelim-se-vkljuciti-v-tecaj

## 031 Digital literacy (advanced)

**Program content**

The workshop is an extension of the workshop Digital Literacy – Basics. In the first part, it improves the knowledge of secondary functions in the mobile phone, in the second part it complements the knowledge of the connectivity of the mobile phone with the computer using cloud services such as e.g. DropBox, Google Drive, iCloud, etc., with knowledge of the risk of others accessing an individual's personal devices (GPS tracking, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth) and e-banking services (paying bills, etc.). The third module is aimed at getting to know Google applications such as maps, drive, calendar, translate, docs.

**The program is intended**

- To all adults
- To the elderly
- To the unemployed
- To entrepreneurs
- To experts (pedagogues, andragogues, leaders, managers...)
- To my parents
- Employees
- To students

**Method of execution**

- Course
- Workshop

**Other**

The workshop will start in October 2023 – subject to a sufficient number of pre-registrations, and will take place in the morning and afternoon at our premises.

**NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR ENROLLMENT IN THE PROGRAM**

It is not necessary to fulfill any conditions to enroll in the program.

**Name of acquired professional/professional education**

/

**Public validity of the program**

No, the program is not publicly available

**Type of education**

Additional education

**Content area of education**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
Computer use

**Contact person**

Sašo Skočir
01 /583 92 75
saso.skocir@cdi-univerzum.si

**Name of the institution**

University Correspondence Education Center –
CDI University
CDI University

**Place of implementation of the program**

CDI University, Grošljeva 4, 1000 Ljubljana

**Duration of the program**

Hours: 9:00 – 13:00

**Date of implementation of the program**

For additional information on the implementation of the educational program, contact the educational provider.

**Program price**

€366.00

*Figure 23. Example of course description - Automated translation from Slovenia*

*Source: Kam Po Znanje[510]*

## Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

At the time of writing, there is no public information about any ILA-like system being implemented or planned at national level.

---

[510] https://kampoznanje.si

## 1.8. Ireland

**Reason for inclusion in the research**

Included because of its advancement in the development of micro-credentials at all levels, indicating innovative approaches to ALE and potential areas to be considered as good practice. Within Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) statutory core QA guidelines are published, which outline the elements of a provider's quality assurance system that are fundamental and common to all providers associated with QQI, as well as sector and topic-specific QA guidelines, which apply to specific areas beyond the core guidelines, and which may or may not apply to individual providers

### Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

In Ireland, **Further Education and Training (FET)** is primarily delivered or contracted by the 16 Education and Training Boards, under the funding and strategic direction of **SOLAS (an agency of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science)[511]**, the Further Education and Training Authority. FET provision includes both labour market focused programmes and programmes with a strong social inclusion dimension. Provision includes adult literacy and basic education, programmes for early school leavers, the unemployed, and those in employment, and national apprenticeship programmes. Awards are made at Levels 1 to 6 of the National Qualifications Framework. Since June 2020, responsibility for FET falls within the remit of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).[512]

#### *Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE*

The provision of these further education strategies is settled into **the Further Education and Training Act from 2013**[513]. In this Act, SOLAS, the new further education and training authority, was established under the Further Education.[514] According to the act, SOLAS is required to develop a 5-year strategy to enact and implement further training and education in Ireland.

SOLAS engaged in a detailed process with stakeholders to develop the FET strategy and also with the Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI), the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and the OECD, to advise and assist with this work. As part of the development of the strategy, SOLAS undertook one-to-one consultations with FET stakeholders, a desk review of current research and an international benchmarking exercise, as well as run strategy workshops with different interested parties. From this process, a draft strategy was developed and submitted by SOLAS for the Minister's approval.[515]

The first strategy was developed for 2014-2019. The **FET Strategy 2014-2019** articulates a vision of a flexible, responsive, quality-driven, labour-market relevant and integrated sector that supports learner progression, transition into employment and personal development. Central to the strategy is the emphasis on provision informed by high-quality data and evidence and funding prioritised according to demonstrable need and performance. The FET Strategy provides a focus for the setting of investment priorities, and to provide a framework for the establishment and development of a strong FET sector. The FET Strategy

---

[511] https://www.solas.ie

[512] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/national-reforms-further-education-and-training-and-adult

[513] https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/25/enacted/en/pdf

[514] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

[515] Ibidem

provides education and training that has a primary focus on developing skills for the economy and courses that support core skills and personal development and are aimed at increasing equity, social inclusion, and educational progression.[516]

The new current strategy **Future FET: Transforming Learning, 2020-24** was launched in July 2020. Timing of the new strategy aligns with the formation of a new Department dedicated to both further and higher education, new Ministers in place to oversee a more cohesive approach across both, and a programme for Government which sets out a range of commitments to grow the role and contribution of FET over the next few years[517].

The new approach is based around three strategic pillars:

- building skills

- fostering inclusion

- facilitating pathways
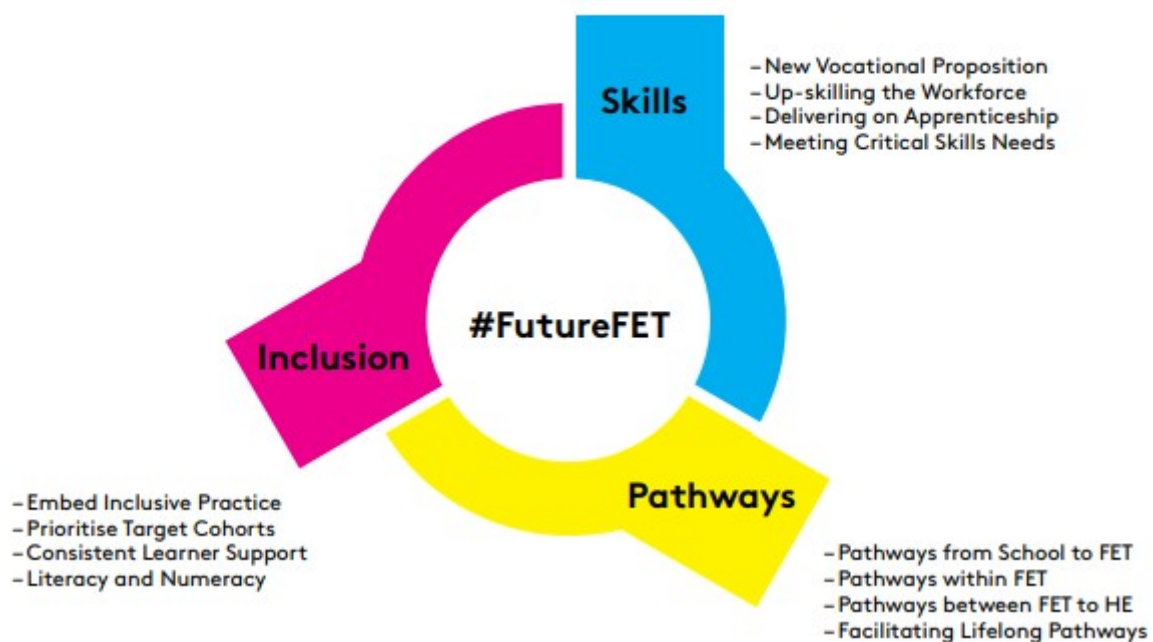


*Figure 24. FET Strategic Priorities*

*Source: SOLAS[518]*

---

[516] Ibidem

[517] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

[518] Ibidem

This will be underpinned by a strong focus on four enabling themes: digital transformation; learner and performance focus; staffing and structures; and capital development. It is the product of extensive analysis and a comprehensive consultation process, and we would like to thank all those who took the time to meet with us or make submissions to support its development. The new strategy is supposed to serve as a major driver of both economic development and social cohesion.[519]

Since its launch in 2020, significant progress has been made on the implementation of the FET Strategy across the three pillars. With regard to:

**Building Skills**, the range of upskilling and reskilling opportunities have been broadened through **Skills to Advance**[520], focussed on upskilling for those in employment, and Skills to Compete, a key SOLAS initiative, to support those who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19 to re-enter the workforce. **eCollege**[521] has also been expanded and eCollege courses have been temporarily made available free of charge as additional supports to those impacted by Covid-19.

**Creating Pathways**, the enhancement of the **Central Applications Office (CAO)**[522] website in 2022 for the CAO application process by the inclusion of links to information on, and applications for, FET programmes and to apprenticeship information and employment opportunities is significant in enhancing the visibility of FET and apprenticeship options for school leavers.[523]

**Fostering Inclusion**, FET supports around 200,000 unique learners annually, with a state investment of around €800million, and offers a range of learning opportunities and supports across Levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It is delivered by 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) ensuring that FET reflects regional characteristics and meets regional needs, and a range of other FET providers and support agencies.[524]

Additionally, in 2020, SOLAS was asked by the Minster for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to develop the **Ten-Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy Digital Literacy Strategy**[525].

Finally, the **Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012** determined, among other aspects, the establishment of the **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)**[526] with a board appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills. The National Framework of Qualifications is aligned with the European Framework for Qualifications, and awards 10 qualification levels. The Certifications in further education are usually in line with the National Framework. The QQI is responsible for quality assurance if further education and training as well as the validation of educational programmes and awarding learners.[527]

The Education and Training Act 2012 settles also that educational providers must include policies on credit accumulation, credit transfer and identification and the formal assessment of the knowledge, skill and

---

[519] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

[520] https://www.solas.ie/programmes/skills-to-advance

[521] https://www.ecollege.ie

[522] https://www.cao.ie

[523] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/national-reforms-further-education-and-training-and-adult

[524] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

[525] https://www.solas.ie/alnd-strategy

[526] https://www.qqi.ie

[527] https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/html

competence previously acquired by learners. The QQI is responsible for establishing policies and criteria for access, transfer, and progression (ATP) for providers.[528]

*National ALE governance structure*

The **Department of Education and Skills[529]** is responsible for devising policy in the Further Education and Training Sector. The Department also provides the funding for Further Education and Training programmes. **SOLAS**, the Further Education and Training Authority, an agency of the Department, is responsible for funding, planning and co-ordinating Further Education and Training programmes.

**Education and Training Boards (ETBs)**

The **Education and Training Boards (ETBs)**, which were established in 2013 under the Education and Training Boards Act, are responsible for the delivery of publicly funded FET programmes locally. The ETBs decide on the level and nature of provision based on local demand and in consultation with SOLAS, the further Education and Training Authority.[530] Each Education and Training Board is a statutory body with its own corporate status.[531] They manage and operate Community National Schools, Post-Primary Schools, Further Education (FE) colleges, and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes. In total, there are 16 education and training boards (ETBs). ETBs are the main provider of further education, with programmes that are usually certified by the **Further Education and Training Awards Council** (FETAC).[532]

Some examples of programmes are:

- Youthreach, for early school leavers between 15 – 20 years of age;

- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for unemployed adults over 21 years of age;

- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) for learners over 16 years of age who have completed the Leaving Certificate (LC) or who are adults returning to education.

Part-time programmes are also available and provided under:

- The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), free for adults with a less than upper second level education;

- Adult Literacy (AL) for adults with specific needs in basic skills areas and includes English as a Second Language (ESOL) provision;

- Community Education (CE) providing informal and non-formal education for hard-to-reach adults;

- Self-financing education (evening classes) accessed by adults who pay a fee.[533]

---

[528] https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/qqi-awards/recognition-of-prior-learning-provider

[529] https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education

[530] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/distribution-responsibilities

[531] https://www.etbi.ie/etbs

[532] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/distribution-responsibilities

[533] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/main-types-provision

Additionally, FET includes foundation and progression courses to acquire basic skills provided in Community Training Centres, as well as through private educational providers, specialist training providers, and local training initiatives.[534]

Further education providers also exist, such as community and voluntary sector organisations, state schools, state training agency, work-based learning providers. The full description of the direct functions of the ETBs is available in the Act 2013.[535]

**SOLAS (an agency of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science)**

Key task of SOLAS is to work closely with Regional Skills[536] managers and other partners in ETBs nationally and to manage a range of FET programmes which enable learners to succeed in the labour market and thrive in society. Programmes include Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Skills to Advance, eCollege, and the European Globalisation Fund.

SOLAS manages the **Safe Pass Health and Safety Awareness Training Programme**[537], the **Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS)**[538] and the **Quarrying Skills Certification Scheme (QSCS)[539]**. SOLAS manages also the **National Skills Database** and provides research, data and analysis for the **Expert Group on Future Skills Needs**[540]. SOLAS also manages the FET courses database[541].

Finally, SOLAS is the designated Intermediate Body for the European Social Fund Programme for Employment, Inclusion, Skills, and Training (EIST) 2021-2027. Eligible further education and training programmes are co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund (ESF+)[542]. Co-funded programmes include ETB Training programmes, Adult Literacy programmes and Youthreach.

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)**

The general responsibilities of the **QQI** are detailed in the Act 2012[543], and, among them, to:

- review and monitor the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance procedures, to validate programmes of education and training;

- establish the standards of knowledge, skill, or competence to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by the Authority;

- determine policies and criteria for access, transfer, and progression in relation to learners, and monitor the implementation of procedures for access, transfer, and progression in relation to learners by providers;

---

[534] Ibidem

[535] https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/11/section/10/enacted/en/html

[536] https://www.solas.ie/research-lp/skills-labour-market-research-slmru/regional-skills

[537] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/132778e570/overview-of-safe-pass-csqa-g02_v1-0_aug_2019.pdf

[538] https://www.solas.ie/construction-lp/cscs

[539] Ibidem

[540] https://www.solas.ie/research-lp/skills-labour-market-research-slmru/research

[541] www.fetchcourses.ie

[542] https://eufunds.ie

[543] https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/section/9/enacted/en/html

- establish, maintain, and develop a database providing information on awards recognised within the Framework, programmes of education and training which lead to awards recognised within the Framework and any other programmes the Authority thinks appropriate and establish and

- maintain the register.

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

The funding of the education is included in the policy document for **the National Training Fund Act 2000.**[544]

The **National Training Fund (NFT)** is a dedicated fund to support the training of those in employment, those seeking employment and to support lifelong learning. The Act also allocates funding for research to provide information on existing and likely future skills requirements of the economy.

The NTF is funded by a levy on employers, which is collected through the PAYE/PRSI system and transferred monthly to the **Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)** by the **Department of Social Protection (DSP)**.[545]

Grants are channelled by the Department of Education and Skills to SOLAS and allocated by the Authority to the 16 regional ETBs. Provision is mainly funded by ETBs through:

- Add on services for adults in vocational schools;

- Designated specialist further education colleges;

- Training centres operated in the past by FAS, the National Training Authority; until it was abolished and its programmes assimilated;

- Other adult education settings;

- Contracted out services to community or private providers.[546]

**SOLAS has published a review of the funding model for Further Training and Education in 2022**, where the full FET funding background is detailed, as also depicted in FET planning and funding structure visual below.[547]

---

[544] https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/41/enacted/en/print.html

[545] https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBudgetOffice/2023/2023-06-20_an-overview-of-the-national-training-fund-ntf_en.pdf

[546] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/adult-education-and-training-funding

[547] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/99ca806e56/fet-funding-model-review-june-2022.pdf

## FIGURE 11: THE FET PLANNING AND FUNDING PROCESS



*Figure 25. The FET planning and funding process*

*Source: SOLAS[548]*

The approach to distribute ETB funding contains two central steps:

[548] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/99ca806e56/fet-funding-model-review-june-2022.pdf

1. The issuing of Planning and Funding Parameters and Requirements to the ETBs, which effectively set the guidelines and conditions for funding during the year

2. An initial planning letter for each ETB, outlining the overall money available and its purpose, and inviting funding allocation requests in return[549]

*Financial support schemes*

On the learner's side, for EU/EEA learners, national programmes of FET are generally provided for free. The exception is the Post Leaving Certificate courses (full-time post-secondary VET 1- and 2-year courses) that have a fee of €500 per year.[550] There is a waiver of fees for medical card holders or their dependents and for welfare recipients. Those who satisfy the means tested criteria of the Student Grant Schemes can have their tuition fee paid by the State and receive maintenance grants (for PLC courses only).[551]

Non-EU/EEA students are required to pay the full fee unless they are asylum seekers at least 5 years in the Irish education system and not the subject of a deportation order.[552]

In general, citizens who receive unemployment benefit or jobseeker allowances availing of other FET full-time programmes are paid a training allowance in lieu of their welfare entitlement, and their course is free.

The Department also offers a free part-time **Back to Education Initiative[553]** prioritising access for those with less than upper secondary education.

In addition to the above, further education and training centres may also offer part time courses on a self-financed basis. These may be courses of a hobby nature or lead to national certification. The fee is set locally but is generally modest.

Students on PLC courses are entitled to means-tested maintenance grants under the Student Grant Schemes.[554]

## Quality assurance in national ALE systems

*Quality assurance systems in ALE*

In Ireland, the responsibility of quality assuring further education opportunities is structured on a national level, with the implementation of the **NFQ** and **the creation of QQI agency**, in line with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The **QQI defines quality assurance (QA)** as an ongoing, continuous process of monitoring, evaluating, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of an education system, institution, or programme.[555]

---

[549] https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/99ca806e56/fet-funding-model-review-june-2022.pdf

[550] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/adult-education-and-training-funding

[551] https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme

[552] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/adult-education-and-training-funding

[553] https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/back-to-education-initiative

[554] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/adult-education-and-training-funding

[555] https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-of-education-and-training

Quality provision includes teaching, opportunities for learning, assessment, qualification standards, the design, and the delivery of learning programmes as well as the accreditation and certification of learning outcomes.

While quality assurance is mainly the responsibility of the educational providers, the QQI play a complementary role in the external quality assurance of the organisations. They ensure that FET providers have appropriate quality assurance structures and procedures in place, which are implemented and effective. [556]

QQI also publishes the reports related to the external quality assurance results on their website, by provider, for the organisations that are mandatorily required to undergo external quality assurance (HEIs, EBTs) and the ones that apply voluntarily for this process (FTE providers that are not EBT).[557]

Training providers can publish information about their internal QA directly on their website on a voluntary basis.
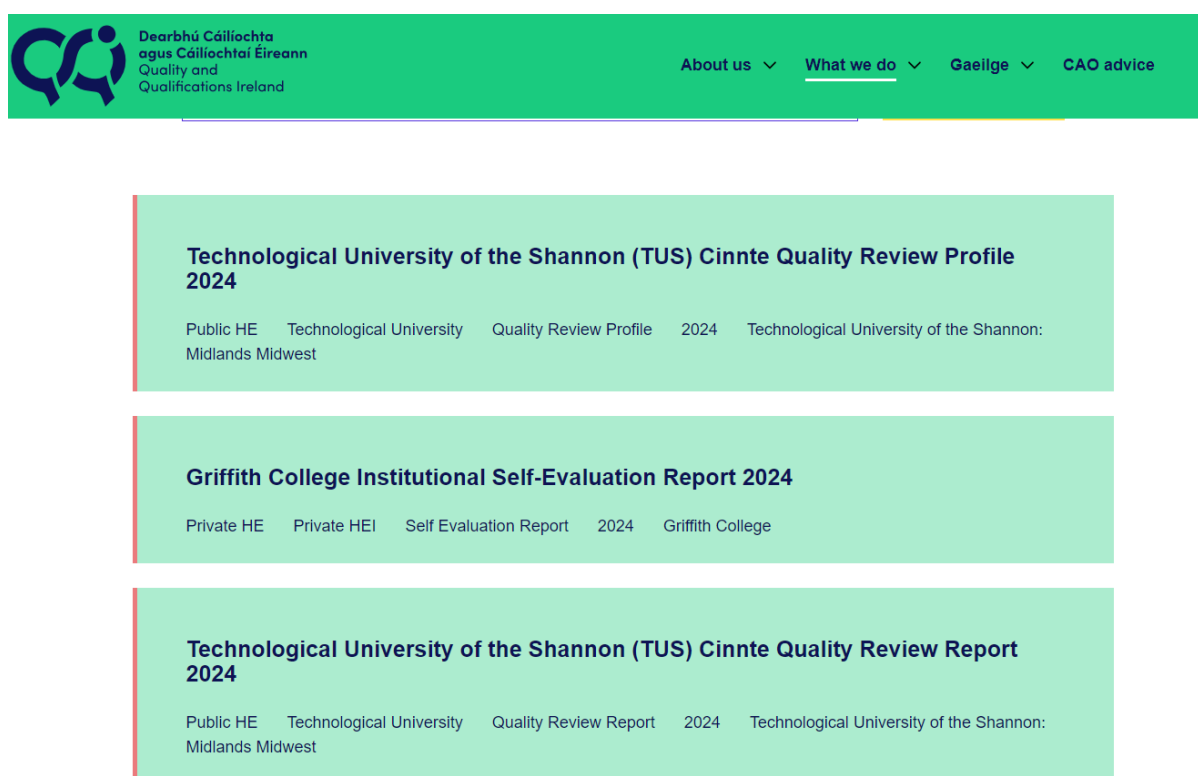


*Figure 26. Quality and Monitoring Review Reports*

*Source: Quality and Qualifications Ireland [558]*

The QQI is additionally responsible that European policies and practices that prove to be internationally effective are implemented nationally, in a way that is suitable to the Irish national context.

---

[556] https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-of-education-and-training

[557] https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-education-training/reviews

[558] Ibidem

Provider-owned quality assurance involves planning, defining, encouraging, assessing, and improving practice.

It involves providers:

- taking full responsibility for the quality of programmes and services offered to their learners

- accepting that quality outputs will require a consistent approach to all facets of provider activity - as an organisation as well as a provider of education and training programmes

- realising that Quality Assurance policies and procedures should be dynamic resources, capturing and communicating best practice in all aspects of the provider's activities

- establishing and regularly monitoring critical indicators of quality

- promptly remedying any serious deficiencies identified

- seeking ways to improve performance against indicators

- using benchmarking and peer review to learn from peers

- providing credible and meaningful information on institutional and programme quality given to stakeholders.[559]

**The general principles of the QQI approach to QA in FET** state that the primary responsibility for QA lies with the educational institution. This responsibility requires planning, resources and commitment, continuous improvement of the QA process, transparency through the QA systems understanding of the provider quality system by its management and staff are crucial.

All areas that should be covered by the QA system, including specific indicators, are detailed in the guidelines **Quality Assurance Guidelines and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes Leading to QQI Awards – Further Education and Training**.[560]

Necessary components of a providers documented QA system include the following:

- The organisation's mission clarifying its role as a provider of education and training programmes,

- Policy statements, stating the understanding of their legislative obligations and methodologies in each area which must be covered by the system (see next chapter). The policies are addressed to management and staff, informing them about general approaches to follow in their work and to learners and other stakeholders, telling them what they can expect from the provider.

- The procedures that are designed to implement the policies, including the methods to fulfil the purpose of the procedure, the responsible actor that is to carry out the procedure, the indicative evidence confirming the effectiveness of the actions proposed and the monitoring.

- An internal monitoring system checking the effectiveness of the procedures regularly and note areas requiring improvement, including through the use of data collection and comparison against indicators.

---

[559] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/qp-1-policy-and-criteria-for-provider-access-to-initial-validation-of-programmes-leading-to-qqi-awards.pdf
[560] Ibidem

- A self-evaluation system, which serves to review and report the quality of the providers own programmes/services, considering the learners view and that of an independent evaluator, who can compare the offers to those of similar providers

- An improvement plan, which serves as a system to respond to the findings and aims to improve weak areas and build further upon areas of strength. Specific indicators/ benchmarks for comparing programme data are relevant in this area.[561]

QQI is then responsible for externally evaluating providers and programmes.

The full external evaluation process includes the first stage of assessment, for the initial validation of programme, of the provider scope (mission statement), capacity (organisation chart) and QA procedures (documented quality system comprising the core components mentioned above), the programme validation in the second stage, and the following decision review process as well as appeals, if necessary, should the QQI refuse to validate the programme.[562]

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

In the QA guidelines and criteria for provider access to initial validation of programmes (leading to QQI awards in further education and training), QQI indicates 9 areas to be quality assured and guidelines for each of these areas.[563]

1. **Quality management**

- Management Responsibility

- Designated Responsibility

- Information Management

2. **Staff Recruitment and Development**

- Staff Recruitment

- Communication with Staff

- Staff Development

3. **Teaching and Learning**

- Staff Feedback

- Learner Feedback

- Other Feedback

- Learning Resources

4. **Access, Transfer and Progression**

---

[561] Ibidem

[562] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2024-08/1.4-draft-policy-and-criteria-for-validation-of-programmes_final.pdf

[563] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/qp-1-policy-and-criteria-for-provider-access-to-initial-validation-of-programmes-leading-to-qqi-awards.pdf

- Information for Learners

- Learner Entry Arrangements

- Recognition of Prior Learning

- Facilitating Diversity

5. **Programme Development, Delivery and Review**

- Programme Development & Approval

- Programme Delivery

- Learner Records

- Programme Review

6. **Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners**

- Planning

- Information to Learners

- Security

- Reasonable Accommodation

- Distance/e-learning assessment

- Feedback to Learners

- Internal Verification

- External Authentication

- Results Approval

- Learner Appeals

7. **Protection of Enrolled Learners**

8. **Collaborative Provision**

- Contract arrangements

- Reporting arrangements

9. **Self-Evaluation and Improvement of Programmes and Services**

- Assignment of Responsibility

- Frequency

- Learner Involvement

- Selection of External Evaluator

- Reporting

Finally, the guidelines detail the requirements for the panel to assess the educational provider's submission and the criteria for approval.

## National ALE registries and information models for ALE

### Available registries (description, structure)

In Ireland, there are two main registries in regard to learning opportunities: **Qualifax**, the national learner's database; and the Irish **Register of Qualification**, which is a resource that provides public confirmation of the formal, technical relationship between a qualification and the NFQ. The two databases complement each other and both are developed and managed by QQI.

### Qualifax[564]

The Qualifax searchable database provides comprehensive information about further and higher education and training options in Ireland. It also offers resources with articles and links to help students, jobseekers, parents, guidance professionals and graduates to make informed choices about education, training, and career pathways.[565]

Qualifax was developed about 20 years ago and then re-developed and launched in 2022.

The re-development of the Qualifax website was heavily informed by a strategic review of the site undertaken in 2021 by external consultants and following wide consultation across the sector. This consultation included interaction and feedback with the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, the National Centre for Guidance in Education, Careers Portal, Grad Ireland, and SOLAS. A range of guidance counsellors across school and adult education were consulted, as well as a wide range of learners representing school leavers, further education learners and adults.[566]

The review identified the unique selling points of Qualifax as being the provision of information that is impartial, non-sectoral, non-commercial, comprehensive, and accurate and by a state agency. The review defined the Qualifax audience in two distinct categories as learners and those that help learners including parents, guidance counsellors and adult guidance professionals. It was agreed that Qualifax needed to be a single resource that is appropriate for both audiences.[567]

It is searchable through by course title or code, course type (e.g. Higher education), course provider, course category (e.g. accounting/finance, childcare, languages, etc.), NFQ level, attendance options (e.g. evening, daytime, full time, online, etc.), points that can be achieved and county.[568]

---

[564] https://www.qualifax.ie

[565] https://www.gov.ie/en/service/access-the-national-learners-database

[566] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2024-09/annual-report-2023_2.pdf

[567] Ibidem

[568] https://www.qualifax.ie/courses?f%5B0%5D=points%3A%28min%3A220%2Cmax%3A1010%29
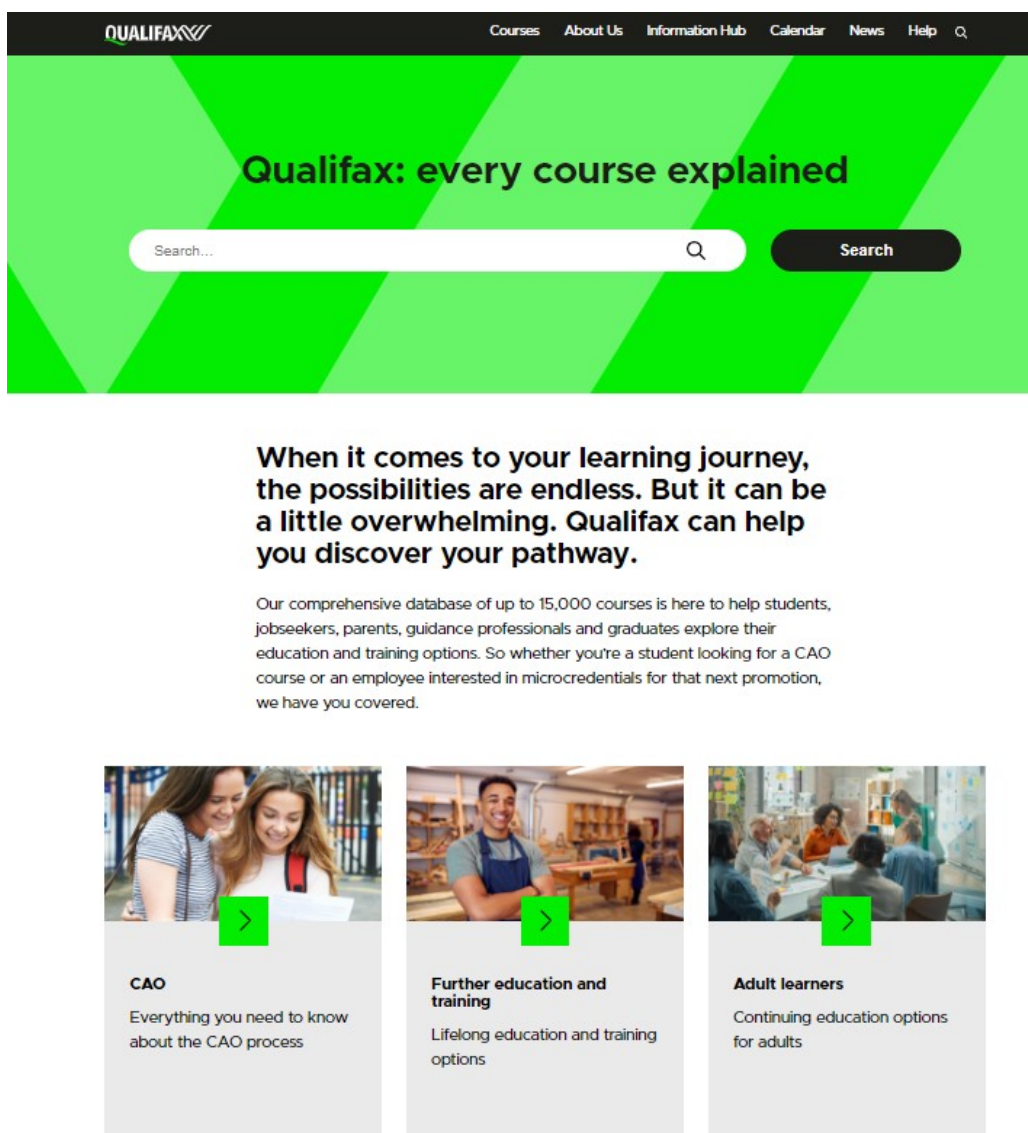
*Figure 27. Qualifax database*

*Source: Qualifax[569]*

In terms of information management, QQI has a dedicated team that deals with monitoring information from publicly available locations and assess and update manually the information in its database, in a constant cycle. Training providers has no responsibility in terms of updating this registry and the process is fully managed by QQI teams.

Apart from higher education and FET courses, smaller modules, that award micro-credentials are also available in this registry.

---

[569] https://www.qualifax.ie

Beyond the information on the link with NQF if relevant, no further information related to quality assurance processes of either provider or the course is published in Qualifax.[570]

*Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ)[571]*

The IRQ is a resource that provides information of a qualification in relation to the NFQ.

The Irish Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and Learning Opportunities (IRQ) meets the statutory requirement under Section 79 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) for QQI to establish and maintain a database that provides information on awards included in the Framework, programmes leading to those awards and any other programmes as appropriate.

It includes all quality-assured, recognised qualifications offered by universities and institutes of technology, as well as private higher education colleges, education and training boards, and private further education providers delivering courses leading to a QQI Award. The IRQ includes the programmes that lead to awards included within the Framework and any other programme the Authority thinks is appropriate. In the future, the IRQ will also include qualifications from other awarding bodies, when they become eligible to have qualifications included within the NFQ, for example, professional bodies, and UK and other international awarding bodies[572]. The programmes validation reports published in IRQ are therefore, at the moment, only for programmes linked to NQF recognition and leading to a QQI awarding qualification.

The register also has a role in making Irish qualifications more visible in Europe. The IRQ is linked to the Qualifications Dataset Register on the Europass platform[573].

It currently includes about 11,000 qualifications and 14,000 courses, from 235 providers. This includes higher education programmes with 30 ECTS, which are classified as micro-credentials[574].

The database is searchable for qualifications, education providers and courses:

1. **Qualifications** can be filtered by learning, NFQ, level, EQF level, Award Class, Sector, awarding body, and credits.

2. For searching **educational providers**, filtering is available by location, sector (higher education or further education), type (e.g. state school, university, education, and training board, etc.).

3. **Courses** can be filtered by field of learning, NFQ levels, Award/Qualification, Award Class (e.g. major, minor), Provider name, Sector, Location, Awarding Body, and Credit (ECTS).

In terms of audiences and users, the portal is primarily a verification tool for those seeking to verify qualifications, awarding bodies and providers, for example admissions officers, access officers, credential evaluators, NARIC or comparable services, RPL officers, immigration officers, recruiters, employers etc. A secondary audience of the IRQ is those that are using the data and information for the purposes of policy development, planning and research. Finally, the IRQ may also be used at European level and by European

---

[570] https://www.qualifax.ie/about-us

[571] https://irq.ie/search/providers

[572] https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/irish-register-of-qualifications

[573] https://careersnews.ie/the-irish-register-of-qualifications-irq

[574] https://www.cimea.it/Upload/Documenti/4762_Achieving_automatic_recognition_Ireland.pdf and https://irq.ie/search/qualifications

agencies and institutions to confirm the status of an awarding body, provider, and associated awards and programmes.

IRQ information is updated in two ways: through QQI QA processes of approval of programmes, with real time update (public information); and directly by HEIs, who have access to an entry point and the responsibility to update their own information.

A redevelopment of the IRQ started in 2024, with a variety of purposes, such as confirmation of institutions, ensuring transparency and accessibility of award and programme information to support recognition of prior learning (RPL); and access, transfer, and progression (ATP) and publication of award and programme information to relevant European platforms including Europass Qualifications Dataset Register (QDR) and Database of European Quality Assurance Reports (DEQAR).

Complementary to the IRQ, the Qualifax website continues to support learners, their parents, and the guidance community with detailed and additional course information. For the time being Qualifax and IRQ database are not connected, while the option to have only one database as backend to publish information in different portals is considered.

*FetchCourses*

Finally, some other portals are available in Ireland, related to education and qualifications, with specific purposes and type of information: **CareersPortal**[575]**, GradIreland**[576] and **FetchCourses**[577]**.

FetchCourses in particular is a more recent portal dedicated only to FET. FET offers a wide variety of life-long education options to anyone over 16. FET includes apprenticeships, traineeships, PLC courses, community, and adult education as well as core literacy and numeracy services. FET courses and programmes are provided through the ETB network throughout the country as well as through other local providers including online through SOLAS' eCollege. FET courses are provided at levels one to six on the NFQ.[578] The portal includes also a section dedicated to information on "Grants and Allowances"[579].

---

[575] https://careersportal.ie
[576] https://gradireland.com
[577] https://www.fetchcourses.ie
[578] https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/about
[579] https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/grants

*Figure 28. FetchCourses portal*

*Source: FetchCourses[580]*

## Information models for ALE

**Qualifax information model** for courses includes information about the qualifications in terms of Award name, NQF classification and level and awarding body (based on QQI external quality assurance processes).

Qualifax data model is a custom model, developed specifically for this registry. The main metadata fields are as following:

- Title + General Information

- Award Name

- NFQ Classification

- Awarding Body

- NFQ level

- Course provider

- Alternate Provider

- Location

---

[580] Ibidem

- Attendance Options

- Qualification Letters

- Apply to: (e.g. CAO)

- CAO points[581]

- Duration

- Specific Subjects or course requirements

- Information about Leaving Certificate General Entry Requirements

- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme LCVP/ Applied Programme LCAP

- QQI Entry Requirements

- Careers/ Further progression

- Course Web Page

Further Information regarding: Enrolment and Start Dates, Location, Course Fee, Application Weblink, Application Date, Course Content, and Subjects Taught. FET Code, Comment (such as QQI recognised), Contact for further enquiries.

---

[581] CAO refers to the Central Applications Office, which processes applications for undergraduate courses in Higher Education Institutions. The CAO converts grades (from either Leaving Cert or QQI / FETAC exams) into points in order to make it easier for them to know who did better at their exams.

*Figure 29. Qualifax data model*

*Source: Qualifax[582]*

---

[582] https://www.qualifax.ie

**Course Content** ∧

This flexible course will equip the student with a wide range of Business, Computer and Digital Skills, which are much sought after in the modern workplace. Students will get the opportunity to use applications from Microsoft Office™ suite, Internet, Social Media platforms, Marketing, Email and payroll software such as SAGE™. These additional Digital skills will greatly enhance the students' job prospects or progression on to further education. The programme also benefits from regular guest speaker visits, which come from a wide range of well-known companies and organisations.

Students get to work at their own pace and will get the opportunity of a work placement. No prior knowledge of the modules is required and a wide variety of student supports are available.

Certification:
QQI Level 5 Office Administration (5M1997)
QQI Level 4 Office Skills (4M2070).

---

**Subjects Taught** ∧

Office Skills
Office Administration

---

**FET Code** ∧

4M2070 Office Skills
5M1997 Office Administration

*Figure 30. Qualifax data model*

*Source: Qualifax[583]*

As for **IRQ,** its model has been developed "natively" based on the European Learning Model[584]. The core metadata includes:

- Name of the award

- Awarding body(s)

- NFQ level

- Award type and class

- Name of providers

- Title and duration of programme

---

[583] https://www.qualifax.ie

[584] https://europa.eu/europass/elm-browser/index.html

**As for FetchCourses,** beyond the standard information on provider and course, very user-friendly information is provided in terms of general course description although not using structured data. The description includes information on the methodology and delivery, inclusiveness of environment and methods and finally on the facilities and access, for face-to-face courses (with a map and information about parking, wheelchair access etc.). The language used is also very accessible.



*Figure 31. FetchCourses an example of course page*

*Source: FetchCourses*[585]

## Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

At the time of writing, there is no public information about any ILA-like system being implemented or planned at national level.

# 1.9. Portugal

## Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

### Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE

In Portugal, the governance and policy landscape of ALE is structured around a series of national laws, strategic plans, and programmes designed to promote lifelong learning and enhance the skills and qualifications of the adult population. The legal framework provides a solid foundation for these initiatives, ensuring they are aligned with both national and European standards.

The legal foundation for adult education in Portugal is anchored in the **Constitution of Portugal** (Constituição da República Portuguesa), which emphasizes the right to education and lifelong learning as fundamental rights for all citizens. Article 74[586] specifically highlights the state's responsibility to ensure education and training opportunities for adults.

Central to Portugal's educational system is the **Basic Law of the Educational System – Law No. 46/86** (Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo)[587]. This foundational law sets forth the principles and structure of the educational system, emphasizing the significance of lifelong learning and ensuring that educational opportunities are accessible to all citizens, regardless of age. It provides the groundwork for various policies and strategic plans that promote adult education and learning.

Building on this foundational law, the **Decree-Law No. 396/2007**[588] established the National Qualifications System and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF, aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), standardizes qualifications to make them transparent and comparable across Europe. The framework includes eight levels of qualifications, from basic education to advanced professional qualifications and doctorate degrees. This structure facilitates the recognition of skills and competences acquired through various learning paths, including formal, non-formal, and informal education, promoting mobility and lifelong learning within the EU.

To further structure the framework for lifelong learning, **Order No. 86/2022**[589], enacted on February 4, 2022, regulates the adult education and training courses known as "EFA courses." This order is pivotal in structuring the framework for lifelong learning, ensuring that adult learners have access to relevant and effective training opportunities.

Additionally, **Order No. 66/2022**[590], which took effect on February 1, 2022, governs certified modular training courses as specified in **Decree-Law No. 396/2007**. This regulation is designed to enhance the qualifications of adult learners, allowing for greater flexibility and personalization in training pathways.

**Decree-Law No. 36/2012**[591] plays a critical role by establishing the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP). ANQEP is responsible for coordinating the implementation of education and vocational training policies for young people and adults, ensuring the development and management of the system for the recognition, validation, and certification of competences (RVCC).

---

[586] https://www.parlamento.pt/sites/EN/Parliament/Documents/Constitution7th.pdf

[587] https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/legislacao-consolidada/lei/1986-34444975

[588] https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/396-2007-628017

[589] https://www.anqep.gov.pt/np4/759.html

[590] https://www.anqep.gov.pt/np4/755.html

[591] https://files.dre.pt/1s/2012/02/03300/0076300766.pdf

To ensure the quality and standards of training providers, **Portaria No. 230/2008**[592] regulates the accreditation of training providers by the Directorate-General for Employment and Labour Relations (DGERT). This ordinance sets the criteria and procedures for accreditation, ensuring that training providers meet the required standards to deliver quality education and training. Accredited providers are essential for maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the ALE system.

The **Qualifica Programme**[593] was established by **Decree-Law No. 14/2017**. Launched in 2017, the Qualifica Programme aims to raise the qualification levels of adults by providing access to the recognition, validation, and certification of competencies (RVCC). The programme includes a network of Qualifica Centers that offer guidance and support to adults seeking to enhance their skills. These centres play a crucial role in facilitating the RVCC process, ensuring that individuals can gain formal recognition for their skills and competences, thereby improving their employability and career prospects.

The **Strategic Plan for Adult Literacy and Basic Education** (Plano Estratégico para a Educação e Formação de Adultos, PAEFBA) was adopted in 2014. The Plan was formulated under the broader European Agenda for Adult Learning. It focuses on improving literacy and basic education among adults, particularly targeting those without basic or secondary education certificates. The plan emphasizes increasing accessibility and participation rates in adult education programmes and addresses the needs of marginalized and low-skilled populations.

The **National Plan for Reading**[594] (Plano Nacional de Leitura, PNL2027), adopted in 2006, but extended in 2017, aims to promote reading and literacy across all age groups in Portugal. Although it is not exclusively targeted at adults, its impact on lifelong learning is significant. The plan encourages reading habits from an early age and extends support to adult education initiatives, promoting literacy as a foundational skill for personal and professional development. The PNL2027 underscores the importance of reading in acquiring knowledge and participating in continuous learning processes.

**National Plan for Adult Literacy** (Plano Nacional de Literacia de Adultos)[595], launched following a consultation process with civil society and policymakers in 2019, this plan proposes specific measures to address low literacy levels across different population groups. It aims to enhance literacy skills as part of the broader targets set by the Qualifica Programme, thus improving access to lifelong learning and vocational education opportunities.

Adopted in 2020, **the Portugal 2030 Strategy**[596] outlines the country's vision for economic and social development. It emphasizes digitalization, innovation, and qualification as key drivers. The strategy includes several interventions aimed at improving VET, such as:

- Combating school dropout and failure while developing skills appropriate for today's society.

- Ensuring equitable conditions for school attendance and educational success.

- Investing in the governance, quality, and efficiency of the education and training system.

- Aligning initial qualifications with new economic specializations, especially digital skills.

---

[592] https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/portaria/230-2008-247246

[593] https://eu.eventscloud.com/file_uploads/c3a0bef69b7531adda790f0d2820721a_TheQualificaProgramme2cPortugal-GonaloXufre.pdf

[594] https://www.apel.pt/documentacao/plano-nacional-leitura/

[595] https://www.anqep.gov.pt/np4/314.html

[596] https://www.dgert.gov.pt/estrategia-nacional

The **Strategic Agreement on Vocational Training** (Acordo de Formação Profissional e Qualificação)[597] was approved in 2020. This agreement emphasizes the need to modernize vocational training in Portugal to better align with the demands of the labour market.

**Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition Portugal**[598] initiative, launched in 2017, is part of a broader European strategy to enhance digital competencies among the workforce. It focuses on training programmes that enable adults to acquire essential digital skills, crucial for modern job markets and personal development.

*National ALE governance structure*

The governance structure of ALE in Portugal is characterized by a multi-layered system that spans various levels of government and involves multiple stakeholders. This structure ensures the coherent implementation and management of ALE policies and programmes across the country.

At the national level, the **Ministry of Education** (Ministério da Educação)[599] holds primary responsibility for the formulation and implementation of educational policies, including those related to adult education and lifelong learning. This ministry oversees the strategic direction of the education system, ensuring that ALE initiatives align with national educational goals and standards.

Alongside, the **Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security** (Ministério do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social)[600] plays a crucial role in the governance of VET and adult education. This ministry is responsible for employment policies, social inclusion, and social security measures, which encompass the development and implementation of training programmes aimed at enhancing the skills and employability of the workforce.

The **Ministry of Economy** (Ministério da Economia)[601] is also involved in the governance of ALE through its focus on economic development and workforce competitiveness. This ministry collaborates with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security to ensure that ALE programmes meet the needs of the labour market and contribute to economic growth.

The **National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training** (Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional, ANQEP)[602] coordinates the implementation of education and vocational training policies for both young people and adults. ANQEP's General Board comprised of both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders plays an important consultative role. The agency is responsible for managing the **Poruguese National Qualifications System** (Quadro Nacional de Qualificações, QNQ)[603] and ensuring the **recognition, validation, and certification of competences**[604]. ANQEP plays a pivotal role in aligning vocational education and training with labour market needs.

---

[597] https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/documento?i=acordo-de-formacao-profissional-e-qualificacao-assinado-entre-governo-e-parceiros-sociais

[598] https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/about/national-coalitions/portugal-digital-skills-and-jobs-coalition

[599] https://www.portugal.gov.pt/en/gc21/ministries/education/about

[600] https://www.portugal.gov.pt/en/gc21/ministries/labour-solidarity-and-social-security/about

[601] https://www.portugal.gov.pt/en/gc21/ministries/economy/about

[602] https://www.anqep.gov.pt/np4EN/anqep/

[603] https://www.refernet.pt/en/documentos/sistema-nacional-de-qualificacoes.html

[604] https://www.anqep.gov.pt/np4EN/RVCC.html

Additionally, the **Sectoral Councils for Qualifications** (Conselhos Setoriais para a Qualificação, CSQ)[605] are advisory bodies that bring together representatives from various sectors to discuss and update the National Catalogue of Qualifications (QNQ)[606]. These councils ensure that the qualifications offered are relevant and responsive to the evolving demands of different industries.

**Institute of Employment and Vocational Training** (Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, IEFP)[607] operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. The institute represents the Portuguese Public Employment Service. Following the guidelines of the government, its mission is to promote the creation and quality of employment and to combat unemployment by implementing active labour market policies (ALMPs), in particular vocational training measures. IEFP provides various courses and certified VET, including apprenticeships and courses specially targeted for adults.

The **Directorate-General for Employment and Industrial Relations** (Direção-Geral do Emprego e das Relações de Trabalho, DGERT)[608] is responsible for the accreditation of training providers. This directorate ensures that training institutions meet the required standards to deliver quality education and training. Its primary functions include shaping employment and vocational training policies, regulating professions, certifying training institutions, managing labour relations and working conditions, fostering social dialogue, monitoring labour disputes, and promoting collective bargaining.

The **Directorate-General for Statistics of Education and Science** (Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência, DGEEC)[609] is one of Portugal's "Other National Authorities", tasked with the production and dissemination of official statistics. The DGEEC is responsible for maintaining the Integrated Information System and Management of the Formative Offer (SIGO), a database connected to the Qualifica Passport. This system allows individuals to access and view their earned qualifications and skills. Additionally, it provides a tool for exploring potential future qualifications based on their existing skill set.

At the regional and local levels, **Directorate-General for Education** (Direção-Geral da Educação, DGE)[610] operate under the Ministry of Education and are responsible for implementing national educational policies. These directorates oversee the administration of schools and educational institutions, including those offering adult education programmes.

**Local authorities, including municipalities**, play a significant role in the governance of ALE. They are involved in the planning and provision of adult education programmes tailored to local needs. Local authorities often collaborate with regional directorates, training providers, and community organizations to deliver accessible and relevant educational opportunities for adults.

Specialized agencies and bodies such as **Qualifica Centres**[611] are integral to the ALE infrastructure in Portugal. These centres provide information, guidance, and support to adults seeking to enhance their skills and qualifications. They are responsible for the recognition, validation, and certification of

---

[605] https://www.dgert.gov.pt/conselhos-sectoriais-para-a-qualificacao-csq

[606] National Qualifications System – ReferNet

[607] https://www.iefp.pt/

[608] https://www.dgert.gov.pt/dgert/missao-visao-e-valores

[609] https://www.dgeec.medu.pt/np4/home

[610] https://learningfromtheextremes.eu/dge/

[611] https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/

competences acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal learning pathways. The Qualifica Centres are a crucial element in operationalizing the Qualifica Programme and achieving its goals.

The **Management Authority of the Human Capital Operational Programme** is a temporary mission structure responsible for implementing the EU Human Capital Operational Programme (POCH) in Portugal. **POCH**[612] is a government initiative designed to enhance the skills and qualifications of the Portuguese workforce. Primarily funded by the European Union, POCH focuses on improving the situation of adults who lack a secondary education or professional certifications. To achieve its goals, POCH provides financial support to training providers, both public and private, to deliver adult education and training programmes. These programmes include Qualifica Centres and EFA courses. It's important to note that while POCH covers a significant portion of the costs, training providers are required to contribute financially as well. The programme operates through a competitive process, with funds allocated to projects that demonstrate the greatest potential to address the skills gap in the Portuguese labour market. Once funded, projects undergo monitoring and evaluation to assess their effectiveness in achieving the programme's objectives. Ultimately, POCH aims to create a more skilled and competitive workforce by investing in the education and training of adult learners.

The **Management Authority of the Social Inclusion and Employment Operational Programme (POISE)** is a temporary mission structure created to implement the EU Employment and Social Inclusion Operational Programme in Portugal. **POISE**[613] is a government initiative aimed at improving employment rates and social conditions in the country. Primarily funded by the European Union, POISE focuses on supporting specific groups such as young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), long-term unemployed individuals, and other vulnerable populations. To achieve its goals, POISE provides funding for adult education and training programmes, specifically those offering certified modular training (FMC). These programmes are designed to equip individuals with the skills necessary to enter the workforce. Similar to the POCH programme, POISE allocates funds through a competitive process, with a significant amount of funding expected to be available for the 2020-2021 period. A key objective of POISE is to increase employment rates among individuals aged 20 to 64 and to integrate NEETs into education or training programmes. This is particularly crucial in the context of Portugal's elevated unemployment rate, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. By investing in adult education and training, POISE aims to contribute to a more inclusive and prosperous society.

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

Funding for ALE in Portugal is sourced from both national and European funds, ensuring a comprehensive approach to developing and sustaining lifelong learning opportunities for adults.

The Portuguese government allocates substantial resources from **the national budget**[614] to support various ALE initiatives. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security are primarily responsible for the financial oversight and allocation of these funds. Budget allocations are used to support a wide range of programmes including literacy initiatives, vocational training, and lifelong learning projects.

---

[612] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/2014-2020/portugal/2014pt05sfop001

[613] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-8-2018-003119_EN.html?redirect

[614] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/portugal/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult

**Public employment services** play a critical role in funding and implementing ALE programmes aimed at improving employability. These services provide funding for training courses that help unemployed individuals gain new skills and qualifications necessary for the labour market. The funding covers a variety of training programmes, including vocational training, upskilling, and reskilling initiatives.

**Regional and local governments** also contribute to ALE funding. These contributions are often directed towards region-specific educational needs and tailored programmes that address local labour market demands. Regional and local authorities collaborate with national bodies to ensure that ALE programmes are effectively implemented at the local level.

The **Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP)** is the primary national body responsible for vocational training and employment-related ALE initiatives in Portugal. It provides funding for various training programmes aimed at improving the employability of adults, particularly those who are unemployed or at risk of redundancy. The IEFP finances training programmes focused on upskilling and reskilling, often in collaboration with employers, to ensure that workers gain the necessary skills for high-demand sectors such as technology, healthcare, and construction. The IEFP also funds vocational training for jobseekers, helping them improve their qualifications and re-enter the labour market.

Portugal benefits significantly from European Union funding, which supports various ALE programmes and initiatives. These funds are crucial in enhancing the scope and reach of ALE in Portugal, allowing for the development of innovative programmes and ensuring alignment with European standards.

A major contributor to ALE funding in Portugal is **the European Social Fund**. The ESF co-finances numerous educational and training programmes aimed at improving employment opportunities, social inclusion, and education quality. **The Erasmus+ Programme** is another significant source of EU funding for ALE in Portugal. Erasmus+ supports education, training, youth, and sport in Europe. Through Erasmus+, Portugal participates in various adult education projects that promote cross-border collaboration, innovation in education, and the exchange of best practices. Funding from Erasmus+ enables Portuguese educational institutions and organizations to engage in international partnerships and improve the quality and relevance of adult education. **The European Regional Development Fund** (ERDF) supports regional development projects, including those related to education and training. ERDF funding is used to enhance the infrastructure for ALE, such as upgrading facilities, providing modern equipment, and developing digital learning platforms. These improvements help create a conducive learning environment for adults and support the delivery of high-quality education and training programmes.

**Human Capital Operational Programme (POCH)**[615] was initiated as part of the Portugal 2020 Partnership Agreement, running from 2014 to 2020, with ongoing activities extended into the next programming period. POCH is one of the primary recipients of ESF funding. This programme focuses on improving the skills and employability of the Portuguese workforce by providing funding for vocational education and training (VET), reducing early school leaving, and facilitating the transition from education to employment. POCH initiatives help address the skills gap in the workforce and promote economic growth and social inclusion. POCH has successfully supported various initiatives, including the expansion of Qualifica Centres, development of adult education courses, and enhancement of vocational training programmes. The programme has contributed to a significant increase in the number of adults obtaining secondary and higher education qualifications.

---

[615] https://www.poch.portugal2020.pt/en/Pages/default.aspx

**Social Inclusion and Employment Operational Programme (POISE)**[616] was launched in the 2014-2020 programming period, continuing its activities into subsequent years as part of the broader Portugal 2020 strategy. POISE is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and national public funds. The programme focuses on creating inclusive and sustainable job opportunities, improving social services, and supporting disadvantaged communities. The aim of POISE is to promote social inclusion, reduce poverty, and enhance employment opportunities, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

**Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)**[617] was launched by the European Union in 2013 to tackle high youth unemployment rates, particularly in regions with youth unemployment rates above 25%. YEI aims to provide direct support to young people (aged 15-29) who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). The initiative focuses on integrating young people into the labour market through education, training, and employment opportunities. YEI has significantly contributed to reducing youth unemployment rates in Portugal. It has provided numerous opportunities for young people to gain work experience, receive training, and improve their employability. The initiative has also supported the development of innovative programmes aimed at addressing the specific needs of young NEET individuals.

**The Qualifica Programme**[618] is a key initiative in Portugal designed to enhance the educational and professional qualifications of adults. It supports the national strategy to promote lifelong learning, improve employability, and foster social inclusion. The programme primarily aims to increase educational attainment by encouraging adults to complete basic and secondary education, improve professional qualifications through vocational training, and promote continuous skills enhancement. It also focuses on the recognition of prior learning, enabling the validation and certification of skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning. Central to the Qualifica Programme are the Qualifica Centres, which serve as hubs for adult education and training, offering personalized guidance and support for individuals seeking to improve their qualifications. These centres provide information on educational opportunities and assist with the Recognition, Validation, and Certification of Competences (RVCC) processes. Another crucial tool within the programme is the Qualifica Passport, a digital document that records an individual's qualifications and competences, helping them plan their educational and professional paths. Funded primarily by national resources and significantly supported by the European Social Fund (ESF), the Qualifica Programme benefits from substantial financial investment aimed at expanding access to education and training, improving infrastructure, and enhancing the quality of educational offerings. Since its inception, the programme has notably increased adult enrolment in education and training courses, enhanced employability, and promoted social inclusion by providing educational opportunities to disadvantaged groups.

The **National Programme for the Promotion of Literacy (Programa Nacional de Promoção da Literacia)**[619] aims to improve basic literacy skills among the adult population. This programme is funded primarily by the Portuguese government, with additional support from the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF funding helps extend the programme's reach and effectiveness by supporting community-based literacy projects and collaborations with local organizations.

---

[616] https://poise.portugal2020.pt/inicio

[617] https://portugal2020.pt/wp-content/uploads/sumario_executivo_en_avalicao_iej_2018_fevereiro2021.pdf

[618] https://eu.eventscloud.com/file_uploads/c3a0bef69b7531adda790f0d2820721a_TheQualificaProgramme2cPortugal-GonaloXufre.pdf

[619] https://inovacaosocial.portugal2020.pt/project/programa-integrado-de-promocao-da-literacia/

**Adult Education and Training Courses (EFA)**[620] are comprehensive programmes that combine general education with vocational training. These courses are designed for adults who have not completed their compulsory education and aim to provide them with both academic knowledge and practical skills relevant to the job market. The EFA courses are structured to include components of basic education, secondary education, and professional certification. This holistic approach ensures that learners gain a broad range of competences, enhancing their overall employability. Funding for EFA courses comes from the Portuguese government, which provides essential support for their operation. The European Social Fund (ESF) contributes significantly, especially for the vocational training components, ensuring these courses meet labour market needs and enhance employability.

The **New Opportunities Initiative**[621] was a major programme launched in the early 2000s aimed at significantly raising the qualification levels of the Portuguese population. This initiative provided opportunities for adults to complete their education and obtain professional qualifications through formal education, RVCC (Recognition, Validation, and Certification of Competences) processes, and vocational training. The New Opportunities Initiative was instrumental in addressing the low qualification levels among adults and fostering a culture of lifelong learning in Portugal. Though it concluded in its original form, its principles and goals continue to influence current ALE policies and programme. The New Opportunities Initiative was funded by the Portuguese state budget, with crucial support from the European Social Fund (ESF), which financed the RVCC processes and other training initiatives. Additionally, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supported the infrastructural developments necessary for the initiative's implementation.

## Quality assurance in national ALE systems

### Quality assurance systems in ALE

The quality assurance system for ALE in Portugal involves a comprehensive framework managed by several key institutions, each playing distinct roles to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of educational programmes[622]. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security are the central organizations coordinating and supervising the system, with their respective agencies and departments executing specific duties.

---

[620] https://linkedopendata.eu/wiki/Item:Q2904472

[621] https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/education-culture-and-sport/document/new-opportunities-initiative-novas-oportunidades

[622] https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/strengthening-quality-assurance-in-adult-education-and-training-in-portugal-implementation-guidance.pdf
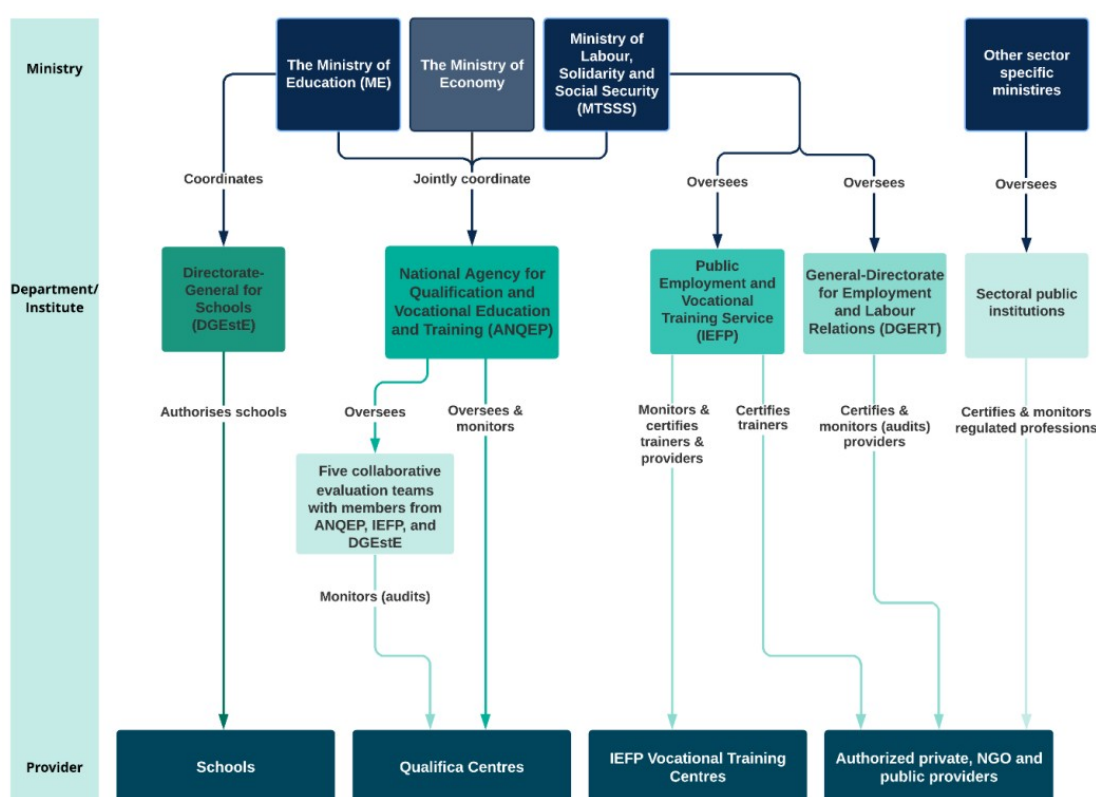
*Figure 32. Key actors of Portugal's adult education and training quality assurance system*

*Source: OECD*[623]

**Directorate-General for Employment and Labour Relations (DGERT)** coordinates the certification of training entities to ensure they meet established quality standards. Governed by Law no. 851/2010 and revised by Law no. 208/2013, DGERT certification is necessary for providers to deliver certified training within the National Qualifications System (SNQ), obtain public funding, and offer training in regulated professions. The certification process involves assessing providers' compliance with legal and quality requirements related to resources, planning, pedagogical practices, and management procedures. Certified entities are regularly audited, and unsatisfactory performance can lead to certification withdrawal.

**National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP)** is responsible for the quality of courses and Recognition, Validation, and Certification of Competences (RVCC) processes offered by Qualifica Centres. It mandates registration of these centres in the SIGO system, which tracks adult learners' progress and provides monthly reports on key performance indicators such as enrolments and certifications. ANQEP also conducts training sessions and site visits, involving representatives from IEFP and DGEstE, to monitor and support Qualifica Centres.

**Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP)** oversees its own training centres and monitors employability outcomes using social security data. It ensures the pedagogical quality of trainers through the certification of pedagogical competencies (CCP). IEFP collaborates with ANQEP and DGEstE in

---

[623] Ibidem

monitoring and auditing Qualifica Centres and contributes data on job vacancies for the National System for the Anticipation of Qualifications Needs (SANQ).

**Directorate-General for Schools (DGEstE)**[624] assures the quality of schools providing adult education by assessing their applications based on criteria like regional coverage, experience, and social inclusion. It also participates in the monitoring and formative support of these schools through regional teams that coordinate with IEFP and ANQEP.

**Directorate-General for Statistics of Education and Science (DGEEC)** manages the SIGO system, which generates statistical indicators related to adult education and training. It ensures data integration and usability for various stakeholders, including POCH, which relies on SIGO for verifying course authorizations and allocating funds.

**Management Authorities of Operational Programmes (POCH and POISE)** condition funding on fulfilling specific requirements, including DGERT certification and compliance with national regulations. They monitor the employability and educational progression of participants, using performance indicators to ensure funded projects meet targets.

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

Portugal has established a comprehensive framework for assessing the quality and effectiveness of its Adult Learning and Education (ALE) programmes. This system involves a combination of **KPIs** and various evaluation methods implemented by different government agencies[625].

**Key institutions involved in ALE quality assurance include:** the Directorate-General for Employment and Vocational Training (DGERT), the National Agency for Qualification and Employment (ANQEP), the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP), the Directorate-General for Education (DGEstE), the Directorate-General for Statistics (DGEEC), and the managing authorities of operational programmes, POCH and POISE.

**DGERT** focuses on provider certification, audit results, learner outcomes, and provider capacity as key indicators. **ANQEP** prioritizes enrolment data, certification data, SIGO system reports, and field visits. **IEFP** evaluates programmes through employability tracking, participant feedback, and pedagogical quality. **DGEstE** assesses schools based on application criteria, conducts monitoring visits, and provides formative support. **DGEEC** collects and analyses administrative data and develops statistical indicators. Finally, **POCH and POISE** monitor funding eligibility, performance indicators, and compliance with quality standards.

Evaluation methods employed in Portugal encompass both **internal and external assessments**. Training providers conduct self-assessments, while independent bodies like DGERT and IGEC perform external evaluations. Additionally, **learner feedback** is systematically collected to inform programme improvement. **Performance indicators** related to programme outcomes, such as completion rates and employment outcomes, are regularly monitored.

National ALE registries and information models for ALE

---

[624] https://www.dgeste.mec.pt

[625] https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/strengthening-quality-assurance-in-adult-education-and-training-in-portugal-implementation-guidance.pdf

Co-funded by
the European Union

*Available registries (description, structure)*

In Portugal, several mechanisms and registries support Adult Education and Learning (ALE). These systems aim to centralize information about educational opportunities for adults, facilitating access for learners, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

The **National Catalogue of Qualifications (Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações – CNQ)**[626] is a key tool for standardizing qualifications in Portugal. Managed by the ANQEP, CNQ is designed to ensure that qualifications and training standards are uniformly recognized across the country. This catalogue is essential for aligning educational and vocational training with labour market needs and promoting lifelong learning. CNQ provides a standardized list of qualifications, ensuring that the skills and competencies recognized are consistent nationwide. This standardization helps in maintaining the quality and relevance of qualifications. The catalogue serves as a reference for educational institutions and training providers to develop and offer accredited courses. This ensures that the training provided meets national standards and is recognized by employers and other educational institutions. CNQ helps learners identify the qualifications that align with their career goals and the training required to achieve these qualifications. This clarity helps individuals plan their education and training pathways effectively.



*Figure 33. Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações*

*Source: Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações* [627]

The **Training Offer Portal (Portal da Oferta Formativa)**[628] is a national technological platform in Portugal designed to consolidate and provide comprehensive information about the educational and training opportunities available within the Portuguese education and training system. This portal addresses the

---

[626] https://catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/qualificacoesPesquisa

[627] https://catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/qualificacoesPesquisa

[628] https://www.ofertaformativa.gov.pt/#/pesquisa-cursos

need for centralized information to assist both young people and adults in making informed decisions regarding their education and vocational training paths. One key challenge has been the lack of a centralized information source, with educational and training information dispersed across multiple websites. The portal addresses this by offering a unified, integrated, and user-friendly platform where all relevant information is available in one place. The portal aggregates information from the National Qualifications System, specifically through the **Integrated Educational and Training Offer Information System (SIGO)**. This integration ensures that the data on the portal is comprehensive and reflects the latest educational and training offerings. The portal is developed and managed by the General Directorate of Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC), in collaboration with the General Directorate of Education (DGE) and the National Agency for Qualification and Professional Education (ANQEP). The educational and training offer data registered in SIGO is also exported to the European portal for educational and training offers (PLOTEUS) annually. This ensures that Portugal's educational offerings are visible and accessible at the European level.



*Figure 34. Portal da Oferta Formativa*

*Source: Oferta Fromativa[629]*

The **Qualifica Portal** serves as a central information system for Portugal's **Qualifica Programme**, which is one of the country's most prominent initiatives for adult education and vocational training. This registry tracks the education and training pathways of adults and helps monitor their progress in obtaining qualifications. The Qualifica Portal is a digital platform that provides adults with access to education and training opportunities, including vocational qualifications and recognition of prior learning. It serves as a national registry for tracking learners' participation in the programme and their qualification progress. The portal is integrated with the national qualifications system and provides detailed information on the available training programmes, accredited Qualifica Centres, and courses. It includes tools for learners to explore pathways for completing secondary education, vocational training, and obtaining certifications through recognition of prior learning. Learners can access personalized plans based on their current

---

[629] Ibidem

qualifications, work experience, and career goals. The system tracks an individual's progress through various learning modules and qualifications. The platform lists all certified **Qualifica Centres** and their programme offerings, allowing learners to find local or online educational opportunities. The portal aims to improve access to adult education, simplify the process of enrolment in training programmes, and provide transparency in terms of qualifications and certifications. The Qualifica Portal is publicly accessible, allowing learners, employers, and educators to view and manage education and training records.



*Figure 35. Qualifica Programme portal – Qualifica Centres search*

*Source:* Qualifica[630]

*Information models for ALE*

**The National Qualifications Catalogue (CNQ)** provides detailed information about qualifications, including occupational profiles, training references, and the Recognition, Validation, and Certification of Competencies (RVCC) system. It categorizes qualifications by levels and lists course details with descriptions and training units. The Sectoral Councils for Qualification update the catalogue to reflect labour market needs. Specialized programmes like Young + Digital, Portuguese as Host Language, and Green Skills & Jobs focus on digital and environmental training. The CNQ is integrated with the National Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (VET) and ECVET.

**The Training Offer Portal** provides comprehensive information on course offerings, including titles, descriptions, education levels, duration, and delivery methods (online, in-person, blended). It details provider information such as names, locations, and qualifications of institutions, along with available facilities. The portal highlights the target audience for each course, whether it's unemployed adults, professionals, or individuals seeking recognition of prior learning. Additionally, it covers quality assurance, including course accreditation, evaluation results, and learner feedback to ensure informed decisions.

---

[630] https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/pesquisaCentros

**The Qualifica Portal** allows users to search for nearby Qualifica Centres in Portugal by entering their postal code, name, or email. It helps individuals locate centres that offer educational qualifications and lifelong learning opportunities.

## Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

### Experiences with the introduction of ILA as a tool

Portugal's approach to ILAs has been inspired by successful ILA implementations in other European countries, such as France's **Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF)**. The goal is to provide individuals with greater autonomy over their learning pathways by allowing them to manage their own learning accounts and access funds for education and training. Portugal's exploration of ILAs is influenced by broader European Union strategies that emphasize lifelong learning and continuous skill development. The EU has encouraged member states to adopt flexible mechanisms, such as ILAs, to promote reskilling and upskilling in response to technological changes and labour market needs. The introduction of ILAs in Portugal is being supported through European Social Fund (ESF) contributions, which co-finance initiatives aimed at improving adult learning and employability. These funds have been critical in setting the foundation for ILA-related experiments and pilot projects.

Portugal has implemented the **Qualifica Passport**[631], which is a significant tool in the realm of ALE. Although it is not an ILA in the traditional sense, the Qualifica Passport shares several characteristics with ILAs and serves as a personalized digital tool for tracking and planning educational and training pathways for adults[632].

**The Qualifica Passport**, developed under **the Qualifica Programme**, is a digital instrument that records the qualifications and skills acquired by adult learners throughout their lives. It serves as a guidance tool for adults to map out and organize their educational and vocational pathways.

The Qualifica Passport allows users to register all the qualifications and competencies they have acquired over time. This includes formal education, professional training, and informal learning experiences. Users can simulate potential learning paths based on their existing qualifications and skills. This helps in identifying the most suitable educational or training routes to achieve further qualifications or career goals. The Passport provides tailored recommendations for educational and training opportunities. It helps users identify necessary skills and plan their learning trajectory accordingly. The Qualifica Passport integrates with the National Qualifications Catalogue (CNQ) and other educational databases, ensuring that the information is current and comprehensive. This integration allows users to explore a wide range of training offers and qualifications available within the Portuguese education system.

The Qualifica Passport offers many benefits. It provides a single point of access for users to view and manage their educational records, making it easier to keep track of their learning progress. Training providers can register their courses, making their offerings more visible to potential learners who use the passport to find relevant training opportunities. Furthermore, the Qualifica Passport encourages continuous education and skills development by offering a clear and structured way for adults to plan their learning journey. At last, the Passport facilitates better policy-making and resource allocation by providing policymakers with detailed data on adult learning patterns and needs.

### Results with introducing ILA at the national level

---

[631] https://www.passaportequalifica.gov.pt/cicLogin.xhtml

[632] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/35807

Portugal's exploration of **ILAs** is still in its early stages, with the country experimenting through pilot initiatives and incorporating some ILA-like features into existing programmes such as the **Qualifica Programme**. While Portugal has not yet implemented a full-scale national ILA system, several results have emerged from the introduction of ILA-related tools and concepts. These experiences provide valuable insights into how ILAs could contribute to the country's broader Adult Learning and Education (ALE) goals.

The introduction of the Qualifica Passport has shown **promising results in enhancing adult education and learning**[633]. The Qualifica Programme, which includes the Qualifica Passport, has seen substantial uptake across the country. By 2022, the number of adults engaged in education and training through Qualifica Centres reached significant levels, with many centres reporting high demand and participation rates. This indicates a strong interest and engagement among adults seeking to enhance their qualifications and skills.

One of the positive outcomes of introducing ILA-like tools, particularly through the Qualifica Programme, has been an increase in adult participation in lifelong learning and education. By offering more flexible and accessible pathways, such as the Qualifica Passport and recognition of prior learning, more adults have been encouraged to engage in education and training.

Furthermore, the Qualifica Passport supports lifelong learning by providing a structured and transparent way for adults to track their educational and professional development. This tool has empowered individuals to identify gaps in their skills and pursue targeted training, thereby fostering a culture of continuous learning and personal growth.

The **Qualifica Passport**, which allows adults to track their learning progress and certifications, has motivated individuals to take charge of their learning journeys. This digital tool provides a personalized roadmap for learners, which has contributed to higher participation rates in vocational and skills training programmes.

The recognition of prior learning (RVCC) process, which aligns with ILA principles by validating informal learning and work experience, has led to an increase in adults receiving formal qualifications without needing to start education from scratch. This has been particularly impactful for low-skilled workers and older adults looking to upskill. By improving qualifications, the Qualifica Passport has positively impacted employment prospects for many adults. Participants have reported better job opportunities and career advancements as a result of the qualifications and skills acquired through the programme. This is particularly important in a country where improving employability is a critical goal.

The Qualifica Passport also plays a crucial role in recognizing and validating non-formal and informal learning. This aspect has been transformative for many adults who have acquired substantial skills and knowledge outside traditional educational settings. By validating these competencies, the programme has enabled many to gain formal recognition and advance in their careers. The programme has had a broader social impact by enhancing individual self-esteem and motivation. Many participants have reported increased confidence and a sense of achievement, which extends beyond professional benefits to personal development and social inclusion.

In summary, the Qualifica Passport has been an effective tool in Portugal's efforts to improve adult education and learning outcomes. It has facilitated greater access to education, improved qualification levels, supported lifelong learning, enhanced employment opportunities, and recognized a wide range of

---

[633] https://elmmagazine.eu/improving-portugals-levels-of-education-at-qualifica-centres/

learning experiences. These outcomes reflect the programme's success in addressing educational and vocational needs and promoting a culture of continuous development among adults.

Despite the positive results, there have been several challenges in implementing ILAs or similar tools in Portugal. These challenges highlight areas for improvement as the country moves toward a more formalized ILA system.

One of the key challenges in expanding ILAs in Portugal is securing sustainable funding. While EU funds, such as the European Social Fund (ESF), have played a significant role in financing pilot projects and programmes like Qualifica, there is concern about the long-term financial sustainability of a fully implemented ILA system. National budgets will need to find a way to maintain and scale these initiatives once external funding diminishes.

While ILAs have been successful in giving individuals more control over their learning, there has been limited engagement from employers. More needs to be done to incentivize employers to co-finance or support their workers' use of ILAs, as employer involvement is crucial for ensuring that the skills being developed are aligned with industry needs. Many adults, particularly in rural areas or those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are still unaware of the benefits and availability of ILA-like programmes. Awareness campaigns and greater outreach are necessary to ensure that more people can take advantage of the available opportunities.

The early experiences with ILA-like programmes in Portugal have laid the foundation for a potential national rollout of a formal ILA system. The following opportunities have been identified as critical for expanding ILAs and improving the country's ALE landscape: There is growing potential for Portugal to introduce a national ILA system that would give all adults access to personalized learning accounts. A fully implemented ILA system could significantly boost participation in lifelong learning, especially for those looking to reskill or change careers.

Encouraging greater employer engagement in ILAs would ensure that the skills being developed through training programmes are closely aligned with labour market needs. Incentives such as tax breaks or subsidies could be introduced to motivate employers to support their employees in using ILAs for professional development. With the growing importance of digital and green skills in the economy, ILAs could be used as a targeted tool to fund training in these areas. This would help Portugal meet its national and EU targets for digital transformation and green energy transition.

As Portugal looks to expand ILAs, integrating with European models and best practices could further enhance the effectiveness of its national system. Learning from countries like France, which has successfully implemented the **Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF)**, could help Portugal refine its own approach to ILAs.

## 1.10. Finland

### Governance and policy landscape of national ALE systems

#### Overview of national policies and strategies related to ALE

Finland has a long history of participation and promotion of adult education, and the participation rate is high in international terms. Adult learning provision in Finland encompasses basic and general education; vocational education; higher education and adult liberal education. Except for basic and general education, there is little distinction between adult and youth education. All formal education qualifications are assigned a competence level within the **Finnish Qualification Framework (FiNQF)**[634]. The landscape of adult liberal education providers is diverse and includes **Adult Education Centres**[635] (*Kansalaisopisto*), **Folk High School**[636] (*Kansanopisto*), **Study Centres**[637] (*Opintokeskus*) and **Summer Universities** (*Kesayliopisto*). The courses offered in these institutions are non-formal and typically related to recreation, citizenship and community development, although they increasingly include courses to develop basic and job-related skills for specific target groups.

Participation in courses at adult liberal education institutions is recognized in the competence-based VET qualifications and validations of prior learning. Participants pay mostly small course fees, and specific target groups, e.g. migrants, receive training vouchers to participate in learning at adult liberal education institutions. While gross participation numbers in adult liberal education are around 1.5 million per year, it is estimated that the number of unique participants is 900 000[638].

Finnish adult education and training has traditionally been divided into two main areas: general adult education and vocational adult education and training.

The **Vocational Qualifications Act** enacted in 1994 created a new system of competence-based qualifications, where people may take vocational qualifications[639] by demonstrating their vocational skills in competence tests irrespective of how they have acquired their skills. At the same time, a uniform quality assurance system was created for vocational adult education and training. Polytechnic adult education started gradually alongside education provided for young people in the late 1990´s. Activities have expanded on an annual basis as polytechnics have become an established form of operation. As from 1 August 2000, all polytechnics have operated on a permanent basis. The name of polytechnics was changed to universities of applied sciences. Educational provision has increased and diversified. Adult education is provided on the same degree programmes as education for young people and it leads to the same universities of applied sciences degrees. Adult education at universities is provided by their own continuing education centres.[640]

The Government aims to reform five priority areas: employment and competitiveness; knowledge and education; wellbeing and health; bioeconomy and clean solutions; and digitalization, experiments and deregulation.

---

[634] https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/qualifications-frameworks

[635] https://kansalaisopistot.fi

[636] https://en.kansanopistot.fi/frontpage/folk-high-schools-in-finland

[637] https://www.opintokeskukset.fi/in-english

[638] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

[639] https://nayttotutkinnot.fi/

[640] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/developments-and-current-policy-priorities

In Finland, the most important instrument for implementing the Council of the European Union Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration in VET policy is the **Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government**[641]. The report, which steers the development of entire education system in the long term, describes the target state of education and research into the 2030s and towards the 2040s and presents the resources needed to achieve the target state and the need for changes in structures and guidance.

The **National Implementation Plan (NIP)[642]** was updated in February 2024 to correspond to the development measures under the new **Government Programme**. The key development measures are related to strengthening the impact and overall efficiency of VET activities. The first version of the National Implementation Plan 2022 was based on the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government[643].

The **Ministry of Education and Culture[644]** follows the objectives for social impact based on the Government Programme, the Board's Action Plan and the mid-term review of the Board. The Education Programme of the current Government was submitted to Parliament on 20 June 2023[645].

Other Ministries whose work can be related to education are the **Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment**[646], responsible for labour market training and the **Ministry of Defense**[647], responsible for the **National Defense University**[648].

*National ALE governance structure*

The **Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)**[649] works in co-operation with the **Ministry of Education and Culture**. It is a national development agency responsible for developing education and training, early childhood education and care and lifelong learning, as well as for promoting internationalization. The agreement between the two institutions is drawn up for a period of three years but is reviewed every year and it includes the tasks of the EDUFI as assigned by the Ministry.

At the beginning of 2017, the former National Board of Education merged with the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) to form a new development agency named Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI, the Finnish name *Opetushallitus* remained unchanged). The **Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)** and the Matriculation Examination Board have operated as independent agencies within EDUFI since the beginning of 2018.[650]

EDUFI's tasks are:

---

[641] Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government

[642] http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/finland/

[643] https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161935

[644] https://okm.fi/en/frontpage

[645] https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165044/Programme-of-Prime-Minister-Petteri-Orpos-Government-20062023.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y

[646] https://tem.fi/en/frontpage

[647] https://www.defmin.fi/en

[648] https://maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu.fi/en/frontpage

[649] https://www.oph.fi/english

[650] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/administration-and-governance-central-andor-regional-level

- developing education and training, early childhood education and care and lifelong learning, taking care of services and management duties related to them, and anticipating society's competence and education needs

- drafting the national core curricula for basic and general upper secondary education, basic education in the arts, vocational education and training, and early childhood education and care

- facilitating programmes and contracts that promote internationalisation and providing consulting services for internationalisation

- providing services for student admissions

- producing information to support development and decision-making in our field, and developing the education field's central information databases

- making decisions on the recognition of studies completed abroad as well as duties dealing with language and translator's degrees

- EDUFI is managed by a governing board, the members of which represent political decision-making, local authorities, teachers and social partners. .[651]

On regional level there are also **15 Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY)[652].** ELY Centres strengthen regional co-operation in adult education, as well as networking between organizers of education, enterprises and other stakeholders. The functions of the centres include improvement of operating conditions for businesses, support for rural economy, promotion of employment and the functionality of the labour market and, in relation to them, promotion of adult employment (labour market) training. The agencies participate in forecasting developments in business and employment trends, and skill and educational needs.

The **Regional Development Act**, effective as from the year of 1994, has created a new category of regional organization, namely, the Regional Councils, which draw up regional development plans in co-operation with the local authorities within their respective regions and the state authorities as well as representatives of economic life and non-governmental organizations.[653]

**Continuous learning reform**

The policy guidelines for the continuous learning reform were agreed in 2020. A vision was drawn up and 27 measures agreed to meet the targets by 2030. The reform responds in particular to the competence needs arising from changes in working life. To promote opportunities for working-aged people to develop their competence as well as the availability of skilled labour are the main aims of the reform.[654]

---

[651] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/administration-and-governance-central-andor-regional-level
[652] https://www.ely-keskus.fi/en/web/ely-en
[653] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/administration-and-governance-central-andor-regional-level
[654] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/lifelong-learning-strategy

**Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment**

The reform led to the establishment of a **Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment (SCELE)**[655]. It helps to improve the skills of working-age people and promote the availability of skilled labour. To respond to skills needs that either arise suddenly or involve supplementing other education and training provision, the SCELE finances targeted training based on foresight information. The training programmes are designed to alleviate skills shortages in the healthcare and social welfare sector, in early childhood education and care, and in the hospitality, tourism, culture and events industries that have suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic. To meet the needs of the green transition and digitalization, which require new expertise, the SCELE also finances training related to the hydrogen economy and the battery industry, which would not otherwise be available.

The SCELE develops and experiments with new ways of reaching employed people who normally participate in training and education less than others. These outreach pilots, which are carried out in 1,200 companies, will also provide research data on the impacts of the measures. In addition, the Service Centre analyses foresight information on skills and labour force needs, develops information, advice and guidance services, and boosts the effectiveness of regional and other collaboration networks.[656]

**Adult education centres**

Adult education comprises education and training leading to a degree or certificate, liberal adult education and staff-development and other training provided or purchased by employers. The courses are organized by adult education centres, folk high schools, learning centres, sports training centres and summer universities and promote personal growth offering thematic courses such as citizenship skills and society.[657]

There are 174 adult education centres (Finnish: kansalaisopisto/työväenopisto) which are mainly municipal institutions of adult education that have been established to meet local educational and cultural needs. The adult education centres mainly provide courses in art, foreign languages and practical skills, not leading to qualifications. In addition, they also organize social studies and other general subject studies, some additional vocational training courses and comprehensive education. In addition, adult education centres organize open university (Finnish: avoin yliopisto) instruction in co-operation with universities.[658]

**Folk high school**

Folk high schools provide general education programmes through which students can revise school subjects, study special fields and try new ways of learning. These schools are also attended by students aiming to prepare for higher education and to take open university courses.

They provide vocational training and basic education courses as well as liberal adult education courses.

Folk high schools can be divided in four groups according to their background organisations: non-political (Grundtvigian), Christian, civil society based and folk high schools with special education.[659]

---

[655] https://www.jotpa.fi/en

[656] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/lifelong-learning-strategy

[657] Ibidem

[658] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/main-providers

[659] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/adult-education-and-training

**Study centres**

Study centres are third-sector (voluntary) institutions run by non-governmental organisations, political parties and trade unions. They provide courses, lectures, seminars and study clubs, which facilitate peer learning taking place usually in the evenings or during weekends.

The aim of the courses provided by these centres is to support democracy and active citizenship and help participants to have an active part in society, particularly at grassroots level.[660]

**Education and training in the spirit of lifelong learning[661]**

**Adult education and training** encompass education leading to a qualification, degree studies, training preparing for competence-based qualifications, apprenticeship training, further and continuing education that provides upskilling and reskilling, studies in subjects relating to citizenship skills, working life skills and society, and studies in different crafts and subjects on a recreational basis. Adult education and training can be paid for by the students themselves or it can consist of apprenticeship training, labour policy education, or staff-development and other training provided or acquired by employers. Various educational institutions that mainly provide education for young people, educational institutions that provide only adult education, private companies, and workplaces (staff development) all provide adult education and training.

**Liberal adult education** offers non-formal studies. It promotes personal growth, health and wellbeing by providing studies relating to citizenship skills and society, and courses in different crafts and subjects on a recreational basis. Liberal adult education institutions include adult education centers, folk high schools, learning centers, sports training centers and summer universities. An essential aspect of liberal adult education is that everyone has the right to apply to take part in it. These studies do not provide a degree or qualification, and their content is not governed by legislation.

**Basic education in the arts** is goal-oriented education in different fields of art, progressing from one level to another. It teaches children and young people skills in self-expression and capabilities in their chosen art form needed in vocational education and training and in higher education.

*ALE funding (sources of ALE funding at national level; selected programmes and initiatives funded by the EU in the national context)*

The education in Finland, also adult education, is mostly financed by public funding, which means that it is free for the student except for further VET where students must pay moderate fees.

The Ministry of Education and Culture makes decisions on the amounts of government transfer for education funded through the system of central government transfers. Other sources of financing for the institutions include contributions from the students' municipalities of residence and the maintaining bodies of the institutions, as well as student payments and course fees. Self-motivated adult education is mainly funded through the government transfer system.

The state participates in the financing of educational services by means of the central government transfers system. Local authorities have a statutory obligation to contribute to funding adult education at general and vocational upper secondary levels. This administrative distribution of financing between central government and local authorities is not visible for the end user, that is the student: both parts of the

---

[660] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/adult-education-and-training

[661] https://okm.fi/en/education-system

funding form an entity which is taxpayer´s money. In addition, local authorities are a significant source of funding for liberal adult education. The proportion of central government transfers of the total funding for general upper secondary education for adults is calculated on the basis of the unit price for equivalent youth-level education and the amount is 65% the government transfer for youth-level education.[662].

**Financial support for adult learners**

The **Employment Fund**[663] grants adult education allowance for employed or self-employed adult students participating in self-motivated education. It is administered by the social partners of the Finnish labour market. Its purpose is to support employees' vocational studies by granting them financial assistance (adult education allowance) and to support the development of the vocational qualification system by granting scholarships for competence-based qualifications (scholarship for qualified employee).

*Adult education allowance*

Adult education allowance was a form of financial support granted to employees and entrepreneurs for studies that support their professional development. With adult education allowance, learners could acquire a degree or complete shorter trainings in several educational institutions across Finland.

The adult education allowance[664] has been discontinued in Finland starting from August 1, 2024. The background for the discontinuation decision is the goal to achieve savings and reallocate funds elsewhere. The professional qualification scholarship was also announced to be discontinued.

*Study loan*

In addition to the adult education allowance, a person may be entitled to a government guarantee for a study loan. The guarantee is granted by **Kela** (Social Insurance Institution of Finland[665]). Kela grants the government guarantee for student loans to those receiving adult education allowance. The requirement for receiving the government loan guarantee is for the student to receive adult education allowance for a consecutive period of at least 8 weeks. The Social Insurance Institution receives notification of adult education subsidies granted directly from the Employment Fund. Students' income or property does not affect their eligibility for a loan, but some benefits may prevent them from being granted the loan guarantee.[666]

**Subsidies for private providers**

Companies' in-service training is generally provided and financed by employers. In addition, there are enterprises providing education and training at market prices for both individuals and companies. These are mostly controlled through consumer protection measures.[667]

Quality assurance in national ALE systems

*Quality assurance systems in ALE*

---

[662] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/adult-education-and-training-funding

[663] https://www.employmentfund.fi/

[664] https://www.aikuiskoulutustuki.fi/en/

[665] https://www.kela.fi/main-page

[666] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/adult-education-and-training-funding

[667] Ibidem

In Finland quality assurance is primarily the responsibility of education providers and the educational institutions themselves at all levels of education. The education providers have a statutory duty to evaluate the education they provide and its effectiveness and participate in external evaluations of their activities. Furthermore, the legislation requires that key results of evaluations must be published, but it does not provide detailed instructions on the ways that the findings should be published.[668]

External evaluations are mainly carried out by the **Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)**[669] which operates as a separate unit within the EDUFI. FINEEC carries out evaluations related to education including the operations of education providers at all levels.

There are no school inspections or a national system for teacher evaluation, and the only national standardized test is at the end of general upper secondary education. Instead, the sample-based evaluations of learning outcomes as well as thematic and system evaluations form the basis of the national evaluation system.

The main objective of these evaluations is to:

- develop education and support learning.

- be part of the quality assurance processes for education.

- provide data and information for evidence-based planning, policy decisions and performance-based steering locally, regionally and nationally.

Decisions regarding directions and financing of national evaluations are taken by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Nevertheless, FINEEC draws up an action plan for external educational evaluation in accordance with the guidelines and financial resources set by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The aim is to make proposals for the development of educational evaluation and to promote educational evaluation research and co-operation as well.[670]

Provisions on the duties and organization of FINEEC are laid down in the **Act[671] and Government decree 1317/2013[672]**.

*Quality indicators and evaluation methods*

Adult education and training comprise education and training leading to a degree or certificate, liberal adult education, staff development and other training provided or purchased by employers. It also includes labour market training, which is mainly targeted at unemployed people.[673]

The **Act on Liberal Adult Education**[674] requires institutions offering liberal adult education to carry out self-evaluations. At the same time, they must also participate in external evaluations. These evaluations also focus on the educational institute structure and network of liberal adult education and the development of

---

[668] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/quality-assurance

[669] https://karvi.fi/en

[670] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/quality-assurance

[671] https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2013/en20131295.pdf

[672] https://finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2013/en20131317.pdf

[673] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/quality-assurance-adult-education-and-training

[674] https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1998/19980632?search%5Btype%5D=pika&search%5Bpika%5D=vapaasta

the service capabilities, the ability to perform statutory responsibilities as well as the volume of activities and target groups.

FINEEC aims to make plans for all of the levels of education to support the development of education and improve the preconditions of learning. The evaluations specifically focus on the duty and role of liberal adult education in the implementation of adult education and their ability to promote equality and accessibility.[675]

An interesting case regards the **thematic evaluations[676]** where the focus is on some content package or theme. The target may also be the evaluation of the state of a certain form of education. System evaluations study the education system, educational policy and its implementation or education system renewal and development processes. In thematic and system evaluation, multidisciplinary planning and evaluation group will be formed for the evaluation project. The evaluation will use inclusive and varied evaluation methods, taking into account the perspectives of various stakeholders as well as thematic studies to get a comprehensive understanding of the evaluation target.[677]

**Evaluation methods for quality assurance**

Liberal adult education organizations are independently responsible for the education they provide and its development. Since there are no national directives regarding the methods of internal evaluation, there is autonomy for individual actors to provide evaluators. However, the municipalities are responsible for creating a quality framework that must be in line with the directive of the national evaluation office, FNEEC.[678]

Although Finland is a multilingual country, the language (Finish, Swedish, Sami) does not create an issue: there are 5 types of different adult education providers, and they follow the same QA needs. Questions may vary according to the providers, but they still need to answer specific needs.

When conducting the evaluations, attention is directed towards:

- the duty and role of liberal adult education as a form of adult education;
- the ability to promote equality and accessibility;
- the functioning of the steering system of adult education centres;
- the development of the educational institute structure;
- the network of liberal adult education;
- the development of the service capabilities;
- the ability to perform statutory responsibilities;
- the volume of activities;

---

[675] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/quality-assurance-adult-education-and-training

[676] https://www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/liberal-adult-education

[677] https://www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/liberal-adult-education/thematic-and-system-evaluations

[678] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/quality-assurance-adult-education-and-training

- target groups of activities.[679]

As for thematic evaluations, in 2022, FINEEC carried out an evaluation of literacy training for immigrants. The evaluation produced information to support the planning, implementation, assessment and development of literacy training for immigrants for the educational institutions providing the training, education providers and national steering system. The evaluation applied to liberal adult education and basic education for adults. [680]

Set of questions used for the quality assurance of the literacy training for immigrants:

1. Statistical national picture: What is the national situation of the volumes and distribution of education provision by region, type of institution and type of education?

2. Assessment: How do current assessment practices support students' equal opportunities to develop their skills and progress along the educational path?

3. Guidance for education: How do the criteria and practices for guidance for education support the realization of competence and need-based learning on the students' education path?

4. Fluency of the educational path: What factors influence the continuation paths of the students and the fluency of the educational paths?

5. Effectiveness of literacy education: What effects does participation in education have on the development of students' skills and their functioning in society?

The evaluation is carried out in accordance with the principle of enhancement-led evaluation and comprises different stages of the evaluation, involving also the consultation of an expert panel. The panel includes representatives from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finnish National Agency for Education, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, student guidance, and the various forms of liberal adult education and their teaching staff.[681]

## National ALE registries and information models for ALE

### Available registries (description, structure)

The **National Registry and Data Transfer Service for Study Rights and Completed Studies** serves as a national data repository **KOSKI**[682].

KOSKI is a centralized integration service for study rights and performance and contains the information stored in the national database of teaching and training about learners' individual study rights, study results and completed degrees. The KOSKI service also includes a separate handover service that brings together national registers containing study and degree information, as well as a register of non-regulated education.

---

[679] Ibidem

[680] https://www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/liberal-adult-education/thematic-and-system-evaluations/evaluation-literacy-training-immigrants

[681] https://www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/liberal-adult-education/thematic-and-system-evaluations/evaluation-literacy-training-immigrants

[682] https://www.oph.fi/fi/palvelumme/koski-palvelu

KOSKI was founded in 2018, when the law on national study and degree registers (884/2017) came into force. The KOSKI service facilitates and streamlines transactions and reduces overlapping official work in different administrative sectors. Citizens and authorities can access reliable information in one integrate front end.[683]

The EDUFI, along with providers of liberal adult education institutions, acts as joint controllers for the **National Registry and Data Transfer Service**, responsible for storing study achievements from non-formal liberal adult education. The EDUFI oversees the operation of this registry.

The aim of storing educational data in the National Registry and Data Transfer Service is to highlight the non-formal skills gained through liberal adult education[684]. These non-formal studies equip learners with a variety of skills beneficial for both work and leisure. The KOSKI data repository plays a crucial role in identifying and recognizing these skills. Generally, the data regarding study achievements in liberal adult education held in the National Registry and Data Transfer Service is not utilized for fulfilling statutory duties enhancing administrative efficiency, making decisions about liberal adult education, or for evaluation, statistical analysis, monitoring, or research related to liberal adult education. The information in the registry is available for access by the student through their **My Studyinfo[685]** service.[686]

According to the **Act on the National Registers of Education Records, Qualifications, and Degrees** (887/2017)[687], providers of educational institutions referenced in the **Act on Liberal Adult Education** are required to store data on completed study achievements in the KOSKI data repository, provided that the educational institution has opted to enable this data storage and the students have given their consent. The **Workers' Educational Association (WEA)[688]** Finland decides which courses and educational programmes will offer data storage options and from when these options will be available.

Overall, the general objective of the courses offered by the providers is lifelong learning, wellbeing and active citizenship, as well as the promotion of democracy and the activities of civil society. Alongside and as a continuation of the formal education system, the Study Centres' studies develop participants' self-knowledge, network skills, basic and working life skills, and build bridges between different groups of citizens.

- Self-development studies: e.g. communication and interaction skills as well as manual and cultural skills;

- Active citizenship and organizational skills studies: how to participate and influence society's affairs, as well as digital and other basic skills;

- Work life studies: negotiation skills, operational management and planning, and economics;

- Voluntary rescue operation.[689]

---

[683] Ibidem

[684] https://okm.fi/en/koski-service-in-liberal-adult-education

[685] https://studyinfo.fi/oma-opintopolku

[686] Guidelines on the minimum information to be provided for students when storing non-formal, non-qualification study attainment data on liberal adult education based on consent

[687] https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2017/en20170884

[688] https://www.tsl.fi/en/tsl.html

[689] https://www.opintokeskukset.fi/opintokeskukset/opiskelu/

Students can access their information through the **My Studyinfo** service[690].

This portal gives the learner access to see their study rights and their academic records found in various national registers. A citizen can also share a view of their own performance data using a link and report an error in their own data directly to the data controller (training organizer).
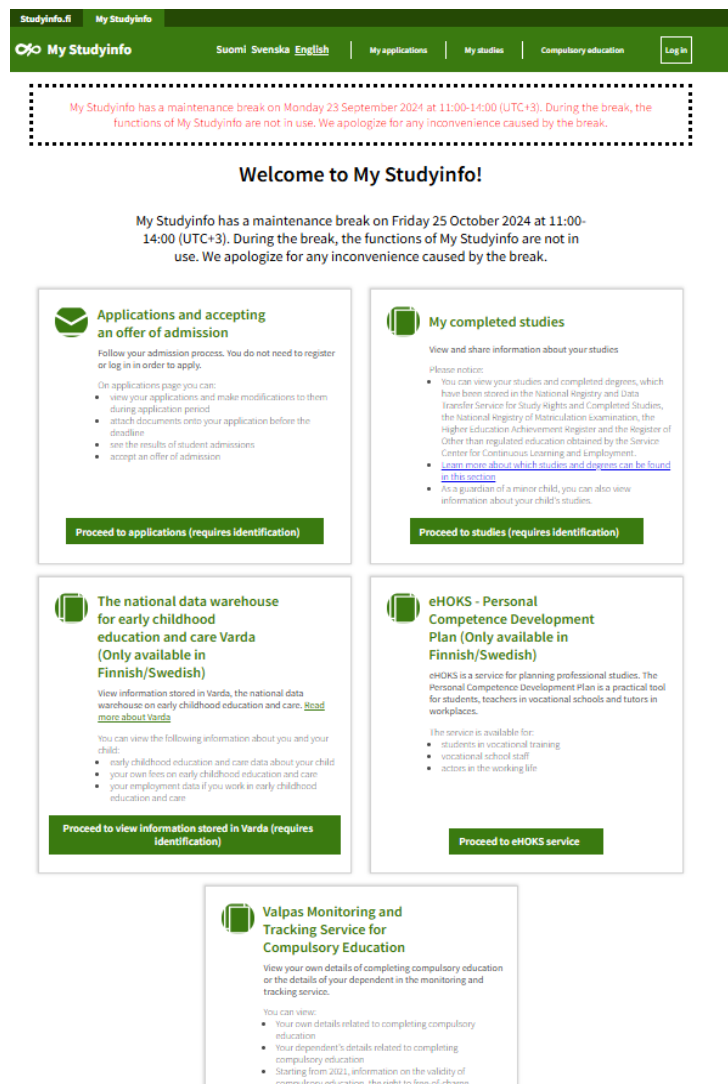


*Figure 36. My Studyinfo portal*

*Source: Studyinfo[691]*

*Information models for ALE*

---

**As for the KOSKI registry,** detailed information on the database structure, the data model and on the use of the platform and its features is offered through a dedicated **Wiki**[692]. The Wiki include comprehensive information about the service, including service instructions for training organizers, information about events and trainings related to the service, links to the service's technical documentation and informational material related to the service.

Furthermore, all the information related to KOSKI is basically public. The system is developed in a fully open manner and KOSKI is published under the open source **EUPL License** approved by the European Commission. Both the versioned source code and the data protocols can be found online, and all documentation is basically public.[693]



*Figure 37. KOSKI registry*

*Source: Eduuni wiki*[694]

**My Studyinfo**[695] is also developed and owner by the EDUFI and has two main sections and services.

The section **Studyinfo⁶⁹⁶** offers users the possibility to explore the lifelong learning system in Finland and its opportunities.

The search can be conducted in two ways:

- by course if the learner already knows what to learn

---

[692] https://wiki.eduuni.fi/display/OPHPALV/KOSKI

[693] https://koski.opintopolku.fi/koski/dokumentaatio

[694] https://wiki.eduuni.fi/display/OPHPALV/KOSKI

[695] https://opintopolku.fi/

[696] https://opintopolku.fi/konfo/en/

- through a tool that will guide the learner in choosing the right path if unsure about the course to take up.

In the latter case, the learner will fill in a guided form whose aim is to understand their interests in order to then suggest the courses that fit the most the inclinations of the searcher.



*Figure 38. Studyinfo platform*

*Source: Stufyinfo*[697]



*Figure 39. Studyinfo platform*

*Source: Studyinfo*[698]

**The course data model includes metadata for:**

- ECTS credits,

- level of education and the type of certification released,

- fee and scholarships

---

[697] Ibidem

[698] Ibidem

- time schedule

- language of instruction

- main deadlines

- prerequisites

- number of places of studies

- description of the course



*Figure 40. An example of course from liberal education*

*Source: Studyinfo[699]*

On top of this, the site provides additional information such as goals, content, structure of the studies, information about the provider. and additional data to guide the learner into the choice.

Experiences and results with ILA (if any)

---

Finland does not have an ILA system, and its implementation is not currently in the public debate. The main reason is historical, since participation in adult education has never been an issue in Finland, so the system that was adopted years ago is still giving good results.

The closest system to ILA is the **voucher** system[700], which has proved to be successful, especially for refugees and people without basic skills. [701]

The voucher system was introduced in 2007 by the Ministry of Education.

The liberal education institutions receive study voucher subsidies to enable them to significantly lower or totally compensate tuition fees for students belonging to specified target groups: immigrants, the unemployed, pensioners and senior citizens, persons with special educational needs. In summer universities, the voucher subsidy is used to support persons who have dropped out of university. In addition, the institutions can apply for subsidies from the National Board of Education for the development of suitable education provision.

Together, the study voucher and development subsidy amount to around five per cent of public funding allocated to liberal adult education.[702]

---

[700] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/financing-adult-learning-db/search/voucher-system-liberal-adult-education-0

[701] https://www.oph.fi/fi/funding/vapaan-sivistystyon-opintoseteliavustukset-2024

[702] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/financing-adult-learning-db/search/voucher-system-liberal-adult-education-0

Co-funded by
the European Union

# Conclusions

The RALExILA project (National Registries of Adult Learning and Education to support the deployment of Individual Learning Accounts) is a strategic initiative to strengthen adult learning and education (ALE) systems across Europe, with a particular focus on the deployment of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs). In response to rapid technological change and the changing demands of the labour market, this project aims to create adaptable, user-oriented ALE frameworks that enhance lifelong learning opportunities for adults. ALE registers, administrative structures, quality assurance practices and funding strategies were analysed in ten different European countries (Croatia, Malta, Cyprus, Slovakia, France, Netherlands, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal and Finland). Using a mixed methods approach – including desk research, surveys, focus groups, interviews and design thinking workshops – the project seeks to identify gaps, understand stakeholder needs and develop best practices for effective ALE and ILA systems. The results will support policy makers, educators and employers in building accessible, high quality ALE systems that promote workforce upskilling and social inclusion. The research will also provide practical insights for learners and employers, raise awareness of ILAs and encourage greater engagement in ALE initiatives. The general conclusions from the studies carried out in the individual countries are listed below.

1. **Croatia** has a good adult education and lifelong learning system with numerous programmes focusing on the qualification and retraining of the workforce. The Ministry of Science and Education oversees policy development, which is enshrined in the Adult Education Act and the Croatian Qualifications Framework, which regulate quality and ensure relevance. Funding sources include state, regional and EU contributions, with priority given to supporting the unemployed, low-skilled workers and vulnerable groups. Quality assurance includes accreditation of providers, evaluation of programs and compliance with national standards and competency frameworks.

2. **Malta's** adult education system is administered by the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth and the National Skills Council and offers a wide range of programmes to improve the skills and employability of the workforce. Financial assistance schemes such as the Training Pays Scheme and the Get Qualified Scheme, funded by the European Social Fund, support individual educational efforts. Quality assurance is regulated by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, although there are problems with the coordination and standardization of non-accredited programmes.

3. **Cyprus** has a decentralized adult education system run by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth. Other important authorities are the Human Resource Development Authority and the Cyprus Productivity Centre. The programmes focus on digital skills, closing skills gaps and promoting lifelong learning and are often supported by EU funds. The Cyprus Qualifications Framework and the MoESY and HRDA accreditations ensure quality standards. However, the low participation of adults in further training and a fragmented system continue to pose a challenge.

4. **Slovakia** is in the early stages of planning and implementing ILA as part of its Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance Strategy 2021-2030. The strategy outlines measures to pilot ILA schemes and increase adult participation in education, indicating a recognition of the need to improve adult education and training to meet the changing demands of the labour market. The MLSAF plays an important role in ALE, particularly in coordinating and funding training programmes aimed at improving workforce skills and aligning ALE with the evolving needs of the labour market.

5. **France**'s well-developed adult education system focuses on accessibility, quality and labour market orientation. Notable programmes include the Individual Learning Account (CPF) and the Law on the Freedom to Choose One's Professional Future, which focus on reforming vocational training. Funding sources are diverse, combining state, regional, corporate and EU support, with a focus on disadvantaged groups. Quality assurance is ensured through accreditation, national standards and competence frameworks. Challenges include the need for specialized skills in the green and digital sectors and combating fraud within the CPF system.

6. **The Netherlands** has a mature adult education system that addresses workforce upskilling and retraining. Key government agencies include the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs and Economic Affairs. Initiatives such as the STAP Budget and the Levenlangleren Krediet provide financial support for individual learning and professional development. Quality is maintained through accreditation and competence frameworks, but challenges remain in ensuring equitable access, particularly for disadvantaged groups, and in addressing skills gaps in emerging sectors.

7. The **Slovenian** adult education system, which is overseen by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, offers comprehensive programmes for upskilling the workforce. The Slovenian Qualifications Framework and the Lifelong Learning Strategy serve as a guideline for the quality and relevance of the programmes. Funding is provided by the state, regional governments and the EU, with priority given to disadvantaged groups. Quality control includes accreditation, national standards and programme evaluations.

8. The **Irish** Further Education and Training (FET) system, administered by SOLAS, supports workforce upskilling, social inclusion and bridging skills gaps. Based on the Further Education and Training Act 2013 and the FET Strategy, funding is mainly provided by the state, with additional support from the EU. Quality assurance includes planning, funding oversight and monitoring, with the challenge of maintaining programme relevance in the face of changing job requirements.

9. **Portugal**'s adult education system is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the IEFP and the DGERT. Programs such as POCH, which is funded by the EU, focus on skills development and social inclusion. DGERT accreditation ensures compliance with programme standards and adaptation to the labour market. The challenges are to maintain the efficiency and adaptability of the system in a rapidly changing economy.

10. **Finland** has a well-established adult education system, led by the Ministry of Education and Culture, with initiatives such as the adult education Allowance and student loan guarantees. Funding sources include state, regional and employer contributions, with a focus on developing vocational and technical skills. Quality assurance is achieved through accreditation, competency frameworks and program assessments. However, the recent removal of the adult education grant could make access to training opportunities more difficult.

The report also outlines the different national approaches to ALE in European countries and highlights several key strategies and challenges:

- **Individual Learning Accounts.** Some countries have introduced ILAs to provide financial support and incentives for adult education and training. Examples include Malta's "Get Qualified" programme, France's "Compte Personnel de Formation" and the Netherlands' "STAP Budget" These accounts aim to increase adult participation in lifelong learning and skills development.

Co-funded by
the European Union

- **Governance and cooperation**. ALE systems are usually steered by coordinated efforts of different ministries, authorities and social partners, including employers' organizations and trade unions. This collaborative structure helps to align ALE programmes with labour market needs, ensure the relevance of training and improve workforce integration.

- **Quality assurance**. National qualification frameworks and accreditation procedures are used in various countries (e.g. Cyprus and the Netherlands) to ensure high standards in ALE programmes. These frameworks ensure that training meets certain quality criteria and is relevant to industry needs.

- **Funding sources.** ALE funding is based on a mix of public funds, EU support (such as the European Social Fund) and contributions from employers and individuals. Financial support is provided in the form of grants, vouchers and loans to reduce barriers to participation and make ALE more accessible to different population groups.

- **Focus areas**. ALE strategies typically focus on upskilling and reskilling to meet the changing needs of the workforce, improving digital skills, supporting disadvantaged groups and smoother transitions between education and employment pathways.

- **Ongoing challenges**. Despite these initiatives, challenges remain in some countries, including low adult participation in VET, gaps in digital skills and fragmentation of ALE systems. Policy reforms and new programmes are being introduced to address these issues and improve overall effectiveness.

In summary, the European countries included in this study have taken different and tailored approaches to improving their ALE systems through financial incentives, management frameworks, quality standards and targeted programmes. However, further improvements are needed to ensure equitable access, increase participation and meet the changing demands of the digital and knowledge economy.

## ANNEX 1

## 1. Introduction

Given the dynamic changes in the global labour market, adult education has become an inseparable part of personal and professional development. In order to respond effectively to the needs of today's society, reliable knowledge about participation in different forms of education is required. This report, produced as part of the RALExILA project, aims to comprehensively analyse the situation in the field of adult learning in 10 selected European Union countries: Ireland, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland.

The RALExILA project proposes a robust approach to the development of adult learning registers across Europe. We anticipate that our efforts will evolve into a common model for improving Adult Education and Learning (ALE) quality, facilitating register implementation at national level and promoting knowledge exchange between different professionals. This will enable a better understanding of the needs and motivations of adults who choose to engage in further education, as well as the identification of needs in the field of Individual Learning Account (ILA).

In this analysis, a detailed analysis of data on participation in ALE is carried out, focusing on the breakdown by gender, educational level, occupational status and occupation. This analysis makes it possible to identify both general trends and differences between countries.

**Objectives of the report**

To describe the current state of adult education in selected EU countries: The analysis includes quantitative aspects of participation in education, such as the popularity of different forms of education.

To identify trends and differences in participation in different forms of education: The comparative analysis enables the identification of general trends in participation in ALE in EU countries, as well as differences between individual countries resulting from differences in educational policies and cultural and socio-economic factors.

**Methodology of the study**

Data from Eurostat was used to carry out the analysis. The selected data was subjected to a detailed statistical analysis, which made it possible to identify significant trends and relationships.

This study uses data from 2007 to 2022. The analysis of formal and non-formal education covers the years 2007, 2011, 2016 and 2022, while informal education is examined for 2007, 2016 and 2022.

According to Eurostat, informal education includes a variety of forms of learning, including knowledge shared by family, friends or colleagues, the use of printed materials and electronic devices, participation in guided tours of museums or historical sites and visits to learning centers, including libraries.

**Structure of the report**

The analysis consists of several chapters. The chapters present the results of the analysis of data on participation in ALE in the individual EU countries. The last chapter contains final conclusions and recommendations for the development of adult learning in Europe.

This analysis is an important contribution to the development of research on ALE in Europe. The results of the analysis presented provide valuable information that can be used to develop effective strategies for the development of ILA.

The chart above shows that in most EU countries, females were more likely to participate in formal education than men. In the European Union, females had higher participation rates in all years studied and the gender gap increased over time. In some countries, such as Ireland and the Netherlands, female participation in formal education increased significantly, while in others, such as France and Cyprus, the gender gap was less pronounced. Furthermore, in countries such as Finland, females have consistently higher participation rates, although the gender gap narrowed between 2016 and 2022. This data shows that while the general trend in the European Union shows a higher participation of females in formal education, patterns vary from country to country and from time to time.



Percentage participation rate in non-formal and education and training by sex
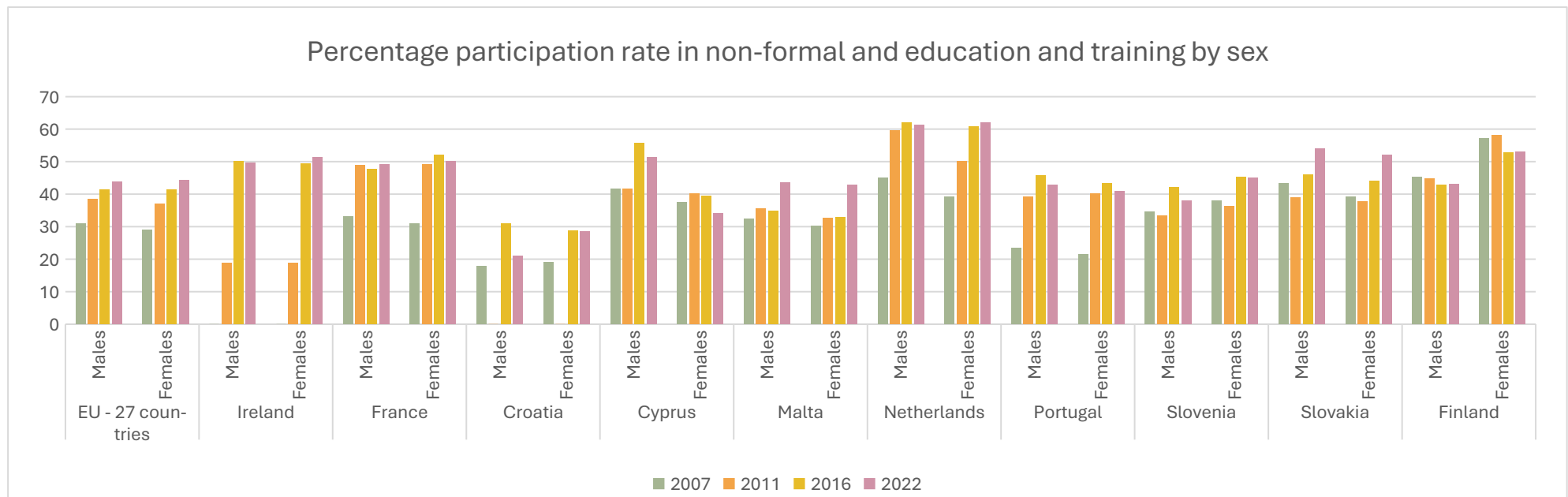
The graph above shows that males and females in the EU participate in non-formal learning to a similar extent, even if in some years the participation of females was slightly higher.

In countries such as France and Finland, female participation was consistently higher than male participation. In Finland, the gender gap was particularly pronounced, with females having an advantage in all years studied. In the Netherlands and Slovenia, the patterns were more complex, with gender differences depending on the year. In Ireland and Cyprus, the ratios were balanced, although in some years there were slight advantages for one group or the other.

It is worth noting that in some countries, such as Portugal and Slovakia, males had slightly higher participation rates in the more recent data, which may indicate a reversal of previous trends. In Finland, while females were more active in earlier years, the data for 2022 shows that the gender gap has narrowed. Overall, these data illustrate the strong participation of both genders in non-formal education, but also highlight the differences between countries, which may be due to local policies, educational culture and the specific needs of the labour market.

Percentafe participation rate in informal education and training by sex
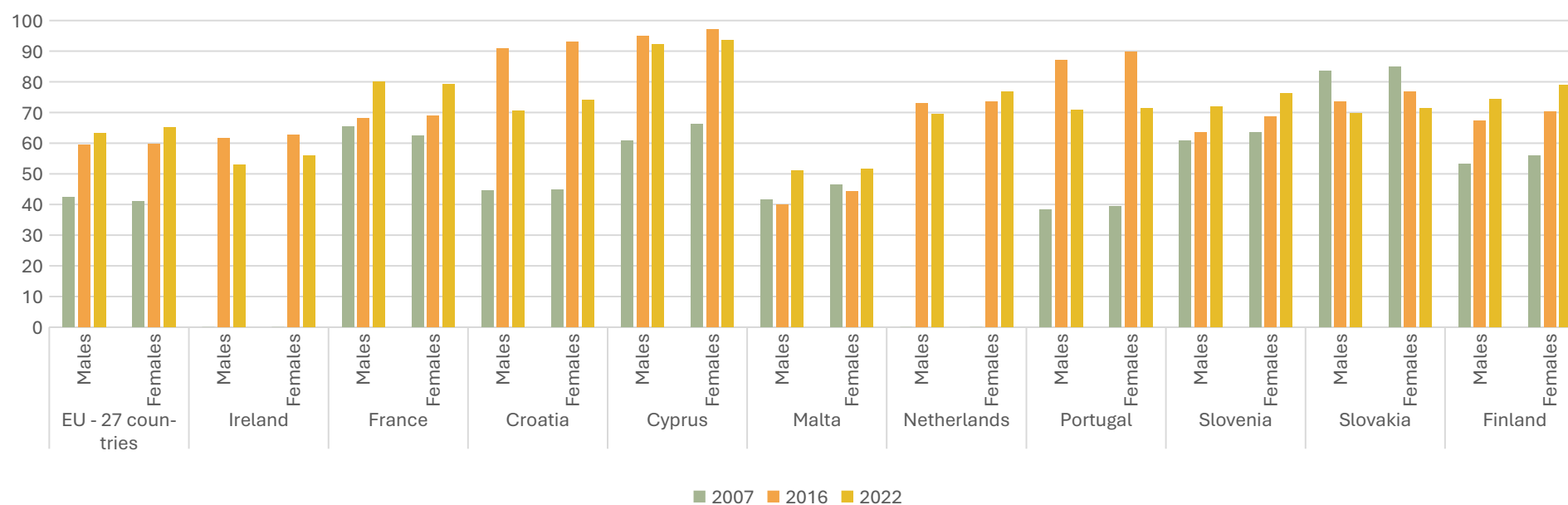
The chart above shows that in most cases females have slightly higher participation rates than males, especially in the most recent data. Across the European Union, both males and females have steadily increased their participation in informal learning. In countries such as France, Cyprus and Finland, females have significantly higher participation rates than males. In the Netherlands and Slovakia, however, data shows more even gender differences in participation.

In Finland, females consistently participate in informal learning more often than males, and this difference has widened in recent years. In Cyprus, the participation rate of female is even higher despite the high participation of both genders, which could indicate significant support for informal learning by females. In countries such as Croatia and Slovakia, the data shows that although females are more active in informal learning, the gender gap is not as pronounced as it was in the past.

This data underlines the importance of informal learning as an important form of skills development in Europe, although there are clear differences between genders and between countries.

**Conclusion**

Data from the European Union illustrates different gender-specific patterns in participation rates in different forms of education — formal, non-formal and informal education — over the years.

**Formal education:** Females consistently show higher participation rates in formal education than males. This gender gap has widened over time, with a clear increase in countries such as Ireland and the Netherlands. In contrast, the gap is less pronounced in France and Cyprus, and in Finland the gap has narrowed between 2016 and 2022. Overall, females are leading the way in formal education, although patterns vary by country.

**Non-formal education:** Participation rates in non-formal learning are generally balanced between the genders in the EU, with females often being slightly more active. In countries such as France and Finland, female participation is higher, while in Portugal and Slovakia males have recently overtaken women. The trends reflect a strong engagement of both genders, influenced by local factors.

**Informal education:** Females often participate more in informal learning than men, although there have been significant differences in recent years. In countries such as France, Cyprus and Finland, female participation is higher, while in countries such as Croatia and Slovakia the gap is narrowing. This demonstrates the importance of informal learning for skills development and highlights the gender gap across Europe.

The data highlights the persistent gender gap in educational participation, with females generally more involved in formal and informal learning. However, the differences between countries suggest that local factors play a crucial role in shaping these trends.

## 4. Participation rate in education and training by educational attainment level

This analysis examines the trends in participation in formal and non-formal education at different levels of education in the European Union from 2007 to 2022. The levels of education are divided into different groups:

- Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

- Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)

- Tertiary education (levels 5-8)

The study examines how people at these different levels engage in education and training. By analysing these trends, the study aims to highlight growing areas of interest, identify differences between countries and understand how participation changes with educational background.

Percentage participation rate in formal education and training by educational attainment level
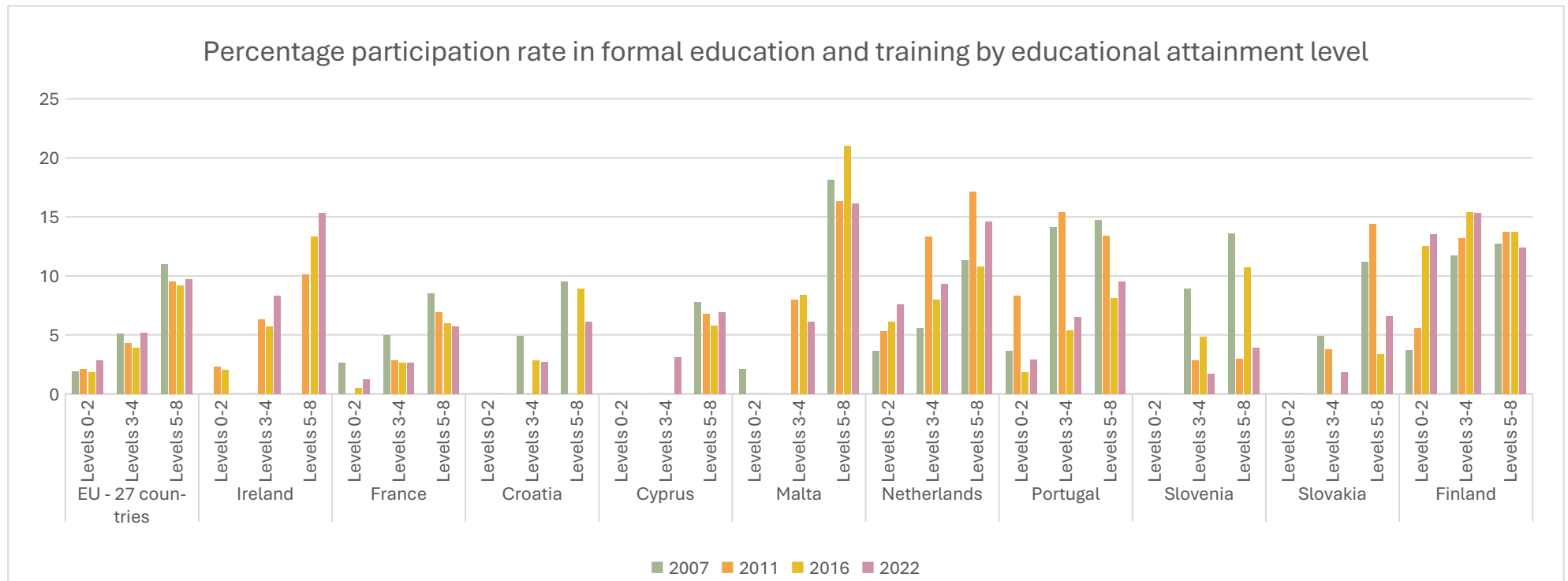
It can be concluded from the above chart that people with education levels 0-2 and 3-4 show a growing interest in further formal education. The proportion of people with education levels 0-2 increased from 1.9% in 2007 to 2.8% in 2022. At the same time, the proportion of people with education level 3-4 has also increased, particularly

in countries such as Ireland, where there has been an increase from 6.3% in 2011 to 8.3% in 2022. The trend for people with education levels 5-8 is more mixed. The overall share of formal education at these levels has fallen from 11.0% in 2007 to 9.7% in 2022. However, in some countries, such as Ireland, this share has increased significantly, which could indicate greater investment in professional development and formal education. Other countries, such as France and Malta, show more volatile developments in this regard. To summarise, the general trend is a growing interest in formal training among people with lower levels of education, while the participation of people with higher levels of education in education and training is less consistent, with differences between countries

RALExILA

NATIONAL REGISTERS OF ADULT LEARNING
TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS



Percentage participation rate in non-formal education and training by educational attainment level
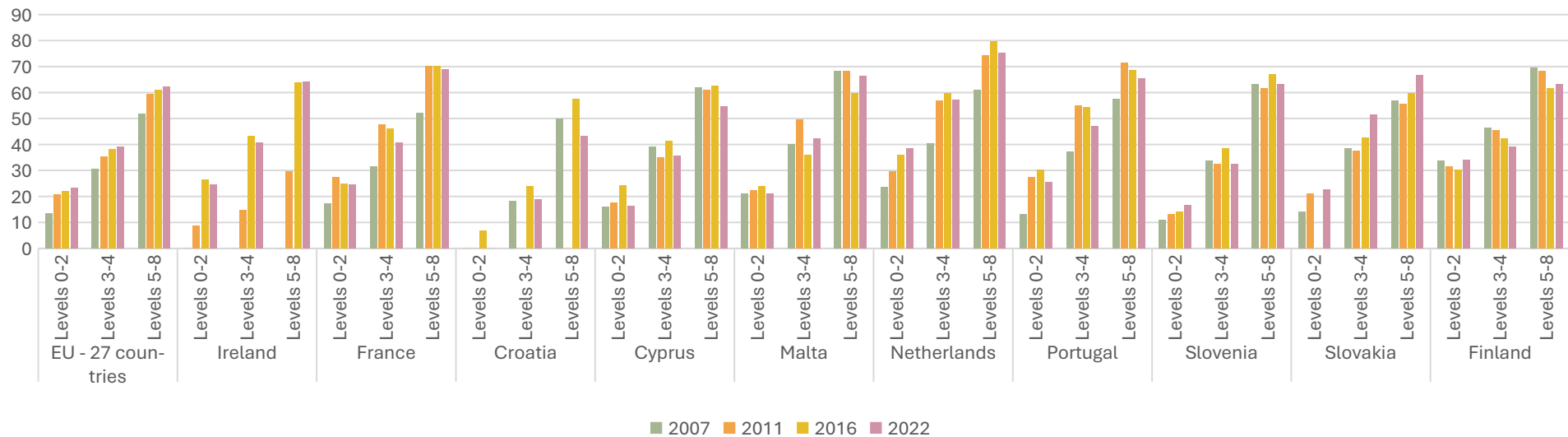
The chart above shows that participation in non-formal education and training has increased significantly at all levels of education in the European Union. Different trends can be observed in the individual countries. In Ireland, for example, the participation of people with education levels 0-2 and 3-4 in non-formal education increased significantly between 2011 and 2016 but remained stable until 2022. The participation of people with education levels 5-8 in non-formal education has

Co-funded by
the European Union

increased significantly in this country in recent years. In France, while overall participation is high, we have observed a decline in recent years among people with education levels 3-4, while participation among people with education levels 5-8 remains high.

In countries such as Malta and the Netherlands, participation in non-formal education is highest among people with education levels 5-8. In these countries, people with less levels of education also participate in non-formal education, but to a lesser extent than people with education levels 5-8.

Throughout the European Union and in all countries, participation in non-formal education and training has increased significantly at all levels of education. Participation is particularly high among people with education levels 5-8, and the differences between countries indicate different approaches to non-formal education.

# Percentage participation rate in informal education and training by educational attainment level
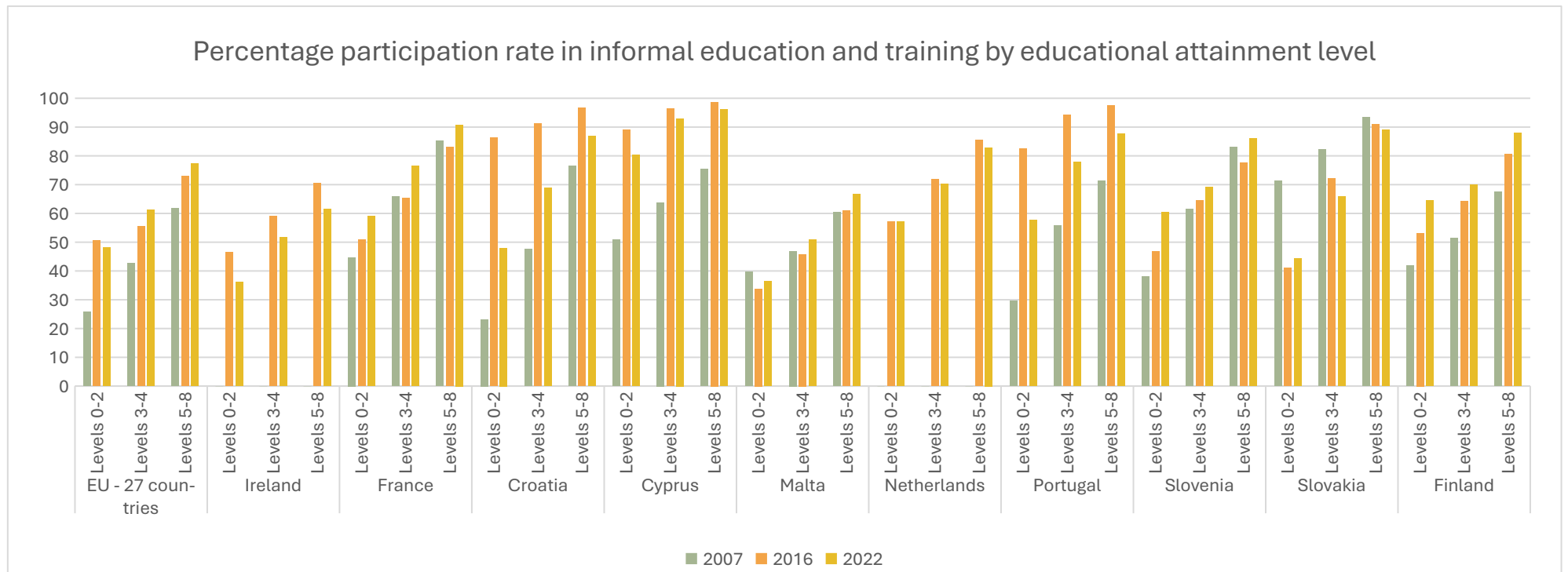


The chart above shows that, at EU level, participation in informal education has increased overall at all levels of education. Different trends can also be seen in the individual countries. In Ireland, for example, the proportion of people at all levels of education has fallen. In France and Portugal, the proportion of people with all levels

of education in informal education has increased. In countries such as Cyprus, Finland and France, the high participation of people with education levels 3-4 and 5-8 in informal education has remained stable and continues to increase. In many countries, such as Croatia, Cyprus, Portugal and Slovakia, participation in informal education has fallen slightly at all levels of education.

To summarise, the general trend in the EU shows a growing interest in informal education at all levels of education, with the highest participation among people with an education level of 5-8. This increase can be observed in most of the countries surveyed, although specific results may vary depending on the available data and particular national circumstances.

**Conclusion**

This analysis provides insights into the trends in participation in formal, non-formal and informal education at different levels of education in the European Union from 2007 to 2022, highlighting the differences in participation patterns across countries. By examining these trends, we aim to understand the shifts in educational engagement and identify key factors influencing these changes.

**Formal education:** The analysis shows a growing interest in formal education among individuals with education levels 0-2 across the EU. This trend reflects increased participation in education related to these levels of education. In contrast, the participation of people with education levels 5-8 varies greatly. While some countries have seen increases in this area, the overall trend is mixed and indicates fluctuating patterns of participation in advanced formal education.

**Non-formal education:** Participation in non-formal education has generally increased at all levels of education in the EU. People with education levels 5-8 show particularly high participation rates. However, trends vary from country to country, with some countries experiencing significant growth and others showing stable or declining trends. These differences illustrate the different approaches to non-formal education and suggest that while there is a general upward trend, country-specific factors have a significant impact on participation rates.

**Informal education:** Participation in informal education has also steadily increased in the EU at all levels of education. This form of learning is crucial for the continuous development of skills and personal development. The trend shows a steady increase in participation, although the extent of this participation varies from country to country. The differences in participation in informal education reflect the varying levels of importance and support for such learning opportunities in different regions.

In summary, the data show rising trends in educational participation across all formal, non-formal and informal learning categories. While engagement is generally increasing, the specifics vary by country and educational level. These findings underscore the need for tailored education strategies to address regional differences and support continued growth in all forms of education.

## 5. Participation rate in education and training by labour status

The aim of this analysis is to examine the participation of different occupational groups in formal, non-formal and informal education in the countries of the European Union in the years 2007-2022. The analysis focuses on differentiating the level of participation in education according to occupational status: employed (Employed), unemployed (Unemployed) and people outside the labour market (Outside). In this way, important trends and differences in access to education and motivation to improve qualifications in different social groups can be identified. Differences between countries are also analysed, allowing a better understanding of the impact of education policy and market conditions on participation in different forms of education.

Percentage participation rate in formal education and training by labour status
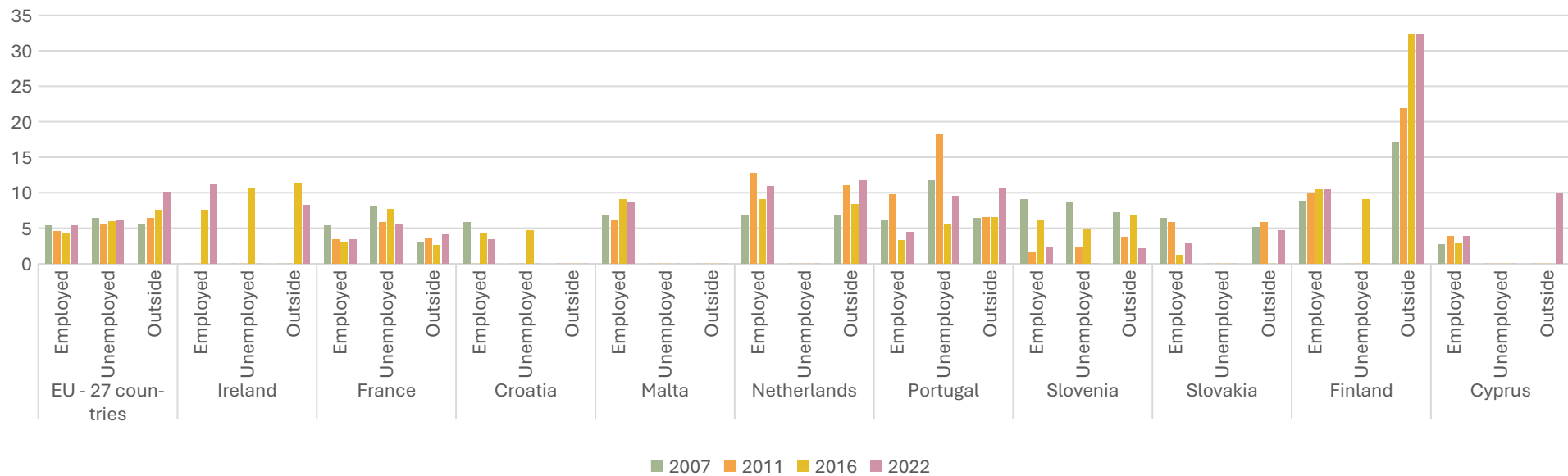
The chart above show that there has been a general increase in this form of education among people outside the labour market in the European Union. The participation of these individuals has increased significantly in recent years, indicating a growing motivation to learn among this group.

Among those in employment, participation in formal education has been relatively stable, with small increases and decreases in individual countries. In some countries, such as Ireland and the Netherlands, there has been a significant increase in recent years, but the overall trend is less dynamic than for the group outside the labour market. In most countries, the unemployed also participate in formal education, but their participation is subject to greater fluctuations than that of the employed and those outside the labour market. In some countries, such as Portugal and France, the participation of the unemployed in formal education is declining, while in others it is increasing.

Overall, participation in formal education has increased the most among the inactive, which could indicate better access to and a greater need for education among this group.

Percentage participation rate in non-formal education and training by labour status
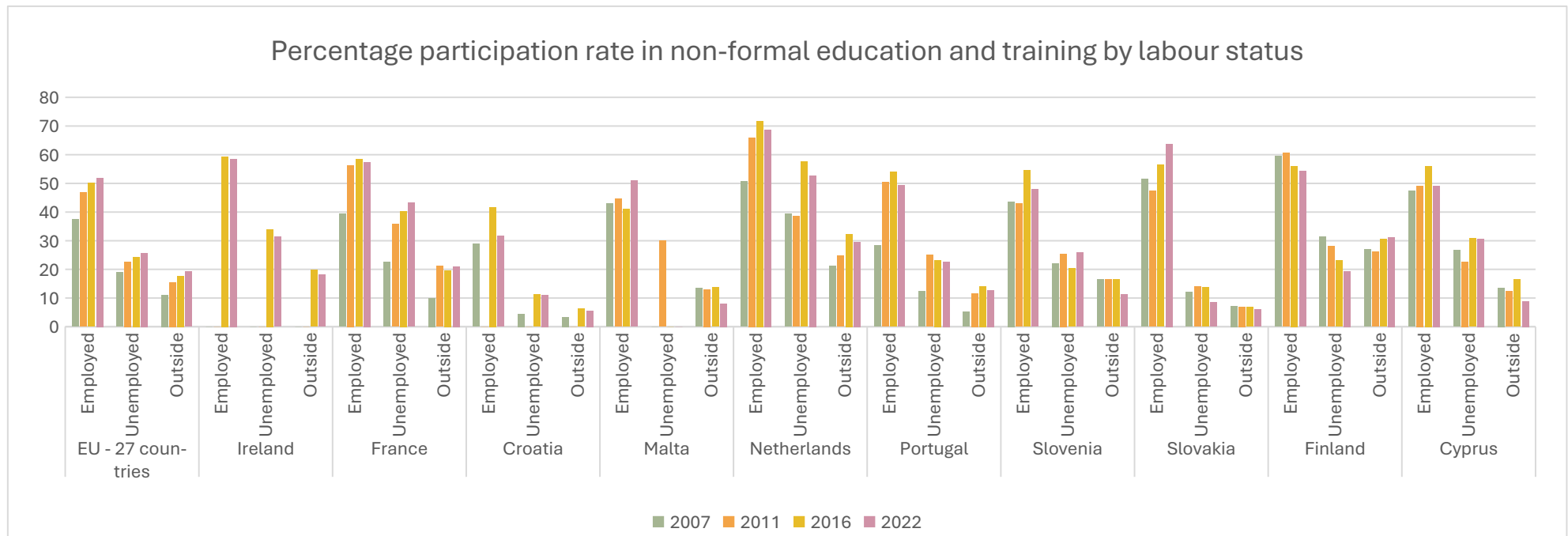
The graph above shows that, at EU level, participation in non-formal education has increased overall among people in employment who regularly attend such education. The share of employed people in this form of education has increased and is stable, indicating the growing importance of non-formal education among the employed. Unemployed people and those who are not in the labour market have also increased their participation, albeit to a lesser extent.

The trends in the individual countries vary. In the Netherlands, for example, people in employment have the highest participation in non-formal education. In Finland, the participation of employed people in non-formal education is high but has been declining in recent years. In Ireland, data is only available for the last few years, where the proportion of people in employment has remained high. In countries such as Portugal and Cyprus, on the other hand, the participation of people in employment in non-formal education is relatively high, but somewhat volatile.

In summary, participation in non-formal education is increasing among the employed, stable among the unemployed and still relatively low among those not in the labour market. The growing interest of the employed in non-formal education indicates that this form of education is gaining in importance in connection with the development of professional skills and abilities.

Percentage participation rate in informal education and training by labour status
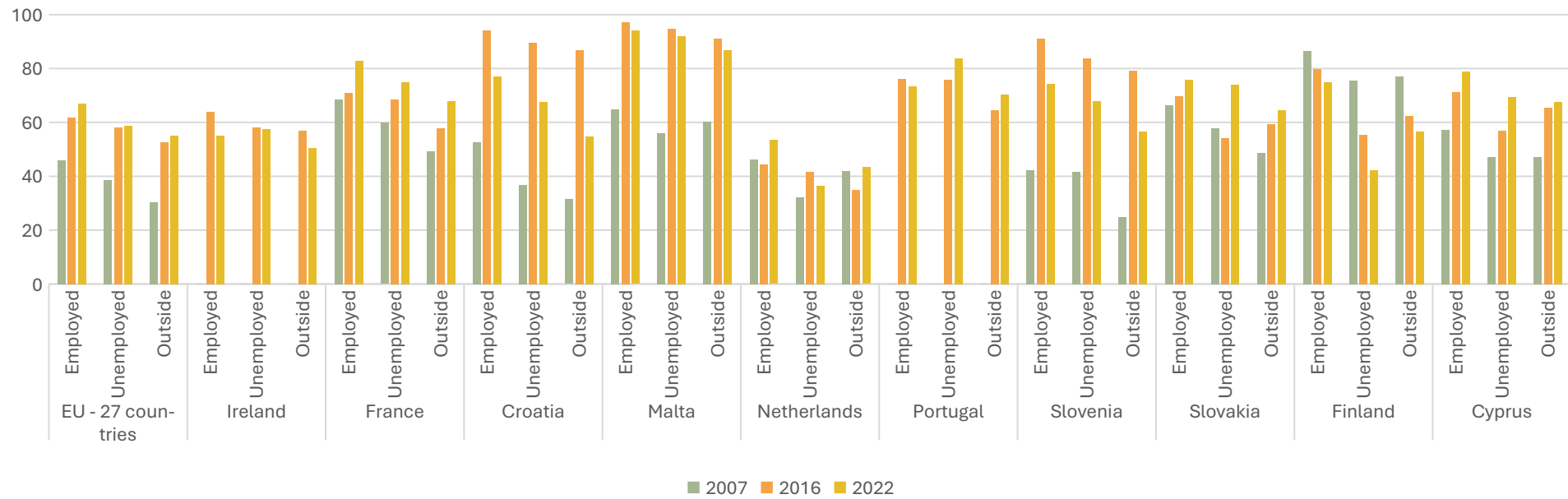
The chart above shows that engagement in this form of learning is increasing across the European Union, regardless of employment status. The proportion of people in employment has increased significantly, reflecting the growing importance of informal education for career development. There has also been a steady increase in engagement among the unemployed. Those outside the labour market have also increased their participation, albeit from a lower level.

Different trends can be observed in the individual countries. In France, the proportion of employed people in informal education has increased significantly, indicating a high level of interest in this form of learning. In Slovenia, Ireland, Croatia, Malta and Finland, there has been a decline in recent years, which could indicate a shift in the demand for education. In countries such as Malta and Croatia, both employed and unemployed people have high participation rates in informal education, which could indicate a particular emphasis on skills development. In Portugal, France and Cyprus, the data shows a stable, high level of engagement in informal education among employed people, while unemployed people and people outside the labour market also show considerable interest, albeit with smaller differences between years.

In summary, participation in informal education has increased across all employment groups, with a significant increase among the employed and a steady increase among the unemployed and people outside the labour market. This variation in participation indicates the growing value of informal education in different work and life contexts.

**Conclusion**

This analysis examines the trends in participation in formal, non-formal and informal education in different employment groups in the European Union from 2007 to 2022. The results show that employed, unemployed and people outside the labour market are engaged to different degrees.

**Formal education:** Participation in formal education has increased the most among those outside the labour market, indicating an increasing need for or access to education in this group. While participation among those in employment is stable and varies slightly by country, Ireland and the Netherlands have seen a notable increase in recent years. In contrast, the participation of the unemployed fluctuates more, and in some countries, such as Portugal and France, it is declining.

**Non-formal education:** In the area of non-formal education, participation among all employment groups has risen steadily. There has been a significant increase among the employed, which underlines the growing importance of non-formal learning for career progression. There has also been an increase in engagement among the unemployed, albeit to a lesser extent. For those not in the labour market, participation has increased from a lower base, but remains less pronounced compared to the employed. Country-specific trends vary, with engagement being high in some countries and more variable in others.

**Informal education:** Participation in informal education has increased across all groups, reflecting a wider recognition of its value for personal and professional development. For those in employment, informal learning is often integrated into ongoing professional development. Unemployed people are also increasingly participating in informal learning, probably to improve their employability. There is also growing participation among people outside the labour market, albeit at a lower level than among the employed, indicating the importance of informal learning outside the traditional work context.

Across the European Union, there is a clear upward trend in participation in all forms of education — formal, non-formal and informal — among the different employment groups. The most significant increase is in non-formal and informal learning among those in employment, underlining the crucial role of these forms of education in the development of professional skills. Formal education has increased the most among those not in employment, highlighting a shift towards continuous learning across different life stages and circumstances. These trends underline the importance of lifelong learning and adaptability in an evolving European workforce.

## 6. Participation rate in education and training by occupation

This analysis examines the participation of different occupational groups in formal, non-formal and informal education in the European Union. By examining the trends and patterns of engagement of different occupational groups, the study aims to show how access to and participation in these forms of education differ according to occupational status. The analysis focuses on four key occupational categories:

- managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals (MPT)

- clerical support workers, service, and sales workers (CSWS)

- skilled manual workers (SMW)
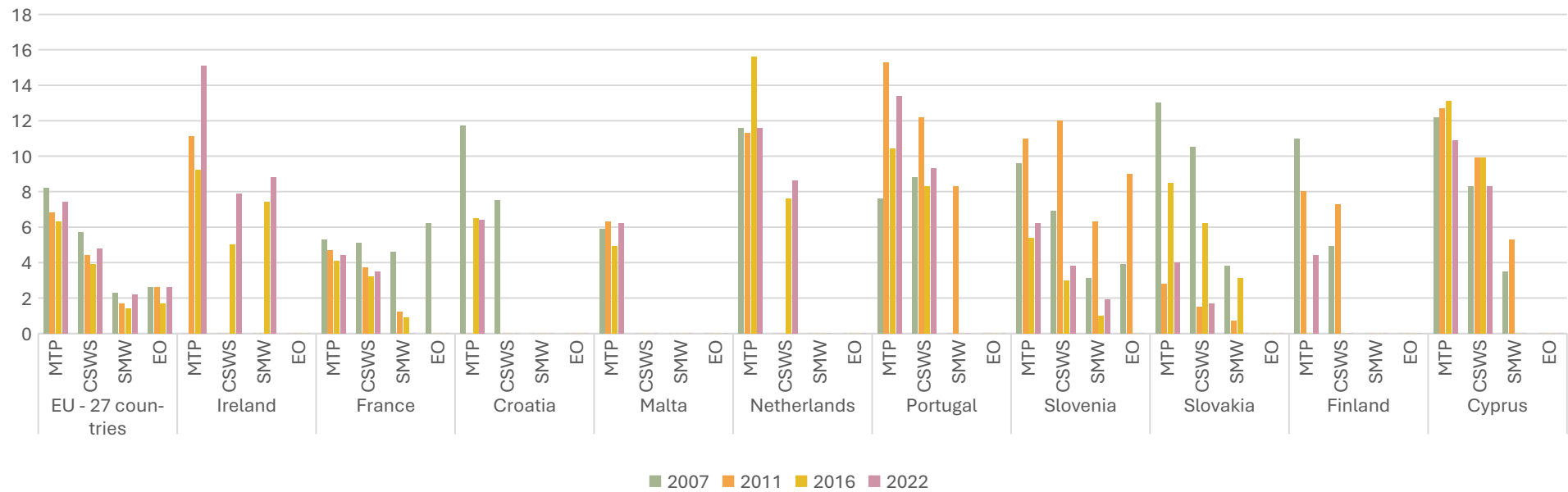
- elementary occupations (EO).

Understanding the differences between these groups, as well as the variations across EU countries, provides valuable insights into the use of educational opportunities across the workforce and highlights the broader implications for professional development and lifelong learning.

# Percentage participation rate and training by occupation



Legend: 2007, 2011, 2016, 2022

Categories across countries: EU - 27 countries, Ireland, France, Croatia, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Cyprus — each with MTP, CSWS, SMW, EO.

The chart above shows that in the EU, the labour force participation of individuals in managerial, professional and technical, and associate professional roles in formal education show relatively stable but low levels of participation, with a slight increase in recent years. The labour force participation of clerical workers, service, and sales

workers is lower, has increased slightly in recent years, but is still lower than that of higher occupations. Skilled workers and elementary occupations consistently have the lowest participation rates, although there has been a slight upward trend over time.

In countries such as Ireland, Portugal and the Netherlands, there has been a significant increase in formal education participation among the higher occupational groups, while in other country such as France, participation rates remain relatively stable or show little change. In Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia, the data is less consistent, which could reflect local conditions or changes in education provision.

Overall, participation in formal education and training is highest among individuals in higher professional positions and lowest among clerical, service, sales, and skilled manual workers. The differences between countries indicate different approaches to accessing and promoting formal education depending on occupational position.

Percentage participation rate in non-formal education and training by occupation
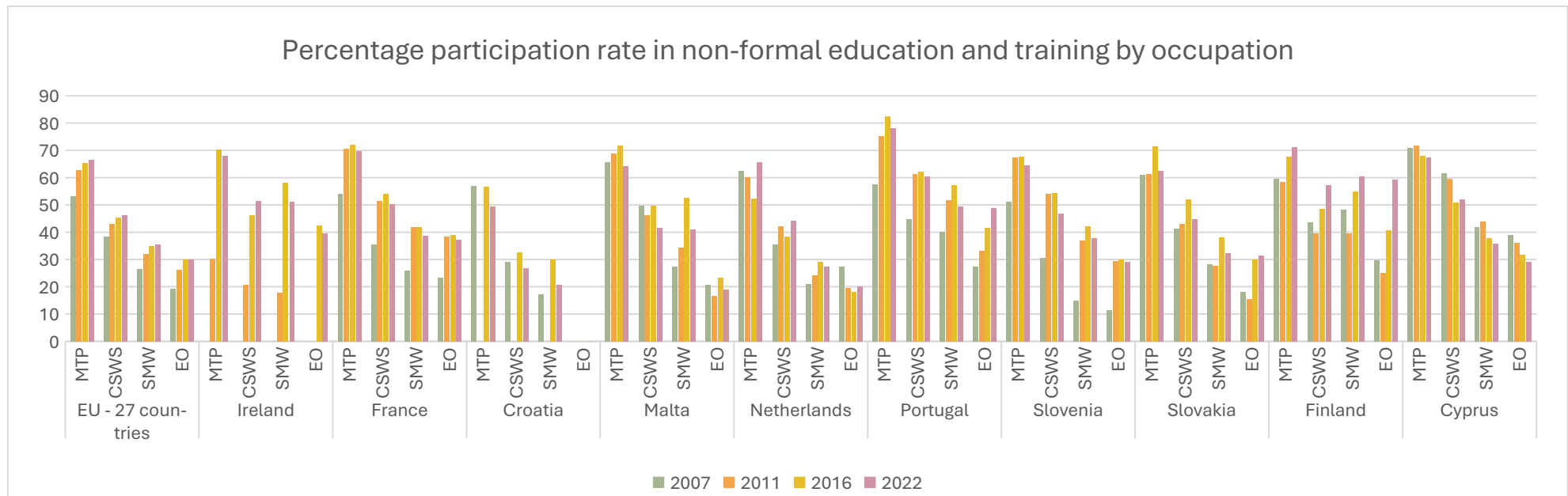
The above chart on participation in non-formal education and training shows remarkable differences between occupations. In the EU, managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals consistently have the highest participation rates, with an increase over time. Clerical support workers, service and sales workers follow with moderate and gradual increases in participation rates. Skilled manual workers and those in elementary occupations have lower participation rates compared to higher occupations, although both groups have seen a gradual increase in participation over the years.

In certain countries, such as Ireland and Portugal, high participation rates can be observed among managers and professionals, while significant fluctuations can be observed among clerical and skilled workers. Countries such as Finland and Malta show a relatively high and stable participation rate for higher skilled workers, while it is lower for elementary occupations. Furthermore, participation in non-formal education in Cyprus is declining in every occupation.

Overall, the data show that individuals in higher-level and managerial positions have higher and more stable participation rates in non-formal education and training than people in elementary occupations. The differences between countries reflect the different approaches and access to non-formal education opportunities depending on occupational status.

Percentage participation rate in informal education and training by occupation
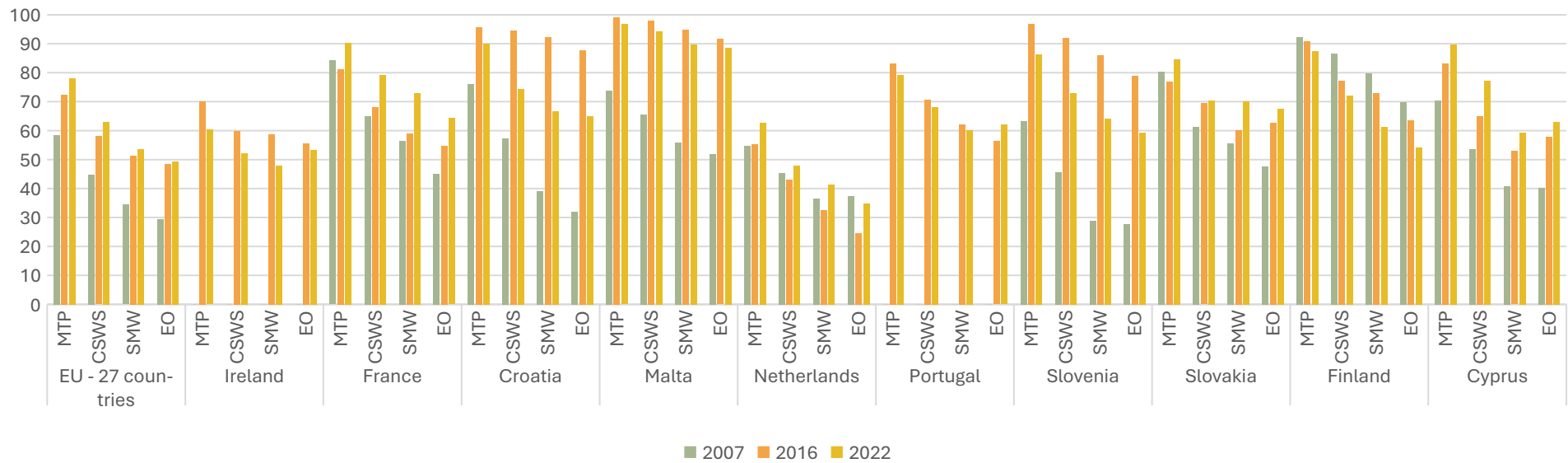
The above chart on participation in informal learning shows clear patterns in different occupations. In the EU, managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals consistently have the highest participation rates, with a significant increase between 2007 and 2022. The participation rates of clerical workers, service,

and sales workers also increased significantly over the years. Skilled manual workers and those in elementary occupations, show improvements, but have lower participation rates compared to higher occupations.

In certain countries such as France, Malta, Finland and Slovenia, participation rates among managers and professionals remain very high, indicating a strong commitment to informal learning. Clerical support workers and skilled manual workers in these countries also show considerable participation, but not as high as their managerial counterparts. In countries such as the Netherlands and Finland, different trends can be observed, with participation rates declining or increasing more slowly in some occupations. In the Netherlands, for example, participation in informal learning among skilled manual workers and those in elementary occupations has increased less than in other countries.

Overall, the data show that higher occupations have higher and more stable participation rates in informal learning, which is due to wider access to such opportunities and greater engagement. The differences between countries highlight the different levels of engagement and access to informal learning depending on occupational status.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of participation in formal, non-formal and informal education among different occupational groups in the European Union shows considerable differences between occupations and countries.

**Formal education:** Managers, professionals and technicians consistently show a relatively stable but low participation in formal education, with a slight increase in recent years. Clerical support workers, service, and sales workers have lower participation rates, although there has been a slight increase recently. Skilled manual workers and those in elementary occupations consistently have the lowest participation rates.

**Non-formal education:** In non-formal education, managers, professionals and technicians consistently show the highest participation rates, which have increased over time. Clerical support workers, service, and sales workers have seen moderate growth in participation but is still below the level of the higher occupational groups. Skilled manual workers and employees in elementary occupations have lower participation rates, but these are gradually increasing.

**Informal education:** In the area of informal education, managers, professionals and technicians again have the highest participation rates, with a significant increase between 2007 and 2022. Clerical, service and sales workers have also seen significant growth, although their participation rates remain below those of the higher occupations. Skilled manual workers and employees in elementary occupations have the lowest employment rates, although there has been some improvement here.

Overall, higher occupations have higher and more stable participation rates across all forms of education, probably due to better access and greater engagement. The differences between countries reflect different approaches and access to educational opportunities depending on occupational status.

## 7. Search for information on learning possibilities

This analysis examines trends in the search for information on learning opportunities in the European Union. By examining the patterns of search activity in different EU countries, the study aims to shed light on the interest in and accessibility of educational opportunities. The analysis focuses on the differences in search behaviour between countries, highlighting the growing interest in educational opportunities in some regions, while a decline is noted in others. Understanding these trends provides valuable insights into how citizens across the EU engage with information about education and training, reflecting broader shifts in educational priorities and access.

# RALExILA

**NATIONAL REGISTERS OF ADULT LEARNING**
**TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION**
**OF INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS**

## Percentage of searches for information about learning opportunities



Legend: 2007, 2011, 2016, 2022
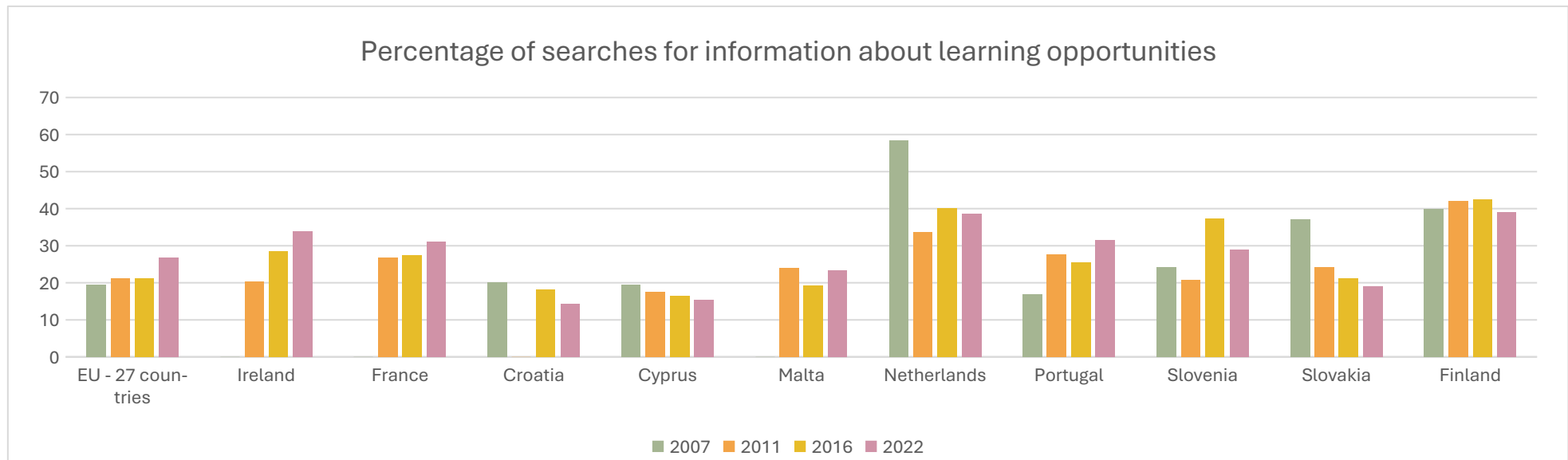
The above chart on searching for information on learning opportunities shows a growing trend across the EU. There are some noticeable patterns between countries. In Ireland, France and Portugal, the number of searches has increased in recent years, indicating an increased interest in learning opportunities. In contrast, countries such as Croatia, Cyprus and Slovakia have seen a decline in search activity, suggesting varying levels of engagement or a change in information-seeking behaviour.

In the Netherlands, search activity was initially high but declined in subsequent years, and there were also fluctuations in Portugal and Slovenia. In Finland, searches remain relatively high, with a slight decline towards the end of 2022.

Co-funded by
the European Union

Overall, while searches for learning opportunities have increased in the EU, the trends in individual countries show different patterns, indicating varying levels of engagement and changes in the availability or relevance of educational information.

# Conclusion

This comprehensive analysis of participation rates in formal, non-formal and informal education in the European Union provides valuable insights into trends, inequalities and influencing factors.

## Key findings:

**Rising participation**: Overall, there has been a steady increase in participation rates in all forms of education, reflecting the increasing importance of lifelong learning and skills development.

**Gender inequalities:** While females generally have higher participation rates in formal and informal education, there are differences between countries and levels of education.

**Educational level:** Participation rates differ according to educational level. People with a lower level of education often show a greater interest in formal education, while people with a higher level of education are more inclined towards non-formal and informal learning.

**Occupational factors:** Participation rates vary considerably between different occupational groups. Managers, professionals and technicians tend to have higher participation rates, while qualified workers and employees in elementary occupations often have lower rates.

**Country-specific differences**: There are significant differences in participation rates between countries due to the different cultural, economic and political contexts.

## Implications:

**Policy development:** the findings highlight the need for targeted policy measures to address inequalities and promote equal access to education and training.

**Lifelong learning:** The increasing importance of lifelong learning underlines the importance of providing diverse educational opportunities to meet the changing needs of the workforce.

**Skills development:** The data underscores the crucial role of education and training in developing essential skills for individuals and the economy.

**Regional differences:** The differences between countries highlight the need for tailored approaches to promote educational engagement and address specific challenges.

## Recommendation

**Investing in Adult Learning and Education (ALE):** Governments should prioritize funding and support for ALE programmes to equip adults with the skills and knowledge needed for lifelong learning and career development.

**Promote Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs):** Introduce ILA programmes that provide financial incentives for individuals to invest in their own education and training.

**Promote a culture of lifelong learning:** Encourage a culture of lifelong learning by promoting the benefits of continuous education and providing accessible and flexible learning opportunities.

**Tailor educational programmes:** Design educational programmes that address the diverse needs and learning styles of adult learners and incorporate both ALE and ILA principles.

Co-funded by
the European Union

By incorporating ALE and ILA, governments can create a more inclusive and equitable education system that empowers adults to reach their full potential.

## Supporting data

*Table 2. Percentage participation rate in formal education and training*

| TIME | 2007 | 2011 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | 5,4 | 5,1 | 5,0 | 6,3 |
| **Ireland** | : | 6,7 | 8,6 | 10,9 |
| **France** | 5,1 | 3,5 | 3,4 | 3,7 |
| **Croatia** | 4,5 | : | 4,0 | 3,6 |
| **Cyprus** | 2,9 | 3,7 | 3,0 | 4,6 |
| **Malta** | 5,2 | 4,4 | 7,2 | 7,5 |
| **Netherlands** | 6,8 | 12,3 | 9,0 | 11,2 |
| **Portugal** | 6,5 | 10,4 | 4,0 | 5,7 |
| **Slovenia** | 8,7 | 2,3 | 6,0 | 2,3 |
| **Slovakia** | 6,1 | 5,8 | 1,5 | 3,0 |
| **Finland** | 10,2 | 12,0 | 14,2 | 13,8 |

*Table 3. Percentage participation rate in non-formal education and training*

| TIME | 2007 | 2011 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | 30,0 | 37,7 | 41,4 | 44,0 |
| **Ireland** | 0 | 18,7 | 49,7 | 50,4 |
| **France** | 32,0 | 49,1 | 50,0 | 49,7 |
| **Croatia** | 18,4 | 0 | 29,8 | 24,8 |
| **Cyprus** | 39,5 | 40,9 | 47,2 | 42,5 |
| **Malta** | 31,3 | 34,2 | 33,8 | 43,2 |
| **Netherlands** | 42,1 | 54,8 | 61,5 | 61,6 |
| **Portugal** | 22,5 | 39,6 | 44,4 | 41,9 |
| **Slovenia** | 36,1 | 34,7 | 43,6 | 41,3 |
| **Slovakia** | 41,2 | 38,3 | 45,0 | 53,1 |
| **Finland** | 51,2 | 51,3 | 47,7 | 48,0 |

**Table 4.** *Percentage participation rate in informal education and training*

| TIME | 2007 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | 41,8 | 59,5 | 64,2 |
| **Ireland** | : | 62,1 | 54,4 |
| **France** | 63,8 | 68,5 | 79,5 |
| **Croatia** | 44,6 | 91,9 | 72,3 |
| **Cyprus** | 63,6 | 96,1 | 92,9 |
| **Malta** | 44,0 | 42,0 | 51,3 |
| **Netherlands** | : | 73,2 | 73,2 |
| **Portugal** | 38,9 | 88,5 | 71,1 |
| **Slovenia** | 62,0 | 66,0 | 74,1 |
| **Slovakia** | 84,1 | 75,1 | 70,7 |
| **Finland** | 54,6 | 68,7 | 76,4 |

**Table 5.** *Percentage participation rate in formal and education and training by sex*

| | TIME | 2007 | 2011 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | **Males** | 5,3 | 4,7 | 4,6 | 5,5 |
| | **Females** | 5,5 | 5,5 | 5,5 | 7,1 |
| **Ireland** | **Males** | : | 6,3 | 7,2 | 8,4 |
| | **Females** | : | 7,0 | 9,9 | 13,3 |
| **France** | **Males** | 5,6 | 3,2 | 2,5 | 3,2 |
| | **Females** | 4,6 | 3,8 | 4,2 | 4,1 |
| **Croatia** | **Males** | 5,3 | : | 3,5 | 2,4 |
| | **Females** | 3,7 | : | 4,4 | 4,8 |
| **Cyprus** | **Males** | 3,8 | 3,8 | 3,1 | 4,7 |
| | **Females** | 2,0 | 3,7 | 2,9 | 4,5 |
| **Malta** | **Males** | 4,8 | 4,2 | 5,8 | 6,0 |
| | **Females** | 5,6 | 4,6 | 8,6 | 9,2 |
| **Netherlands** | **Males** | 7,1 | 10,9 | 7,8 | 9,6 |
| | **Females** | 6,4 | 13,7 | 10,2 | 12,7 |
| **Portugal** | **Males** | 6,0 | 10,0 | 4,3 | 5,6 |
| | **Females** | 7,0 | 10,9 | 3,8 | 5,7 |
| **Slovenia** | **Males** | 7,7 | 1,9 | 5,4 | 2,0 |
| | **Females** | 9,7 | 2,6 | 6,7 | 2,7 |
| **Slovakia** | **Males** | 4,1 | 3,9 | : | 2,6 |
| | **Females** | 8,0 | 7,6 | 2,0 | 3,5 |
| **Finland** | **Males** | 8,2 | 9,2 | 12,4 | 11,9 |
| | **Females** | 12,2 | 14,8 | 16,1 | 15,8 |

Co-funded by
the European Union

**Table 6.** *Percentage participation rate in non-formal and education and training by sex*

| | TIME | 2007 | 2011 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EU - 27 countries | Males | 30,9 | 38,5 | 41,5 | 43,8 |
| | Females | 29,1 | 36,9 | 41,3 | 44,2 |
| Ireland | Males | : | 18,8 | 50,0 | 49,5 |
| | Females | : | 18,7 | 49,4 | 51,2 |
| France | Males | 33,1 | 49,0 | 47,7 | 49,2 |
| | Females | 31,0 | 49,2 | 52,1 | 50,1 |
| Croatia | Males | 17,8 | : | 30,9 | 21,0 |
| | Females | 19,0 | : | 28,7 | 28,6 |
| Cyprus | Males | 41,6 | 41,7 | 55,6 | 51,4 |
| | Females | 37,5 | 40,2 | 39,4 | 34,2 |
| Malta | Males | 32,3 | 35,6 | 34,7 | 43,5 |
| | Females | 30,3 | 32,7 | 32,9 | 42,9 |
| Netherlands | Males | 45,0 | 59,5 | 62,1 | 61,2 |
| | Females | 39,3 | 50,1 | 60,8 | 62,0 |
| Portugal | Males | 23,3 | 39,1 | 45,7 | 42,9 |
| | Females | 21,6 | 40,1 | 43,2 | 40,9 |
| Slovenia | Males | 34,5 | 33,3 | 42,2 | 37,9 |
| | Females | 37,9 | 36,3 | 45,2 | 45,0 |
| Slovakia | Males | 43,4 | 38,9 | 46,1 | 54,1 |
| | Females | 39,1 | 37,7 | 43,9 | 52,1 |
| Finland | Males | 45,2 | 44,7 | 42,8 | 43,1 |
| | Females | 57,2 | 58,1 | 52,8 | 53,1 |

**Table 7.** *Percentage participation rate in informal education and training by sex*

| | TIME | 2007 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EU - 27 countries | Males | 42,5 | 59,3 | 63,2 |
| | Females | 41,0 | 59,8 | 65,1 |
| Ireland | Males | : | 61,6 | 53,0 |
| | Females | : | 62,7 | 55,8 |
| France | Males | 65,5 | 68,0 | 80,0 |
| | Females | 62,3 | 69,0 | 79,1 |
| Croatia | Males | 44,5 | 90,9 | 70,5 |
| | Females | 44,8 | 93,0 | 74,1 |
| Cyprus | Males | 60,9 | 94,9 | 92,2 |
| | Females | 66,2 | 97,1 | 93,5 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Malta** | **Males** | 41,5 | 39,9 | 51,0 |
| | **Females** | 46,4 | 44,2 | 51,5 |
| **Netherlands** | **Males** | : | 72,9 | 69,4 |
| | **Females** | : | 73,4 | 76,9 |
| **Portugal** | **Males** | 38,3 | 87,1 | 70,9 |
| | **Females** | 39,5 | 89,8 | 71,4 |
| **Slovenia** | **Males** | 60,7 | 63,4 | 72,0 |
| | **Females** | 63,4 | 68,7 | 76,3 |
| **Slovakia** | **Males** | 83,5 | 73,4 | 69,8 |
| | **Females** | 84,8 | 76,8 | 71,5 |
| **Finland** | **Males** | 53,3 | 67,2 | 74,2 |
| | **Females** | 55,9 | 70,2 | 78,8 |

**Table 8.** *Percentage participation rate in formal education and training by educational attainment level*

| | **TIME** | **2007** | **2011** | **2016** | **2022** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | **Levels 0-2** | 1,9 | 2,1 | 1,8 | 2,8 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 5,1 | 4,3 | 3,9 | 5,2 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 11,0 | 9,5 | 9,2 | 9,7 |
| **Ireland** | **Levels 0-2** | - | 2,3 | 2,0 | - |
| | **Levels 3-4** | - | 6,3 | 5,7 | 8,3 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | - | 10,1 | 13,3 | 15,3 |
| **France** | **Levels 0-2** | 2,6 | - | 0,5 | 1,2 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 5,0 | 2,8 | 2,6 | 2,6 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 8,5 | 6,9 | 6,0 | 5,7 |
| **Croatia** | **Levels 0-2** | - | - | - | - |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 4,9 | - | 2,8 | 2,7 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 9,5 | - | 8,9 | 6,1 |
| **Cyprus** | **Levels 0-2** | - | - | - | - |
| | **Levels 3-4** | - | - | - | 3,1 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 7,8 | 6,8 | 5,8 | 6,9 |
| **Malta** | **Levels 0-2** | 2,1 | 0 | 0 | - |
| | **Levels 3-4** | - | 8,0 | 8,4 | 6,1 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 18,1 | 16,3 | 21,0 | 16,1 |
| **Netherlands** | **Levels 0-2** | 3,6 | 5,3 | 6,1 | 7,6 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 5,6 | 13,3 | 8,0 | 9,3 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 11,3 | 17,1 | 10,8 | 14,6 |
| **Portugal** | **Levels 0-2** | 3,6 | 8,3 | 1,8 | 2,9 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 14,1 | 15,4 | 5,4 | 6,5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Levels 5-8 | 14,7 | 13,4 | 8,1 | 9,5 |
| Slovenia | Levels 0-2 | - | - | - | 0 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 8,9 | 2,8 | 4,8 | 1,7 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 13,6 | 3,0 | 10,7 | 3,9 |
| Slovakia | Levels 0-2 | - | - | - | - |
| | Levels 3-4 | 4,9 | 3,8 | - | 1,8 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 11,2 | 14,4 | 3,4 | 6,6 |
| Finland | Levels 0-2 | 3,7 | 5,6 | 12,5 | 13,5 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 11,7 | 13,2 | 15,4 | 15,3 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 12,7 | 13,7 | 13,7 | 12,4 |

*Table 9. Percentage participation rate in non-formal education and training by educational attainment level*

| | TIME | 2007 | 2011 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EU - 27 countries | Levels 0-2 | 13,6 | 20,8 | 21,9 | 23,4 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 30,4 | 35,4 | 38,2 | 39,2 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 51,7 | 59,3 | 60,9 | 62,1 |
| Ireland | Levels 0-2 | 0 | 8,7 | 26,4 | 24,5 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 0 | 14,8 | 43,2 | 40,8 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 0 | 29,7 | 63,8 | 64,0 |
| France | Levels 0-2 | 17,2 | 27,4 | 24,7 | 24,6 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 31,4 | 47,6 | 46,1 | 40,7 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 52,1 | 70,3 | 70,2 | 68,8 |
| Croatia | Levels 0-2 | 0 | 0 | 6,8 | 0 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 18,1 | 0 | 24,0 | 18,8 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 49,8 | 0 | 57,6 | 43,1 |
| Cyprus | Levels 0-2 | 16,0 | 17,5 | 24,3 | 16,3 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 39,0 | 34,9 | 41,3 | 35,7 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 61,9 | 60,8 | 62,6 | 54,6 |
| Malta | Levels 0-2 | 21,1 | 22,2 | 23,8 | 21,2 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 40,2 | 49,6 | 35,8 | 42,4 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 68,3 | 68,2 | 59,8 | 66,2 |
| Netherlands | Levels 0-2 | 23,7 | 29,5 | 36,0 | 38,5 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 40,5 | 56,7 | 59,8 | 57,3 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 61,0 | 74,2 | 79,6 | 75,3 |
| Portugal | Levels 0-2 | 13,1 | 27,5 | 30,3 | 25,4 |
| | Levels 3-4 | 37,1 | 55,1 | 54,4 | 46,9 |
| | Levels 5-8 | 57,6 | 71,3 | 68,6 | 65,4 |
| Slovenia | Levels 0-2 | 10,9 | 13,0 | 14,2 | 16,5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Levels 3-4** | 33,7 | 32,5 | 38,5 | 32,3 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 63,3 | 61,7 | 67,0 | 63,1 |
| **Slovakia** | **Levels 0-2** | 14,2 | 20,9 | 0 | 22,7 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 38,4 | 37,4 | 42,6 | 51,3 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 56,8 | 55,7 | 59,6 | 66,7 |
| **Finland** | **Levels 0-2** | 33,6 | 31,4 | 30,2 | 34,1 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 46,3 | 45,5 | 42,4 | 39,0 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 69,4 | 68,3 | 61,5 | 63,1 |

***Table 10.** Percentage participation rate in informal education and training by educational attainment level*

| | TIME | 2007 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | **Levels 0-2** | 25,8 | 50,5 | 48,1 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 42,8 | 55,4 | 61,2 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 61,7 | 72,9 | 77,3 |
| **Ireland** | **Levels 0-2** | 0 | 46,5 | 36,1 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 0 | 59,0 | 51,6 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 0 | 70,5 | 61,4 |
| **France** | **Levels 0-2** | 44,7 | 50,8 | 59,1 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 65,8 | 65,4 | 76,6 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 85,3 | 83,1 | 90,8 |
| **Croatia** | **Levels 0-2** | 23,2 | 86,3 | 48,0 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 47,5 | 91,3 | 68,9 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 76,6 | 96,7 | 86,9 |
| **Cyprus** | **Levels 0-2** | 50,8 | 89,1 | 80,3 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 63,8 | 96,4 | 93,0 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 75,4 | 98,7 | 96,2 |
| **Malta** | **Levels 0-2** | 39,7 | 33,8 | 36,4 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 46,9 | 45,8 | 50,9 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 60,5 | 60,9 | 66,6 |
| **Netherlands** | **Levels 0-2** | 0 | 57,1 | 57,2 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 0 | 71,9 | 70,1 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 0 | 85,6 | 82,9 |
| **Portugal** | **Levels 0-2** | 29,7 | 82,5 | 57,6 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 55,8 | 94,2 | 77,8 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 71,2 | 97,5 | 87,7 |
| **Slovenia** | **Levels 0-2** | 38,0 | 46,8 | 60,4 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 61,5 | 64,5 | 69,1 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 83,0 | 77,6 | 86,1 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Slovakia** | **Levels 0-2** | 71,3 | 41,1 | 44,4 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 82,3 | 72,2 | 65,9 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 93,3 | 90,9 | 89,0 |
| **Finland** | **Levels 0-2** | 41,8 | 53,2 | 64,5 |
| | **Levels 3-4** | 51,4 | 64,2 | 69,9 |
| | **Levels 5-8** | 67,5 | 80,5 | 88,0 |

*Table 11.* *Percentage participation rate in formal education and training by labour status*

| | **TIME** | **2007** | **2011** | **2016** | **2022** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | Employed | 5,3 | 4,6 | 4,2 | 5,4 |
| | Unemployed | 6,4 | 5,6 | 5,9 | 6,2 |
| | Outside | 5,6 | 6,4 | 7,5 | 10,1 |
| **Ireland** | Employed | - | - | 7,6 | 11,3 |
| | Unemployed | - | - | 10,7 | - |
| | Outside | - | - | 11,4 | 8,2 |
| **France** | Employed | 5,3 | 3,4 | 3,0 | 3,4 |
| | Unemployed | 8,1 | 5,8 | 7,7 | 5,5 |
| | Outside | 3,1 | 3,5 | 2,6 | 4,1 |
| **Croatia** | Employed | 5,8 | - | 4,3 | 3,4 |
| | Unemployed | - | - | 4,7 | 0 |
| | Outside | - | - | - | - |
| **Malta** | Employed | 6,8 | 6,1 | 9,1 | 8,6 |
| | Unemployed | - | - | - | - |
| | Outside | - | - | - | - |
| **Netherlands** | Employed | 6,8 | 12,8 | 9,0 | 10,9 |
| | Unemployed | - | - | - | - |
| | Outside | 6,8 | 11,0 | 8,4 | 11,7 |
| **Portugal** | Employed | 6,0 | 9,7 | 3,3 | 4,4 |
| | Unemployed | 11,7 | 18,3 | 5,5 | 9,5 |
| | Outside | 6,4 | 6,5 | 6,5 | 10,5 |
| **Slovenia** | Employed | 9,1 | 1,7 | 6,0 | 2,4 |
| | Unemployed | 8,7 | 2,3 | 4,9 | 0 |
| | Outside | 7,2 | 3,8 | 6,7 | 2,1 |
| **Slovakia** | Employed | 6,4 | 5,8 | 1,2 | 2,8 |
| | Unemployed | - | - | - | - |
| | Outside | 5,1 | 5,8 | - | 4,7 |
| **Finland** | Employed | 8,8 | 9,9 | 10,4 | 10,4 |
| | Unemployed | - | 0 | 9,1 | - |

|  | | 17,1 | 21,8 | 32,2 | 32,2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Outside | 17,1 | 21,8 | 32,2 | 32,2 |
| **Cyprus** | **Employed** | 2,7 | 3,9 | 2,8 | 3,9 |
| | **Unemployed** | - | - | - | - |
| | **Outside** | - | - | - | 9,9 |

*Table 12. Percentage participation rate in non-formal education and training by labour status*

| | **TIME** | **2007** | **2011** | **2016** | **2022** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | **Employed** | 37,5 | 46,8 | 50,1 | 51,9 |
| | **Unemployed** | 18,9 | 22,7 | 24,4 | 25,7 |
| | **Outside** | 11,1 | 15,5 | 17,7 | 19,2 |
| **Ireland** | **Employed** | - | - | 59,3 | 58,5 |
| | **Unemployed** | - | - | 34,0 | 31,3 |
| | **Outside** | - | - | 19,8 | 18,1 |
| **France** | **Employed** | 39,4 | 56,3 | 58,4 | 57,4 |
| | **Unemployed** | 22,5 | 35,7 | 40,3 | 43,2 |
| | **Outside** | 10,0 | 21,1 | 19,6 | 21,0 |
| **Croatia** | **Employed** | 28,9 | - | 41,7 | 31,7 |
| | **Unemployed** | 4,5 | - | 11,2 | 11,1 |
| | **Outside** | 3,3 | - | 6,3 | 5,5 |
| **Malta** | **Employed** | 43,0 | 44,6 | 41,0 | 50,9 |
| | **Unemployed** | - | 30,0 | - | - |
| | **Outside** | 13,4 | 13,0 | 13,7 | 8,0 |
| **Netherlands** | **Employed** | 50,7 | 66,0 | 71,8 | 68,7 |
| | **Unemployed** | 39,3 | 38,6 | 57,6 | 52,8 |
| | **Outside** | 21,2 | 24,8 | 32,3 | 29,6 |
| **Portugal** | **Employed** | 28,3 | 50,4 | 54,0 | 49,3 |
| | **Unemployed** | 12,3 | 25,0 | 23,2 | 22,6 |
| | **Outside** | 5,1 | 11,6 | 14,1 | 12,7 |
| **Slovenia** | **Employed** | 43,6 | 42,9 | 54,5 | 47,9 |
| | **Unemployed** | 22,1 | 25,5 | 20,3 | 25,8 |
| | **Outside** | 16,5 | 16,4 | 16,4 | 11,2 |
| **Slovakia** | **Employed** | 51,5 | 47,3 | 56,5 | 63,8 |
| | **Unemployed** | 12,1 | 14,0 | 13,7 | 8,4 |
| | **Outside** | 7,2 | 7,0 | 6,8 | 6,0 |
| **Finland** | **Employed** | 59,5 | 60,6 | 56,0 | 54,2 |
| | **Unemployed** | 31,3 | 28,1 | 23,1 | 19,4 |
| | **Outside** | 26,9 | 26,1 | 30,6 | 31,2 |
| **Cyprus** | **Employed** | 47,3 | 49,2 | 56,0 | 49,1 |

Co-funded by
the European Union

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployed | 26,7 | 22,6 | 30,8 | 30,7 |
| Outside | 13,6 | 12,3 | 16,4 | 8,8 |

*Table 13. Percentage participation rate in informal education and training by labour status*

| | TIME | 2007 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | **Employed** | 46,0 | 61,7 | 66,9 |
| | **Unemployed** | 38,6 | 58,1 | 58,7 |
| | **Outside** | 30,4 | 52,6 | 55,2 |
| **Ireland** | **Employed** | - | 63,9 | 55,1 |
| | **Unemployed** | - | 58,2 | 57,5 |
| | **Outside** | - | 56,9 | 50,6 |
| **France** | **Employed** | 68,5 | 71,0 | 82,9 |
| | **Unemployed** | 59,8 | 68,5 | 74,9 |
| | **Outside** | 49,2 | 57,7 | 68,0 |
| **Croatia** | **Employed** | 52,7 | 94,1 | 77,2 |
| | **Unemployed** | 36,8 | 89,7 | 67,6 |
| | **Outside** | 31,4 | 86,8 | 54,7 |
| **Malta** | **Employed** | 64,9 | 97,3 | 94,0 |
| | **Unemployed** | 55,9 | 94,9 | 92,0 |
| | **Outside** | 60,2 | 91,1 | 86,7 |
| **Netherlands** | **Employed** | 46,1 | 44,5 | 53,4 |
| | **Unemployed** | 32,1 | 41,6 | 36,4 |
| | **Outside** | 42,0 | 35,0 | 43,3 |
| **Portugal** | **Employed** | - | 76,1 | 73,4 |
| | **Unemployed** | - | 75,7 | 83,8 |
| | **Outside** | - | 64,6 | 70,3 |
| **Slovenia** | **Employed** | 42,3 | 91,1 | 74,3 |
| | **Unemployed** | 41,5 | 83,8 | 67,8 |
| | **Outside** | 25,0 | 79,3 | 56,5 |
| **Slovakia** | **Employed** | 66,4 | 69,6 | 75,9 |
| | **Unemployed** | 57,7 | 54,1 | 73,9 |
| | **Outside** | 48,7 | 59,4 | 64,4 |
| **Finland** | **Employed** | 86,5 | 79,8 | 74,8 |
| | **Unemployed** | 75,5 | 55,5 | 42,2 |
| | **Outside** | 77,0 | 62,4 | 56,5 |
| **Cyprus** | **Employed** | 57,3 | 71,3 | 79,0 |
| | **Unemployed** | 47,2 | 57,0 | 69,3 |
| | **Outside** | 47,0 | 65,4 | 67,6 |

*Table 14. Percentage participation rate and training by occupation*

| | TIME | 2007 | 2011 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | MTP | 8,2 | 6,8 | 6,3 | 7,4 |
| | CSWS | 5,7 | 4,4 | 3,9 | 4,8 |
| | SMW | 2,3 | 1,7 | 1,4 | 2,2 |
| | EO | 2,6 | 2,6 | 1,7 | 2,6 |
| **Ireland** | MTP | - | 11,1 | 9,2 | 15,1 |
| | CSWS | - | - | 5,0 | 7,9 |
| | SMW | - | - | 7,4 | 8,8 |
| | EO | - | - | - | - |
| **France** | MTP | 5,3 | 4,7 | 4,1 | 4,4 |
| | CSWS | 5,1 | 3,7 | 3,2 | 3,5 |
| | SMW | 4,6 | 1,2 | 0,9 | - |
| | EO | 6,2 | - | - | - |
| **Croatia** | MTP | 11,7 | - | 6,5 | 6,4 |
| | CSWS | 7,5 | - | - | - |
| | SMW | - | - | - | - |
| | EO | - | - | - | - |
| **Malta** | MTP | 5,9 | 6,3 | 4,9 | 6,2 |
| | CSWS | - | - | - | - |
| | SMW | - | - | - | - |
| | EO | - | - | - | - |
| **Netherlands** | MTP | 11,6 | 11,3 | 15,6 | 11,6 |
| | CSWS | - | - | 7,6 | 8,6 |
| | SMW | - | - | - | - |
| | EO | - | - | - | - |
| **Portugal** | MTP | 7,6 | 15,3 | 10,4 | 13,4 |
| | CSWS | 8,8 | 12,2 | 8,3 | 9,3 |
| | SMW | - | 8,3 | - | - |
| | EO | - | - | - | - |
| **Slovenia** | MTP | 9,6 | 11,0 | 5,4 | 6,2 |
| | CSWS | 6,9 | 12,0 | 3,0 | 3,8 |
| | SMW | 3,1 | 6,3 | 1,0 | 1,9 |
| | EO | 3,9 | 9,0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Slovakia** | MTP | 13,0 | 2,8 | 8,5 | 4,0 |
| | CSWS | 10,5 | 1,5 | 6,2 | 1,7 |
| | SMW | 3,8 | 0,7 | 3,1 | - |
| | EO | - | - | - | - |

| Finland | MTP | 11,0 | 8,0 | - | 4,4 |
|---------|------|------|-----|---|-----|
|  | CSWS | 4,9 | 7,3 | - | - |
|  | SMW | - | - | - | - |
|  | EO | - | - | - | - |
| Cyprus | MTP | 12,2 | 12,7 | 13,1 | 10,9 |
|  | CSWS | 8,3 | 9,9 | 9,9 | 8,3 |
|  | SMW | 3,5 | 5,3 | - | - |
|  | EO | - | - | - | - |

**Table 15.** *Percentage participation rate in non-formal education and training by occupation*

|  | TIME | 2007 | 2011 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| EU - 27 countries | MTP | 53,2 | 62,9 | 65,3 | 66,4 |
|  | CSWS | 38,5 | 43,0 | 45,4 | 46,2 |
|  | SMW | 26,4 | 31,9 | 34,8 | 35,6 |
|  | EO | 19,4 | 26,1 | 30,0 | 30,1 |
| Ireland | MTP | - | 30,4 | 70,4 | 68,1 |
|  | CSWS | - | 20,7 | 46,2 | 51,4 |
|  | SMW | - | 17,8 | 58,0 | 51,3 |
|  | EO | - | - | 42,4 | 39,7 |
| France | MTP | 54,1 | 70,6 | 72,0 | 69,7 |
|  | CSWS | 35,6 | 51,4 | 54,1 | 50,2 |
|  | SMW | 25,9 | 41,8 | 42,0 | 38,6 |
|  | EO | 23,2 | 38,3 | 39,0 | 37,4 |
| Croatia | MTP | 57,0 | - | 56,7 | 49,5 |
|  | CSWS | 29,1 | - | 32,5 | 26,7 |
|  | SMW | 17,2 | - | 30,0 | 20,8 |
|  | EO | - | - | - | - |
| Malta | MTP | 65,6 | 68,9 | 71,7 | 64,2 |
|  | CSWS | 49,8 | 46,2 | 49,6 | 41,6 |
|  | SMW | 27,4 | 34,2 | 52,7 | 40,9 |
|  | EO | 20,6 | 16,7 | 23,4 | 18,9 |
| Netherlands | MTP | 62,6 | 60,2 | 52,2 | 65,6 |
|  | CSWS | 35,6 | 42,1 | 38,5 | 44,1 |
|  | SMW | 20,9 | 24,3 | 29,2 | 27,4 |
|  | EO | 27,4 | 19,5 | 18,2 | 20,2 |
| Portugal | MTP | 57,5 | 75,1 | 82,4 | 78,2 |
|  | CSWS | 44,7 | 61,2 | 62,1 | 60,5 |
|  | SMW | 40,1 | 51,7 | 57,1 | 49,3 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **EO** | 27,4 | 33,1 | 41,7 | 48,8 |
| **Slovenia** | **MTP** | 51,3 | 67,5 | 67,8 | 64,4 |
| | **CSWS** | 30,6 | 54,0 | 54,4 | 46,7 |
| | **SMW** | 14,8 | 37,0 | 42,1 | 37,8 |
| | **EO** | 11,5 | 29,3 | 29,9 | 29,1 |
| **Slovakia** | **MTP** | 61,0 | 61,3 | 71,5 | 62,5 |
| | **CSWS** | 41,2 | 42,9 | 51,9 | 44,7 |
| | **SMW** | 28,3 | 27,6 | 38,2 | 32,4 |
| | **EO** | 18,1 | 15,6 | 30,0 | 31,5 |
| **Finland** | **MTP** | 59,7 | 58,3 | 67,7 | 71,1 |
| | **CSWS** | 43,7 | 39,5 | 48,5 | 57,2 |
| | **SMW** | 48,2 | 39,5 | 55,0 | 60,5 |
| | **EO** | 29,8 | 25,1 | 40,8 | 59,2 |
| **Cyprus** | **MTP** | 71,0 | 71,8 | 68,0 | 67,3 |
| | **CSWS** | 61,7 | 59,7 | 51,0 | 52,0 |
| | **SMW** | 41,8 | 44,0 | 37,7 | 35,7 |
| | **EO** | 38,9 | 36,0 | 31,7 | 29,2 |

**Table 16.** *Percentage participation rate in informal education and training by occupation*

| | TIME | 2007 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | **MTP** | 58,5 | 72,3 | 78,1 |
| | **CSWS** | 44,8 | 58,0 | 62,9 |
| | **SMW** | 34,4 | 51,4 | 53,6 |
| | **EO** | 29,4 | 48,4 | 49,5 |
| **Ireland** | **MTP** | - | 70,0 | 60,3 |
| | **CSWS** | - | 60,0 | 52,3 |
| | **SMW** | - | 58,6 | 47,9 |
| | **EO** | - | 55,7 | 53,3 |
| **France** | **MTP** | 84,2 | 81,2 | 90,4 |
| | **CSWS** | 65,0 | 68,0 | 79,3 |
| | **SMW** | 56,5 | 59,1 | 73,0 |
| | **EO** | 45,2 | 54,8 | 64,3 |
| **Croatia** | **MTP** | 76,0 | 95,7 | 90,0 |
| | **CSWS** | 57,2 | 94,6 | 74,5 |
| | **SMW** | 39,2 | 92,4 | 66,6 |
| | **EO** | 32,0 | 87,9 | 64,9 |
| **Malta** | **MTP** | 73,7 | 99,2 | 96,7 |
| | **CSWS** | 65,5 | 98,1 | 94,4 |
| | **SMW** | 56,0 | 95,0 | 89,7 |
| | **EO** | 51,8 | 91,6 | 88,6 |
| **Netherlands** | **MTP** | 54,8 | 55,2 | 62,7 |
| | **CSWS** | 45,4 | 43,1 | 47,9 |
| | **SMW** | 36,5 | 32,5 | 41,4 |
| | **EO** | 37,4 | 24,6 | 34,9 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Portugal** | **MTP** | - | 83,3 | 79,2 |
| | **CSWS** | - | 70,8 | 68,2 |
| | **SMW** | - | 62,1 | 60,1 |
| | **EO** | - | 56,3 | 62,0 |
| **Slovenia** | **MTP** | 63,4 | 96,8 | 86,4 |
| | **CSWS** | 45,7 | 92,1 | 72,9 |
| | **SMW** | 28,9 | 86,1 | 64,2 |
| | **EO** | 27,6 | 79,0 | 59,2 |
| **Slovakia** | **MTP** | 80,4 | 76,9 | 84,7 |
| | **CSWS** | 61,4 | 69,4 | 70,3 |
| | **SMW** | 55,6 | 60,1 | 70,2 |
| | **EO** | 47,7 | 62,7 | 67,5 |
| **Finland** | **MTP** | 92,2 | 91,0 | 87,6 |
| | **CSWS** | 86,6 | 77,3 | 72,1 |
| | **SMW** | 79,8 | 73,1 | 61,4 |
| | **EO** | 69,9 | 63,7 | 54,2 |
| **Cyprus** | **MTP** | 70,3 | 83,3 | 89,7 |
| | **CSWS** | 53,6 | 65,0 | 77,3 |
| | **SMW** | 40,9 | 52,9 | 59,3 |
| | **EO** | 40,3 | 57,9 | 63,0 |

***Table 17.*** *Percentage of searches for information about learning opportunities*

| TIME | 2007 | 2011 | 2016 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EU - 27 countries** | 19,4 | 21,1 | 21,1 | 26,9 |
| **Ireland** | 0 | 20,4 | 28,6 | 33,9 |
| **France** | 0 | 26,9 | 27,4 | 31,1 |
| **Croatia** | 20,1 | 0 | 18,1 | 14,4 |
| **Cyprus** | 19,5 | 17,6 | 16,5 | 15,4 |
| **Malta** | 0 | 24,0 | 19,3 | 23,3 |
| **Netherlands** | 58,4 | 33,6 | 40,1 | 38,6 |
| **Portugal** | 16,8 | 27,6 | 25,6 | 31,5 |
| **Slovenia** | 24,2 | 20,8 | 37,3 | 28,9 |
| **Slovakia** | 37,2 | 24,2 | 21,1 | 19,1 |
| **Finland** | 40,0 | 42,1 | 42,4 | 39,1 |

## ANNEX 2

## Introduction

The aim of this survey was to collect insights from two key target groups – adult learners and employers – about their awareness and perceptions of existing national registers of adult learning programmes. The results will help to identify gaps in awareness, misconceptions and opportunities to improve the accessibility and presentation of existing registers to better meet the needs of these groups.

The survey aimed to collect quantitative and qualitative data to inform the development of targeted information campaigns and adjustments to the provision of adult education resources. It focused on gathering feedback on current usage patterns, satisfaction levels and the perceived relevance of adult learning initiatives to individual and organizational development. The responses also helped shape the subsequent discussions in focus groups and Design Thinking workshops, which confirmed and expanded on the survey findings.

This survey was distributed electronically to a wide audience in 10 countries: **Cyprus, Croatia, Malta, Slovakia, France, Netherlands, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal** and **Finland**. The aim was to receive **a total of 300 responses**, with at least two thirds from adult learners and the remainder from employer representatives.

Structure of the survey

- **For adult learners:** questions focus on personal motivations, previous experience with adult learning programmes, and familiarity with registers or related tools like Individual Learning Accounts (ILA).

- **For employers:** questions relate to the importance of employee development, company investment in education, experience with adult learning providers and familiarity with national registries.

The results provide a comprehensive understanding of the current level of awareness and engagement with adult learning opportunities among these groups. The data collected also fed into the discussions in the subsequent focus groups and Design Thinking workshops, providing greater depth to the analysis of emerging themes.

Co-funded by
the European Union

# 1. Survey results

## 1.1. Adult learners

The survey was conducted among **195 adult learners** from **10 countries**: Cyprus, Croatia, Malta, Slovakia, France, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal and Finland.

Below are the detailed results based on the responses received.
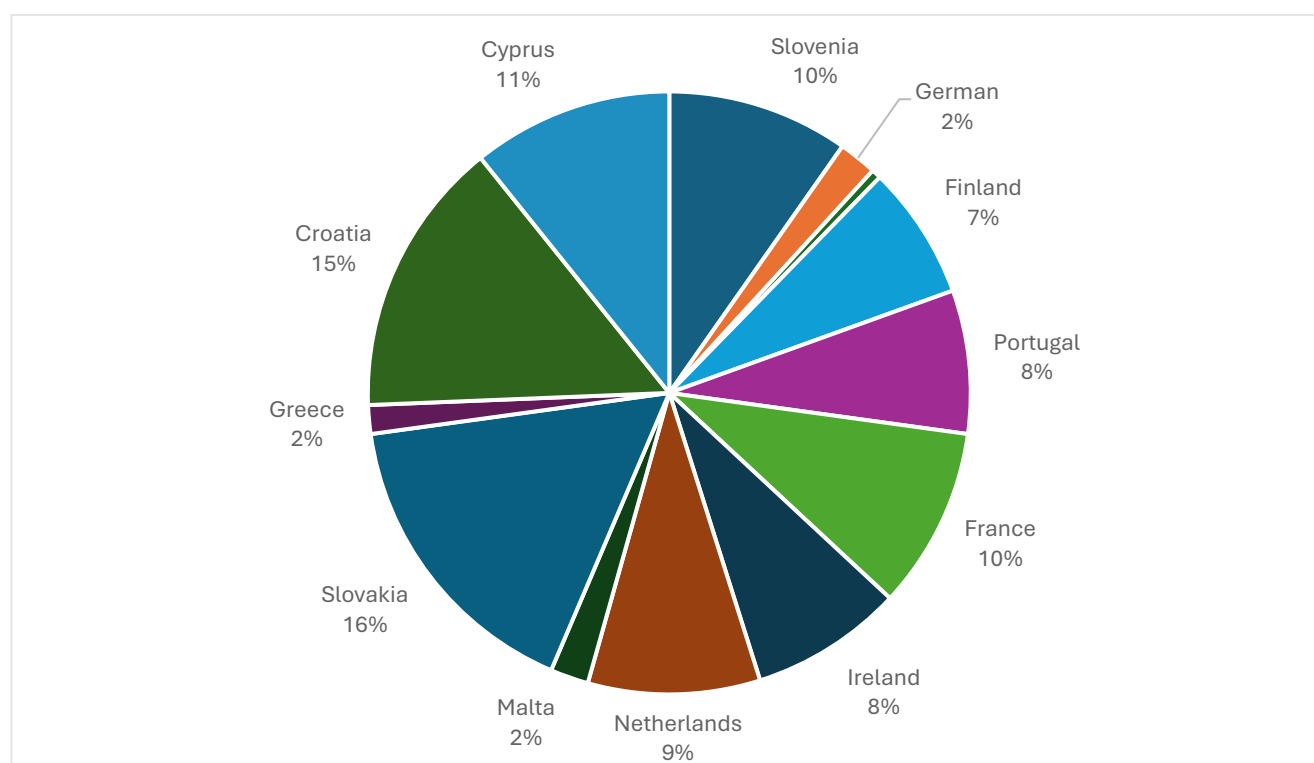


Figure 1. Country of residence

The largest number of responses came from **Slovakia, Croatia, Cyprus** and **Slovenia**. Together, they account for more than 50% of all responses.

Countries with a smaller share, such as **Greece, Malta** and **German**y, are less represented.
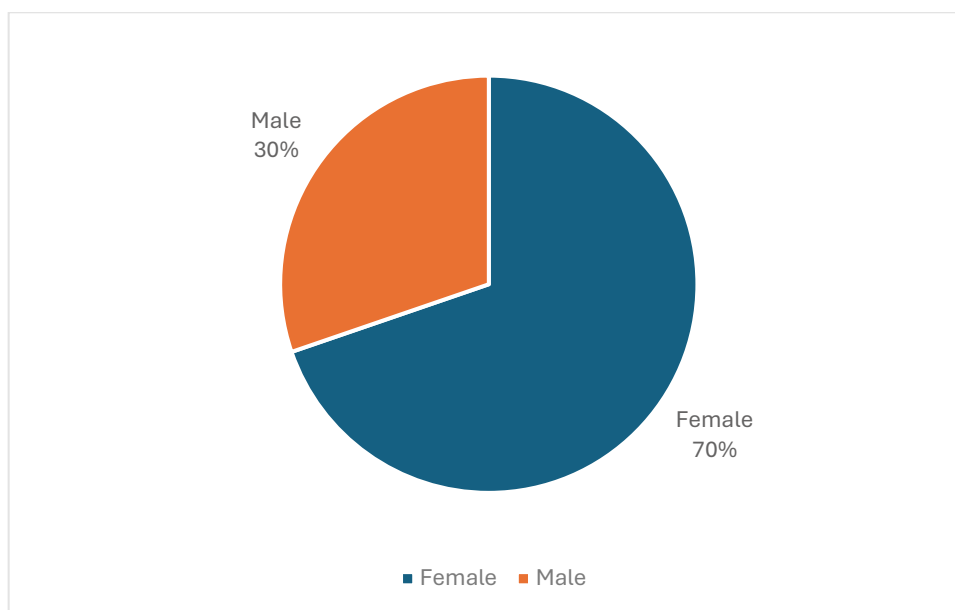
Figure 2. Gender

**70%** of the respondents were **female**, the remaining part – **30%** of the respondents – were **male**.

It can be seen that women, which may be related to the general conclusions drawn on the basis of European Union statistics, that women are more willing to take part in all kinds of education.
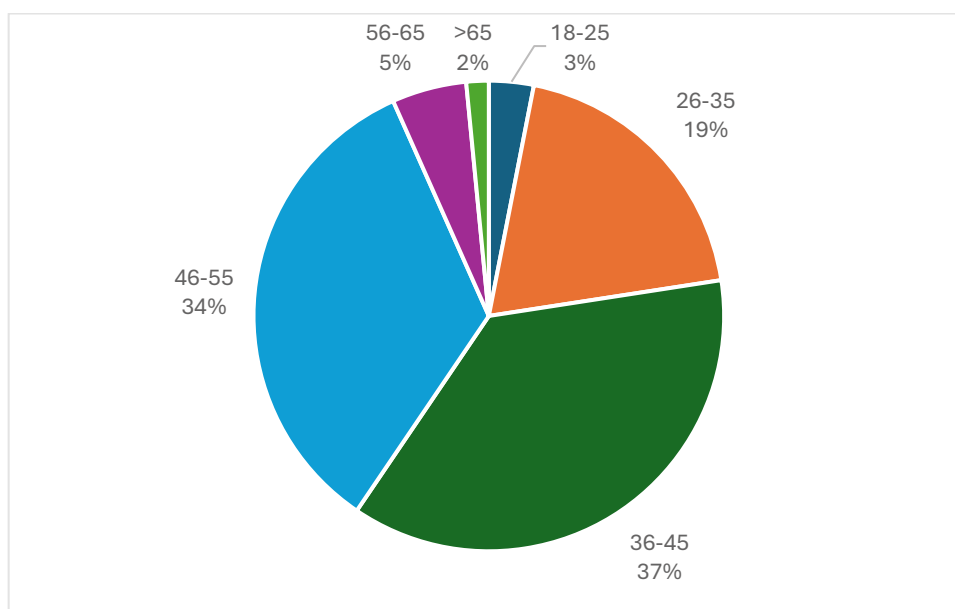


Figure 3. Age group

Most of the responses came from middle-aged people **(36-55 years)**, who together make up **71%** of the participants.

**Younger (18-35)** and **older (56+)** people are **less represented** in this survey, which could indicate their lower interest in the topic of the survey or other characteristics of the study group.
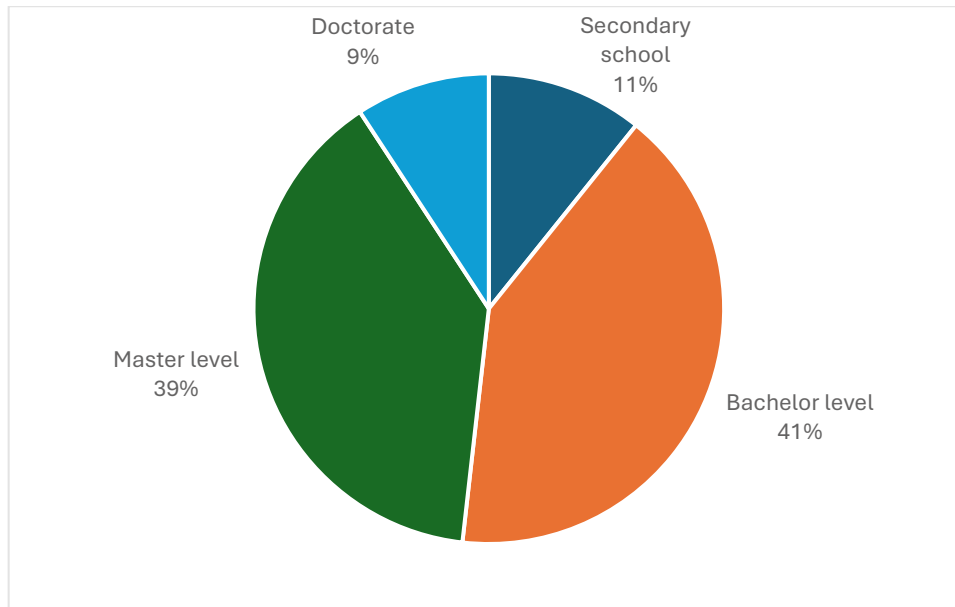


Figure 4. Max level of education achieved

People with a **bachelor's degree** make up **41%** of survey participants. This is by far the most common level of education among respondents. **39%** of respondents have a **master's degree**, indicating a significant number of people with advanced higher education. **10%** of respondents have a **secondary school degree**, and people with a **doctorate** make up **9%** of respondents. The survey shows that **89% of respondents have a university degree** (bachelor's, master's, doctorate), indicating the high level of qualification of the group surveyed.

There is a preponderance of people with higher education, which may be related to the nature of the survey, which may have attracted a more educated sample.
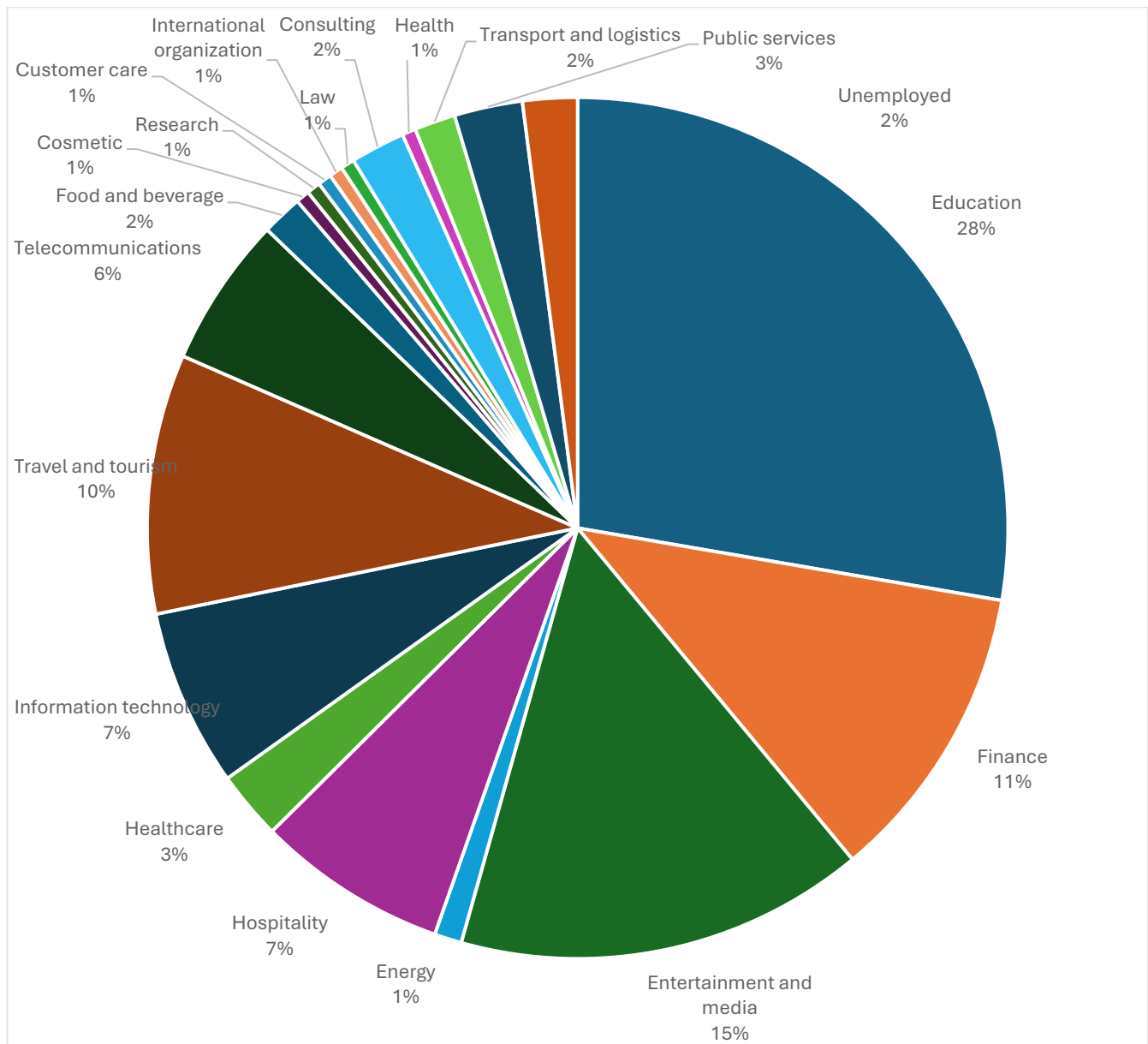
Figure 5. Current industry sector

The **education** sector clearly dominates with over **28%** of responses. This could indicate that the topic of the study was particularly important to them.

The second largest group is people working in the **entertainment and media** sector (**15%**), indicating a significant share of the creative industry.

The **financial** sector is one of the most important groups with **11%** of responses, and **travel and tourism** with **10%**.

Industries related to hospitality, telecommunications and information technologies are similarly well represented, indicating their importance in the surveyed population.

Sectors such as law, cosmetics, energy, scientific research and international organisations had very few responses.

**2%** of respondents stated that they were currently **unemployed**, which represents a small percentage of respondents.

The survey was dominated by people involved in education, which probably influenced the distribution of the results, e.g. the respondents' level of education.
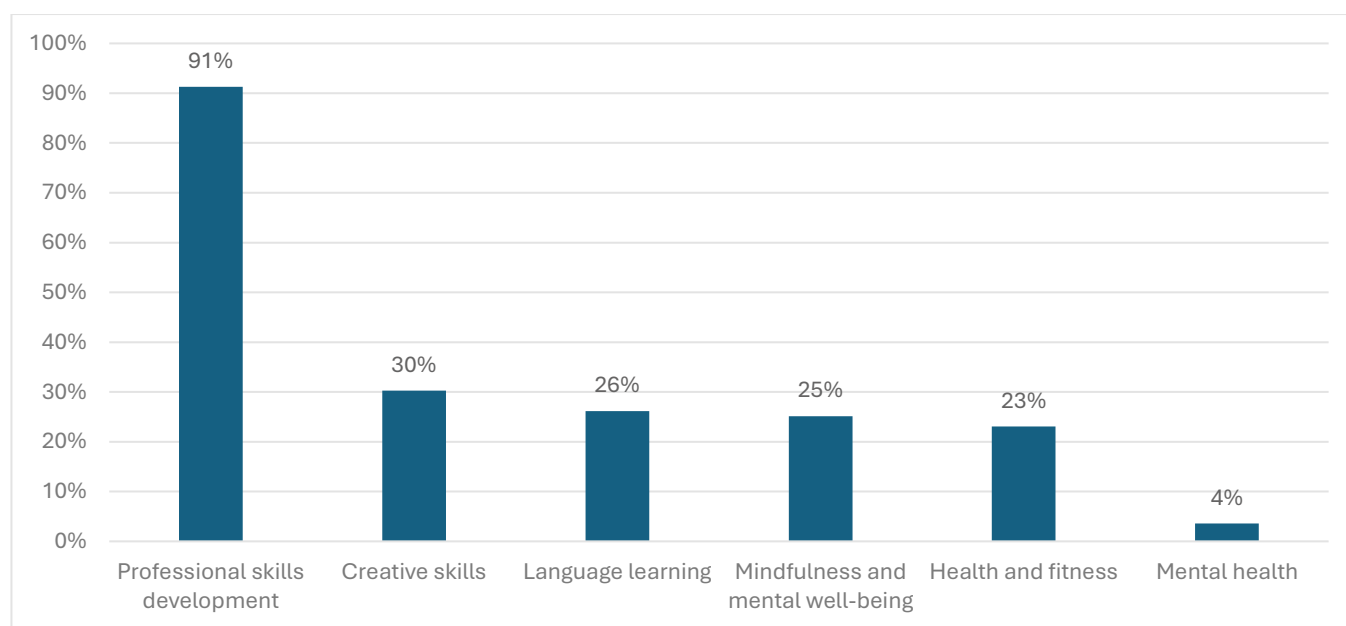


Figure 6. Personal development interests

The largest group of respondents (**91%**) showed interest in education that supports the **professional skills development**, indicating a strong link between adult education and the needs of the labour market and professional ambitions.

A significant number of respondents (**30%**) indicated an interest in education that supports **creative skills**, which may include areas such as art, design or writing.

**Language learning** (**26%** of responses) is a key area of interest, which may be motivated by career requirements, migration or a desire to broaden cultural competences.

**Mindfulness and mental well-being** (**25%** of responses) indicates a growing interest in educational opportunities that promote mental balance and the ability to manage stress.

**Health and fitness** (**23%** of responses) – education to improve physical health, reflecting the trend towards an active lifestyle.

**Mental health** (**4%**) – less popular, education in this area reflects a growing awareness of the importance of mental health.

Civics and democracy, arts, technical skills, social media and other specialised courses (1% each). These responses indicate a niche but important educational need.

The results suggests that adult education should be flexible and diverse to cover a wide range of needs, from career development to mental health and creativity. It is particularly important to focus on areas that are most in demand, such as professional development, creativity and language learning, while also catering for niche interests.
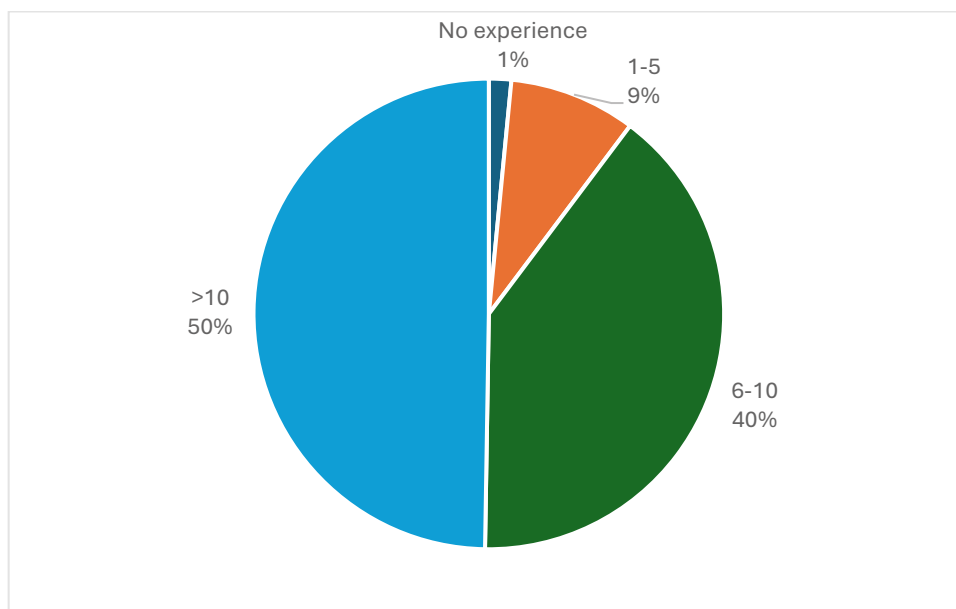


Figure 7. Years of work experience

The majority of respondents (**50%**) have more than **10 years of work experience**, which indicates the dominance of people with longer work experience in this group. Respondents with **6-10 years of work experience** are also a significant group (**40%**), and the least numerous are people with no work experience.
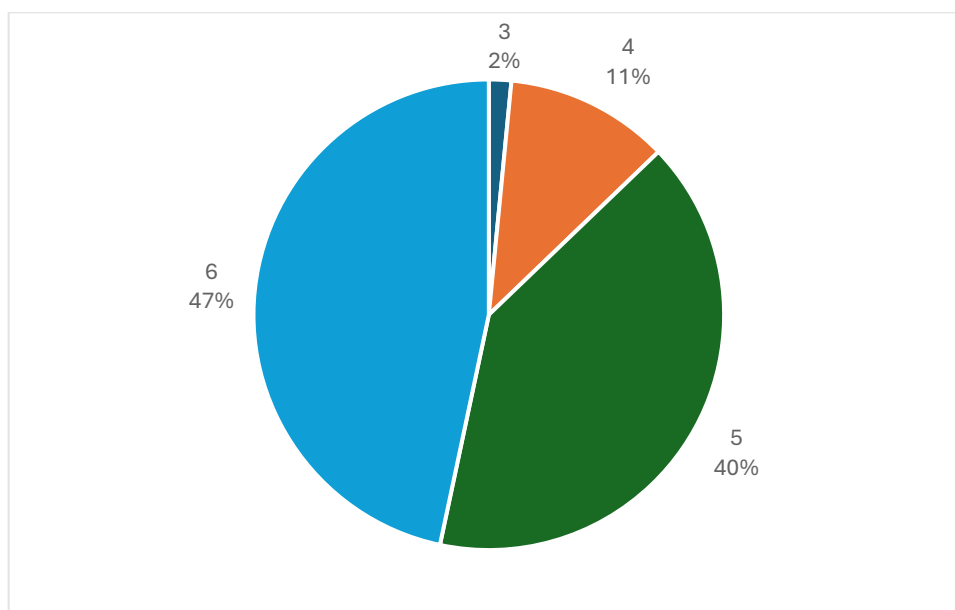
Figure 8. Importance of education

The majority of respondents (**87%**) considered adult education to be **very important or important** (5 or 6 on a scale). None of the respondents gave options 1 or 2, which emphasises that adult education is seen as an important issue. Only **13%** of respondents gave ALE an **average score** (3 or 4), which may indicate some lack of engagement in this area, but this is a small percentage. Respondents overwhelmingly believe that adult learning is important to their lives and development, which could indicate a high awareness of the importance of lifelong learning. This attitude is particularly important when it comes to designing educational measures and programmes.
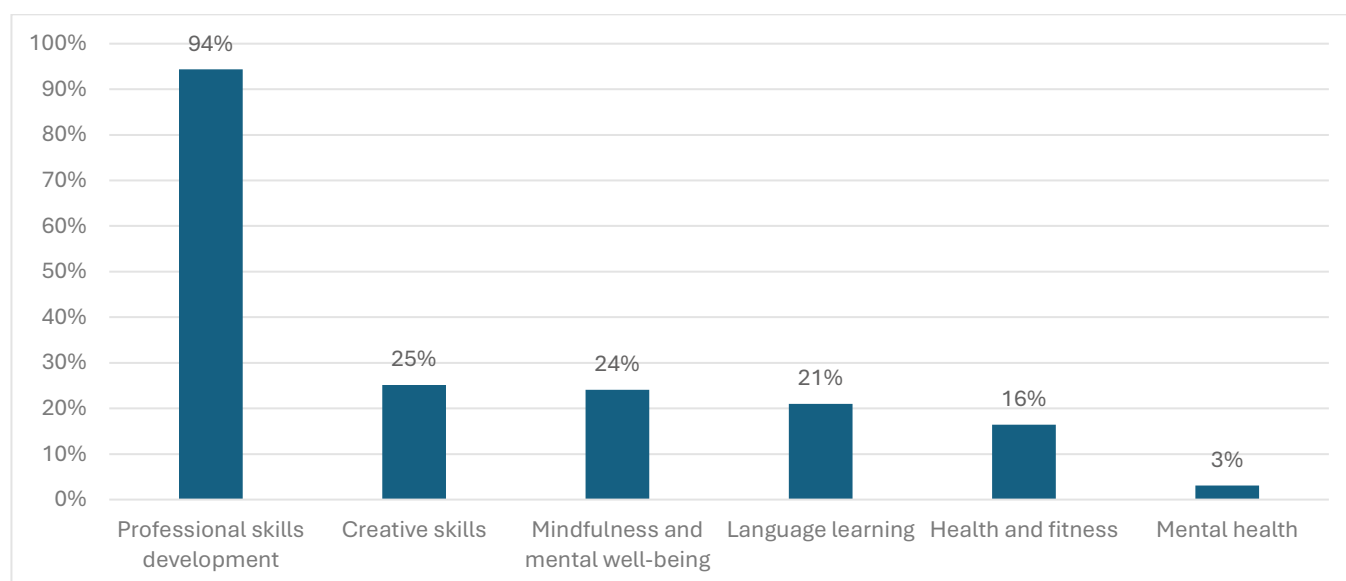


Figure 9. The motivations for adult education

The vast majority of participants (**94%**) identified **professional skills development** as the main reason for participating in adult education. This result emphasises the strong connection between learning and career progression, as respondents want to improve their employability, close skills gaps and grow professionally.

A quarter of respondents (**25%**) expressed an interest in acquiring **creative skills**. This suggests that adult education is also seen as a platform for personal expression and innovation.

A remarkable **24%** of respondents indicated that **mindfulness and mental well-being** motivate their participation in adult learning. This emphasises the role of education as a tool to improve mental resilience, emotional balance and stress management.

**Learning languages** was important to **21%** of respondents, reflecting the practical importance in both private and professional contexts. The motivation to acquire language skills is in line with the demands of a globalised world, where multilingual skills can open up new opportunities and facilitate intercultural communication.

With **16%** of participants motivated by **health and fitness**, it is evident that a subset of learners value education as a means of improving physical wellbeing.

A small number of participants mentioned unique or niche motivations for participating in adult education. These include: dealing with burnout in their profession, engaging in democracy, culture or public debates, exploring new academic fields or technological advances such as IT and AI, preventing professional stagnation by staying ahead of emerging trends and personal interests, curiosity or social engagement.

The results clearly show that adult education is primarily seen as a tool for professional growth, but also as a means for personal enrichment, promoting creativity, mental health and physical well-being.
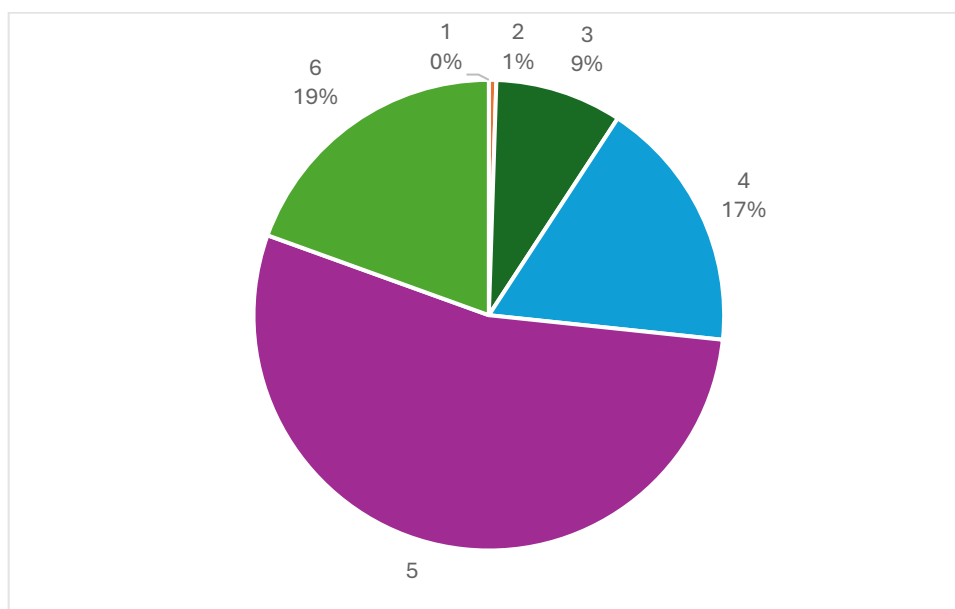


Figure 10. Previous experience with adult education

A total of **73%** of respondents rated their experience as either "**5**" (positive, 54%) or "**6**" (very positive, 19%). This shows that the majority of participants rated their experience in adult education positively. **17%** of respondents rated their experience as a "**4**", reflecting a moderately positive perception. This group represents participants who had neutral to somewhat positive feelings towards adult education. Only **9%** rated their experience a "**3**", indicating mixed or lukewarm perceptions, while **1%** rated it a "**2**" (negative). None of the respondents chose "1" (very negative), indicating minimal dissatisfaction.

The data shows an overwhelmingly positive perception of adult education among respondents, with **over 70% positive experiences**.
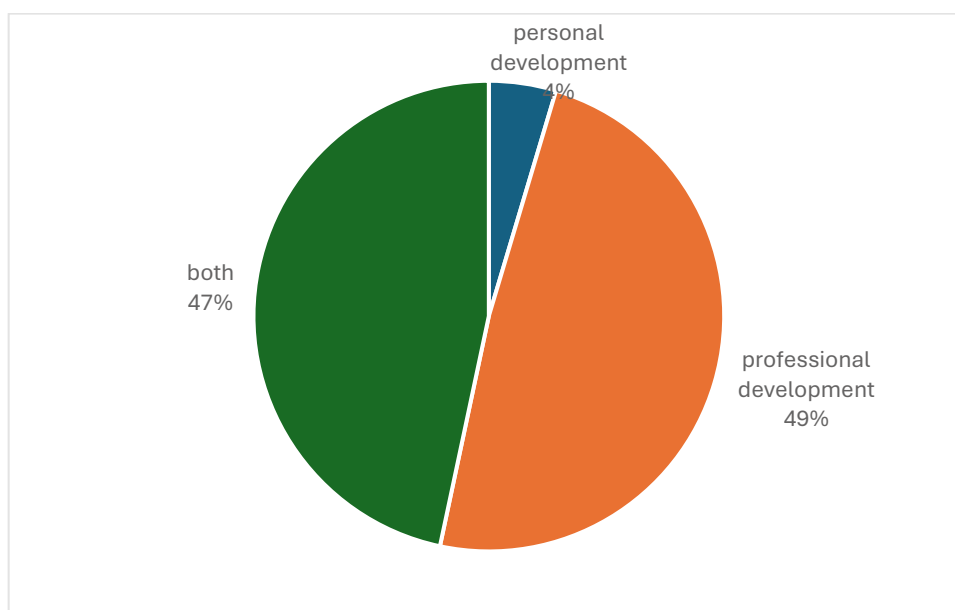


Figure 11. Motivations for pursuing adult education

The survey results show that the largest group of respondents (49%) take part in adult education primarily for reasons of professional development. This suggests that most people see learning as a means of improve their professional qualifications, which may be related to a desire for promotion, a change of job or to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market.

The second largest group (47%) are respondents who learn for both personal and professional purposes. This indicates a large number of people who see education as an element of comprehensive development that combines professional and personal benefits.

Only a small percentage of respondents (4%) choose education solely for personal development. These participants seek knowledge and skills mainly for self-realisation, developing passions or improving quality of life that are not directly related to their professional career.

The results show that adult education is primarily perceived as a means for professional development, but there is also a significant group of people who combine professional and personal goals.
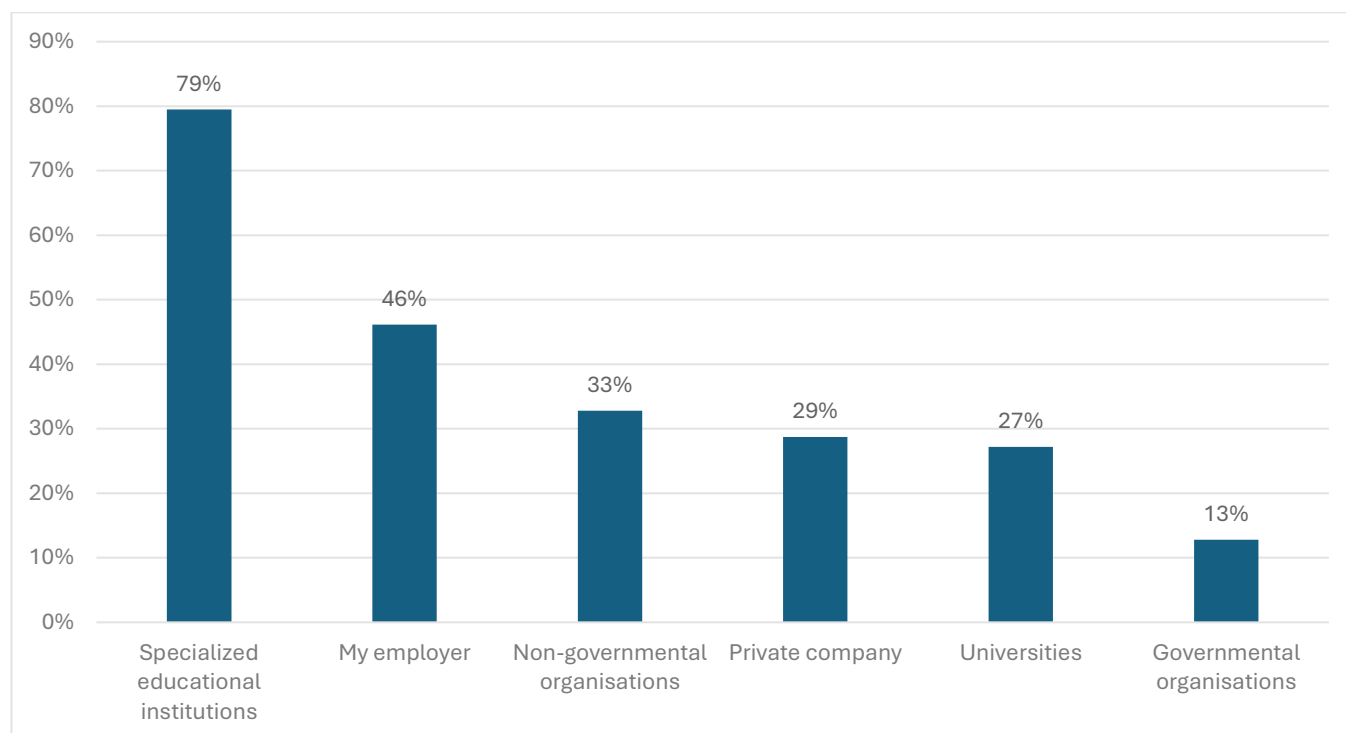
Figure 12. Providers of adult education programmes in which learners have attended

The largest number of respondents participated in adult education provided by **specialist educational institutions**(**79%**). This suggests that formal and specialist educational institutions are the main source of adult education, offering a wide range of programmes and courses tailored to different needs.

A large proportion of participants (**46%**) use educational programmes provided by their **employer**. This may indicate a growing interest from companies that invest in the development of their employees through courses, training and other forms of educational support.

**Non-governmental organisations** are also a significant source of education, used by **33%** of respondents. This indicates the role of social organisations in promoting adult education, particularly in areas such as personal and social development or integration assistance.

**Private companies** account for **29%** of education providers. This indicates the presence of the private sector in the education market, offering courses and programmes tailored to the needs of specific industries.

The share of **universities** as providers of adult education is **27%**. Although smaller than other institutions, universities play an important role in offering courses that can lead to additional qualifications or develop skills in specific areas.

**Government organisations** are responsible for **13%** of education programmes. Government support for adult education is less common, but still plays a role in organising courses and programmes supporting the professional and social development of citizens.

A very small percentage of respondents (4% in total) attended education programmes offered by a variety of other institutions, such as online learning, Erasmus+, monasteries or Volkshochschulen. Although these

options are marginal compared to the main providers, they still represent alternative educational paths that can attract people looking for non-standard forms of learning.

The results show that the main providers of adult education are specialised educational institutions and employers, indicating that vocational and technical education is a priority. Non-governmental organisations, private companies and universities also play an important role in the education market, offering courses and programmes for personal and professional development.
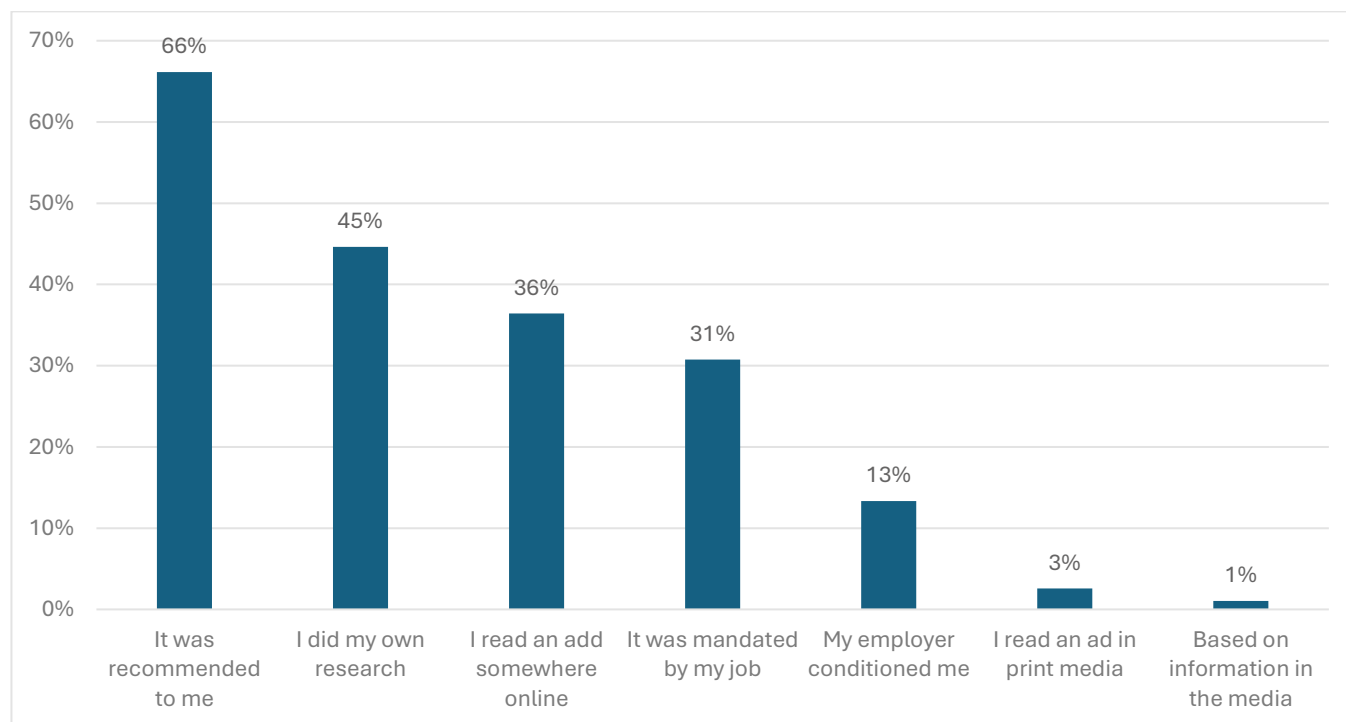


Figure 13. Selection of adult education programmes

The largest group of respondents (**66%**) opted for adult education programmes because they were **recommended** by others. This suggests that recommendations from friends, colleagues, mentors or industry peers play an important role in the decision to enrol in an adult education programme. **45%** of respondents selected programmes after **researching them themselves**. This suggests that a significant number of participants are actively seeking out information and comparing different programmes to make informed decisions about their education. **36%** of respondents chose educational programmes after seeing an **online advertisement**. This shows that online advertising plays an important role in directing participants to adult education programmes, reflecting the growing influence of digital platforms in education. **31%** of respondents took part in educational programmes because they were **mandated by their job**. This suggests that many participants are taking part in adult education due to job requirements, e.g. to fulfil work requirements or to further their career development. **13%** of respondents participated in programmes because it was a **requirement of their employer** in order to keep or advance their job. This suggests that in some cases adult learning is a requirement for career progression or job retention. Only **3%** of respondents chose a programme after seeing an **advertisement in the print media**. This low percentage suggests that traditional advertising methods, such as print advertisements, play only a minor role in the promotion of adult education programmes.
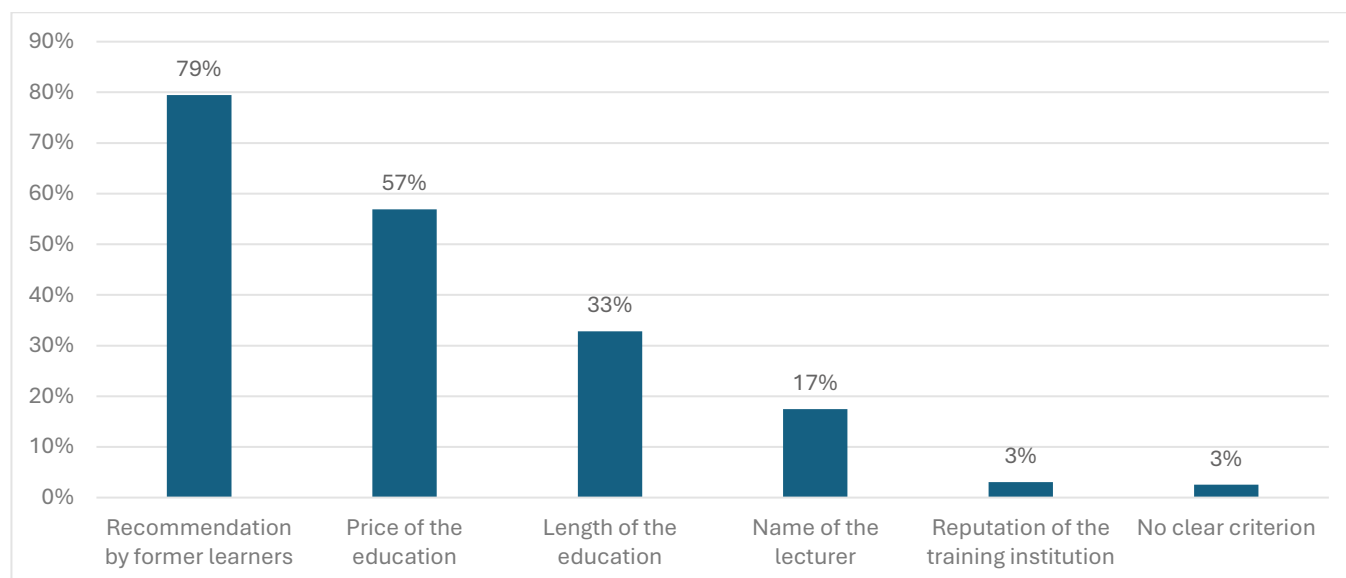
Figure 14. Criteria of choosing between two seemingly similar education programmes

The most influential criterion for choosing between similar adult education programmes are **recommendations from former learners**. This shows that personal experience and word-of-mouth are very important. **79%** of participants rely on feedback from respondents who have already completed the programme. **Price of the education** plays a decisive role for **57%** of respondents when choosing an educational programme. This suggests that affordability plays an important role for many and participants are likely to weigh up the value of the programme in relation to its cost. **Length of the education** is an important factor for **33%** of respondents, suggesting that the length of a programme plays an important role, possibly due to time constraints or a preference for shorter or more intensive courses. The **name of the lecturer** influenced **17%** of respondents, indicating that the reputation or qualifications of the instructor can be a deciding factor for learners looking for expertise and credibility in the field. For **3%** of respondents, the **reputation of the training institution** is important. Although this is a lower priority compared to other criteria, it shows that for some individuals, the credibility or prestige of the institution may influence their choice. **3%** of respondents stated that they **did not have a clear criterion** for choosing between programmes.

A small group of respondents (1%) considered factors such as clear and clean online communication, objectives and outcomes, provision of additional services, personal feeling, feedback on the lecturer and course, outside working hours, accessibility, learning programme, teaching methods, references, satisfaction survey results, quality of information provided, training format (face-to-face, online, hybrid course), course description, usability for work, focus on practical application and marketing approach. Although these criteria were recognised, they had minimal influence on their decision.
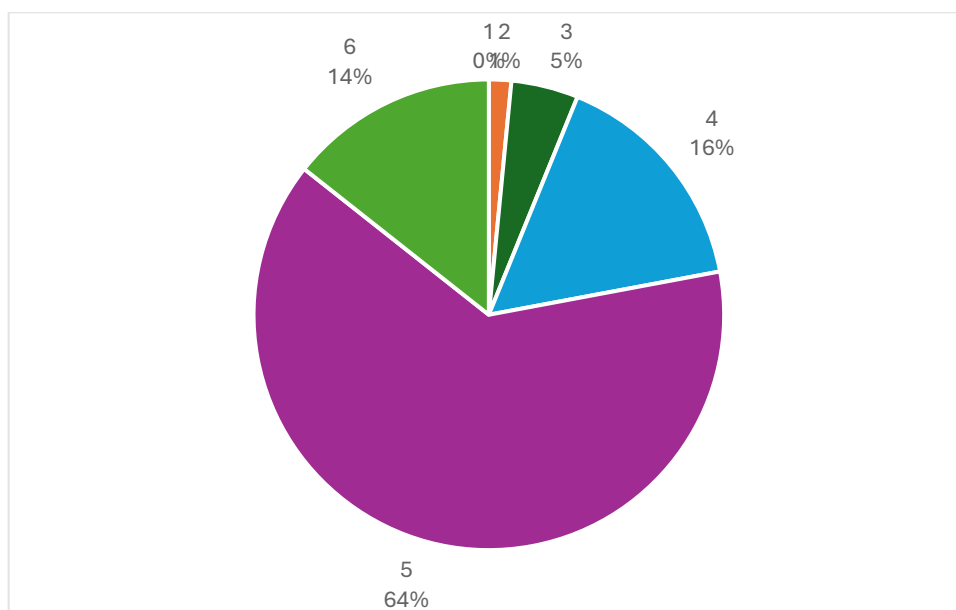
Figure 15. Satisfaction with the quality of the majority adult education programmes

The results show that a clear majority of respondents were satisfied with the adult education programmes they attended. A total of **78%** rated their satisfaction as **"5" (satisfied**) or **"6" (very satisfied)**, indicating that most learners had a positive experience with the quality of these programmes.

The relatively low number of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction (only **2%** rated "**2**" for disappointment and **5%** rated **"3"** for neutral) suggests that the programmes were generally well received. The fact that no one rated their experience as very disappointing (1) underlines the idea that the programmes generally provided a positive learning experience.

Overall, these results suggest that the adult education programmes met the expectations of most participants, with a focus on high levels of satisfaction and low levels of dissatisfaction or indifference.
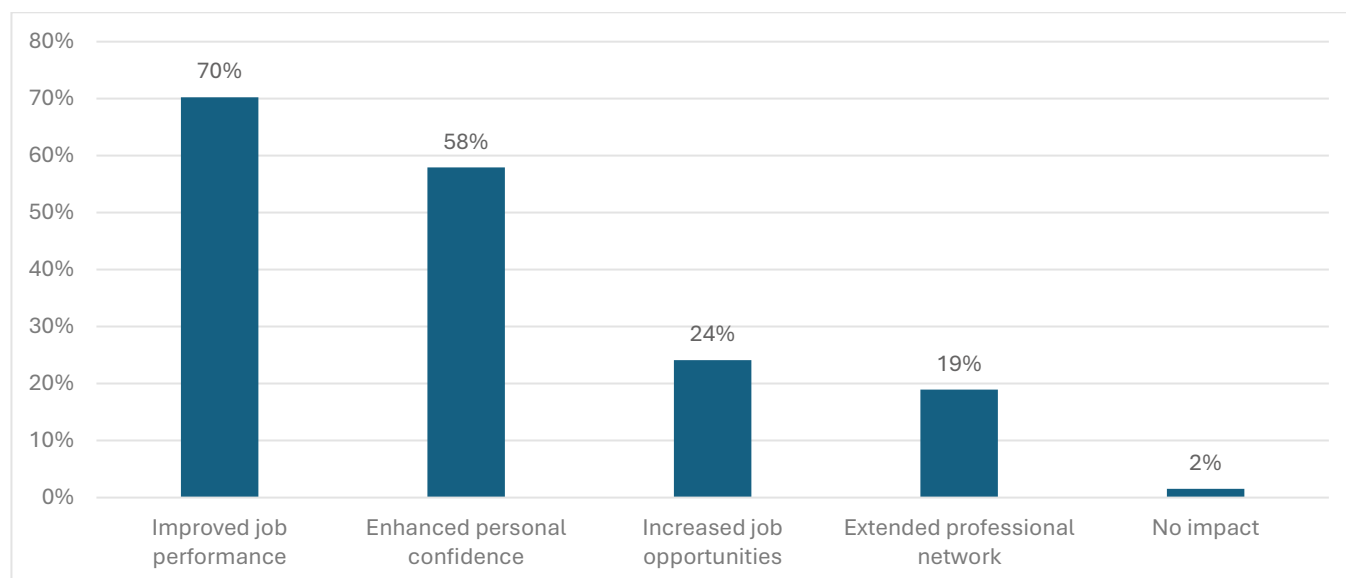
Figure 16. The immediate impact of the adult education programmes

The most important immediate effect for **70%** of respondents was an **improvement in their job performance**. This suggests that the programmes were highly relevant to their current roles and had enhanced their skills and effectiveness at work. More than half of the participants (**58%**) stated that their **personal confidence had enhanced**. This suggests that the programmes had a positive psychological impact, boosting learners' confidence and likely making them feel more competent in different areas of their lives. A smaller group (**24%**) experienced **increasing job opportunities** as a result of the educational programmes. This reflects a direct professional benefit and shows that the programmes have helped participants to improve their employability. Networking was a direct benefit for **19%** of respondents, indicating that the programmes provided the **enhanced professional network** with other professionals, which could lead to further career opportunities and collaborations. A very small percentage (**2%**) of participants stated that the programmes had **no impact**. This suggests that while the majority of participants saw a benefit in their training, a few did not see any immediate benefit.

Other smaller impacts were observed, each indicated by only 1% of participants: better feedback from training participants, sharing and acquiring expertise, acquiring and developing skills that impact daily life, better understanding of participants' needs, broader knowledge and perspectives on a topic, improved health and general well-being, higher salary, interest in further collaboration, more insights, more knowledge, new knowledge and skills, personal contacts and opinions, self-satisfaction. These 1% responses suggest that whilst these results are rather niche, they reflect a wide range of personal and professional benefits experienced by a small group of participants.
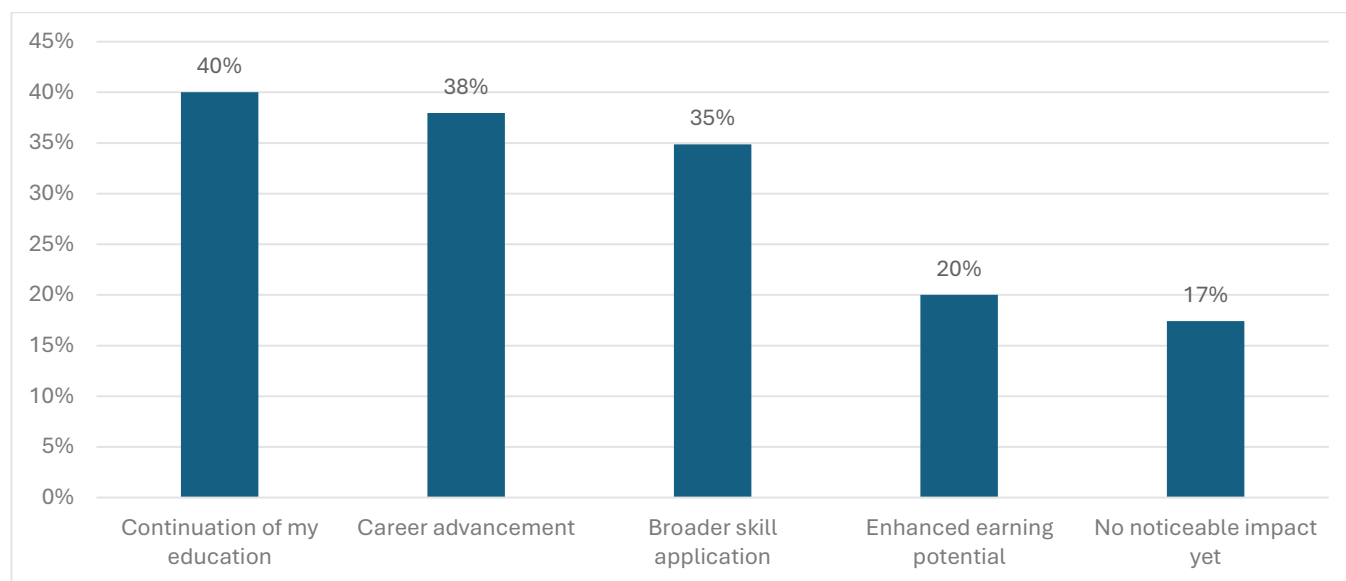
Figure 17. Medium-term effects of adult education programmes

The most frequently mentioned medium-term effect was the **continuation of education**. **40%** of respondents stated that they wanted to continue their education. This shows a strong inclination towards lifelong learning and the value that participants place on education as a long-term commitment. This is closely followed by **career advancement**, cited by **38%** of respondents. This suggests that the skills and knowledge gained through the programmes had a direct positive impact on their professional growth, whether in the form of promotions, new roles or other career opportunities. A significant proportion (**35%**) reported the **broader skills application**. This suggests that the knowledge and skills gained through the programmes were applied in different aspects of their work and personal lives, resulting in more versatile skills. **Enhance earning potential** was a medium-term benefit for **20%** of respondents, indicating that the education programmes had led to salary improvements or better paid jobs for some individuals. A small group (**17%**) **had not yet experienced a tangible** impact from the programmes, indicating that for some the impact is still unfolding or they have not yet observed tangible results.

Other, less common impacts were mentioned by only 1% of respondents each: new and better social contacts, broadening of skills for my work, enrichment of techniques and methods for working with my target group.

The medium-term impacts of adult education programmes largely revolve around upskilling and career progression, with a focus on further learning and applying new skills in the workplace.
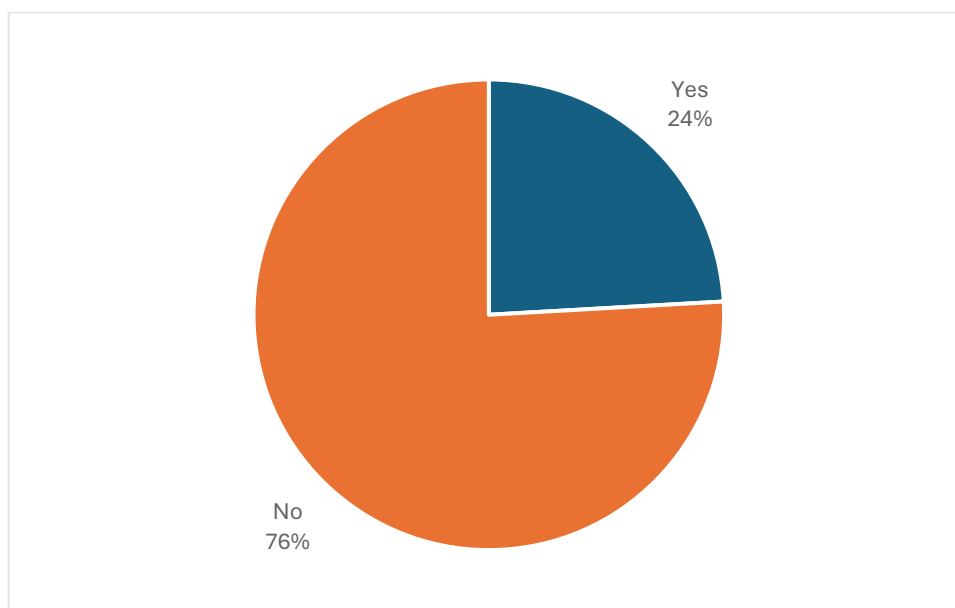
Figure 18. Existence of a database listing all adult education programmes in the respondent's country or region to the respondent's knowledge

The results indicate that the majority of respondents (**76%**) **do not know that there is a central database** listing all adult education programmes in their country or region. **24%** of respondents **indicated that such a database exists**.
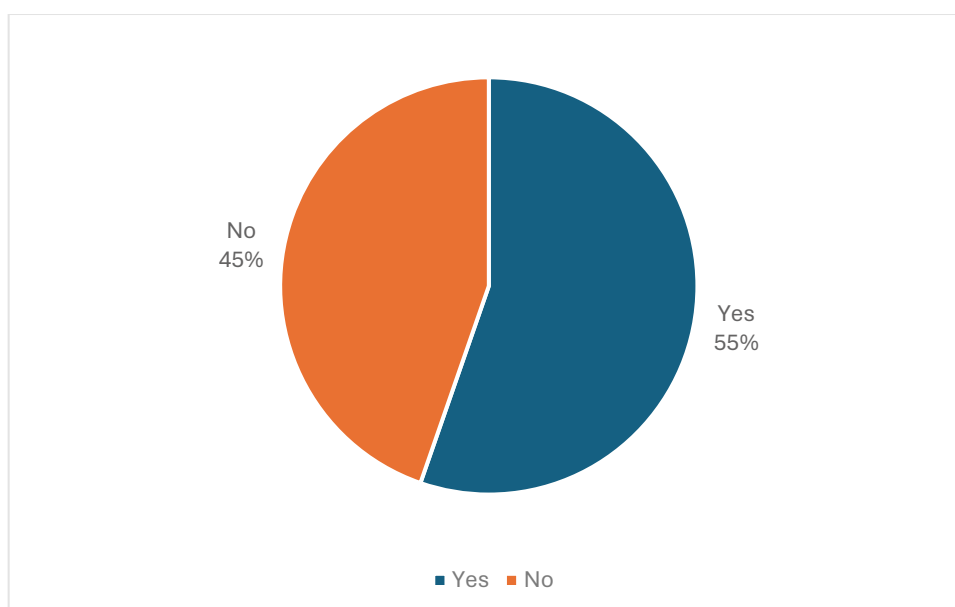


Figure 19. Use of the database by respondents who declared its existence in their country or region

The results show that **55%** of respondents who are aware of the existence of databases **have used a database** for adult education programmes, while **45% have not**. This suggests that although there is some engagement with the resource available, almost half of the respondents have not used it, even though such a database exists. The relatively high percentage of non-users suggests that improvements in reach, ease of use and awareness could help the database reach a broader audience and become a more valuable tool for adult learners.
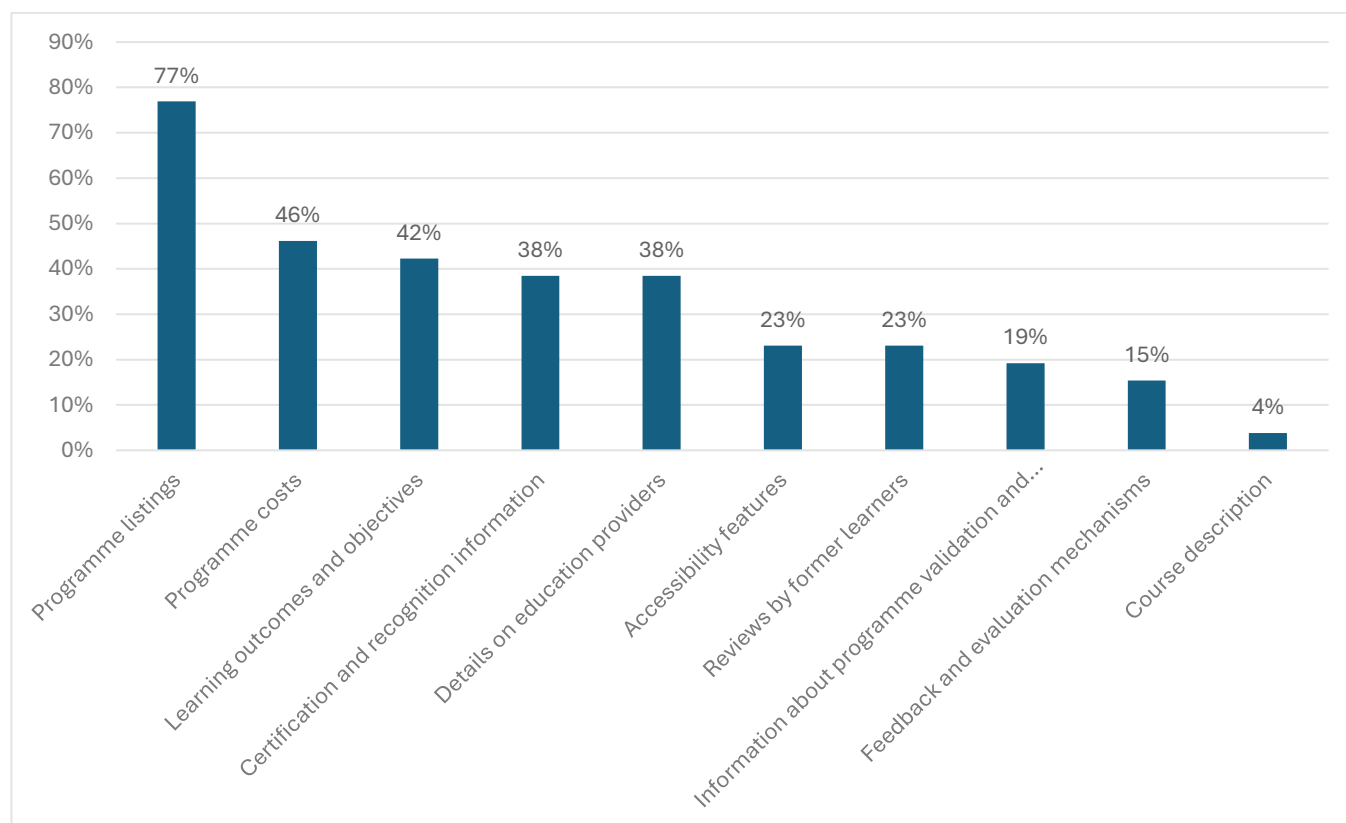


Figure 20. Information that respondents searched for in databases

The respondents in whose countries or regions the database exists and who used it most frequently searched for the following information:

The most searched for information in the database was the **list of available programmes**. **77%** of users searched for this. This shows that the database is primarily used to discover available educational opportunities, suggesting that it is an important tool for learners to explore different programmes. **Programme costs** were the second most common query, with **46%** of users looking for this information. This shows that for many learners, cost is a deciding factor when choosing an educational programme. The **learning outcomes and objectives** were queried by **42%** of users. This suggests that learners want to know what they will achieve with the programme and whether it meets their personal or professional goals. **Certification and recognition information** was important to **38%** of respondents, showing that the credentials and value of the qualifications offered by the programmes are of great importance to potential learners. **Details on education providers** was also sought by **38%** of users. This shows that trust in the provider is an important factor for learners when choosing a programme, suggesting that credibility plays an important role. **Accessibility features** were of interest to **23%** of users. This suggests that a smaller

group pay attention to how accessible programmes are, particularly in terms of accommodation and ease of access. **Reviews by former learners** were indicated from **23%** of respondents. This suggests that feedback from previous participants is important to gain insight into the quality and value of the programme before making a decision. **Programme validation and accreditation** were important to **19%** of users. While only a small group are interested in this, it shows that for some learners official recognition and credibility of the programme is important, particularly for future career prospects. **Feedback and evaluation mechanisms** were searched by **15%** of users. This shows that a smaller percentage are interested in how programmes are evaluated and how learner feedback influences future improvements. **Course descriptions** were the least sought after information, with only **4%** of respondents looking for this. This suggests that learners are less interested in the specific content of the courses themselves once other factors such as outcomes, costs and provider details are taken into account.
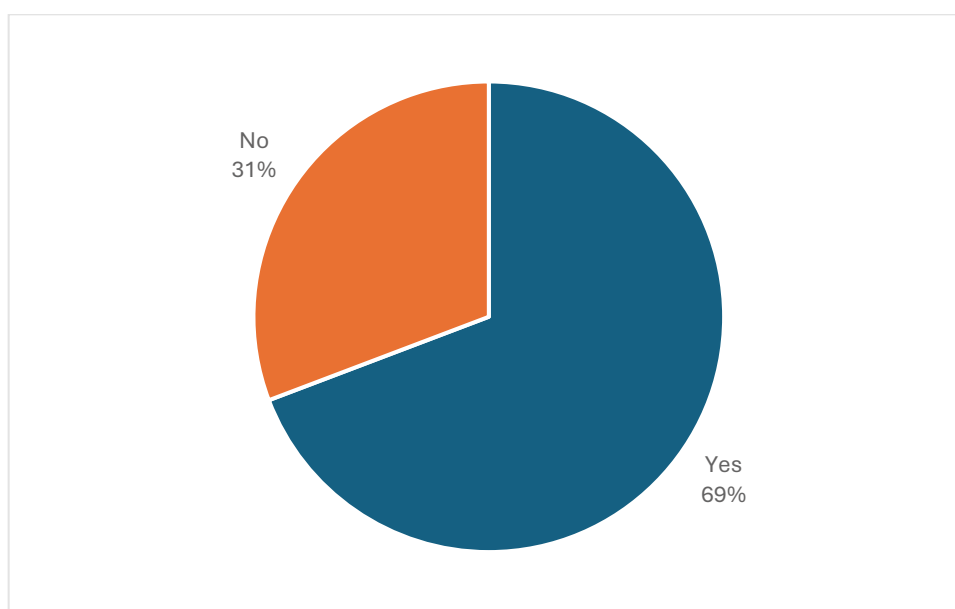


Figure 21. Respondents were able to find the information they were looking for quickly

The results show that **69%** of respondents in whose countries or regions the database exists and who have used it were **able to find the information** they were looking for **quickly**, indicating that the databases are generally efficient and user-friendly for most users. However, **31%** of respondents were **unable to find the information** they were looking for quickly, suggesting that the structure of the databases presents usability issues or challenges for some users. This suggests that while the resource is helpful for many, there is still room for improvement to make the databases more accessible and easier for all.
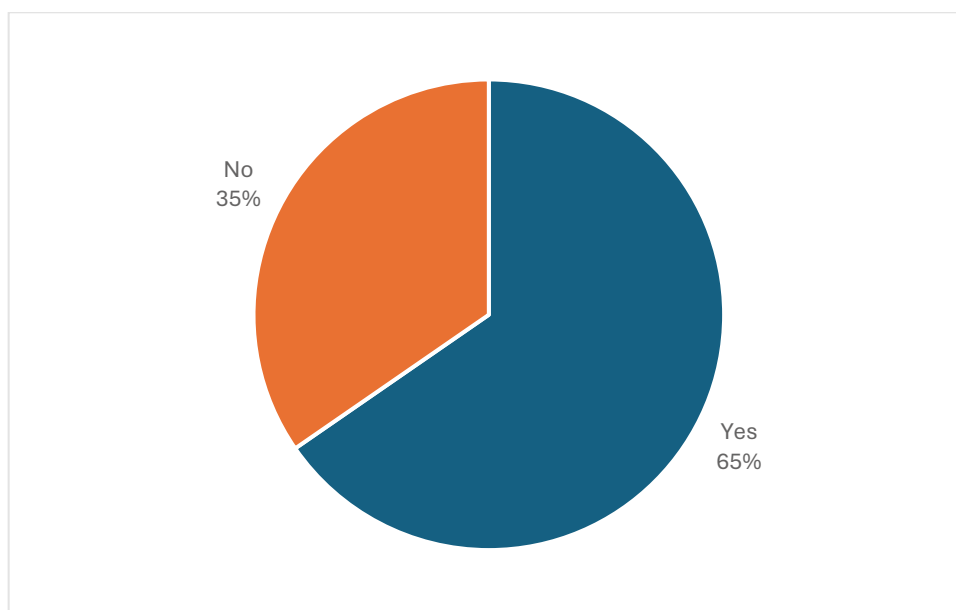
Figure 22. User satisfaction with database information

The results show that **65%** of respondents in whose countries or regions the database exists and who have used it **were satisfied with the information provided in the database**, suggesting that the content met their needs for the majority. However, **35% were dissatisfied**, indicating that a significant proportion of users found the information insufficient, unclear or incomplete. This shows that the quality and scope of the databases can be improved to better serve all users.
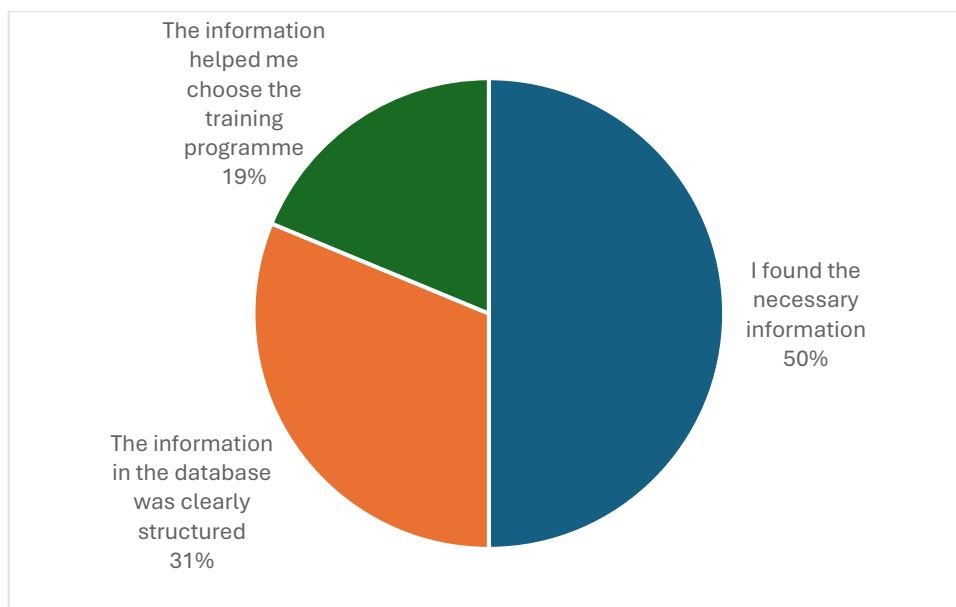


Figure 23. Reasons for satisfaction with the information contained in the database

The analysis shows that **50%** of respondents who used the database and were satisfied with the information found there were satisfied because they **were able to find the necessary information**. **31%** appreciated the **clear structure of the information**, suggesting that the organisation of the database makes it easier to navigate and find relevant data. **19%** found that **the information helped them to choose a training programme**. This underlines that the content of the database is not only accessible and well organised, but also useful for making informed decisions about education opportunities.
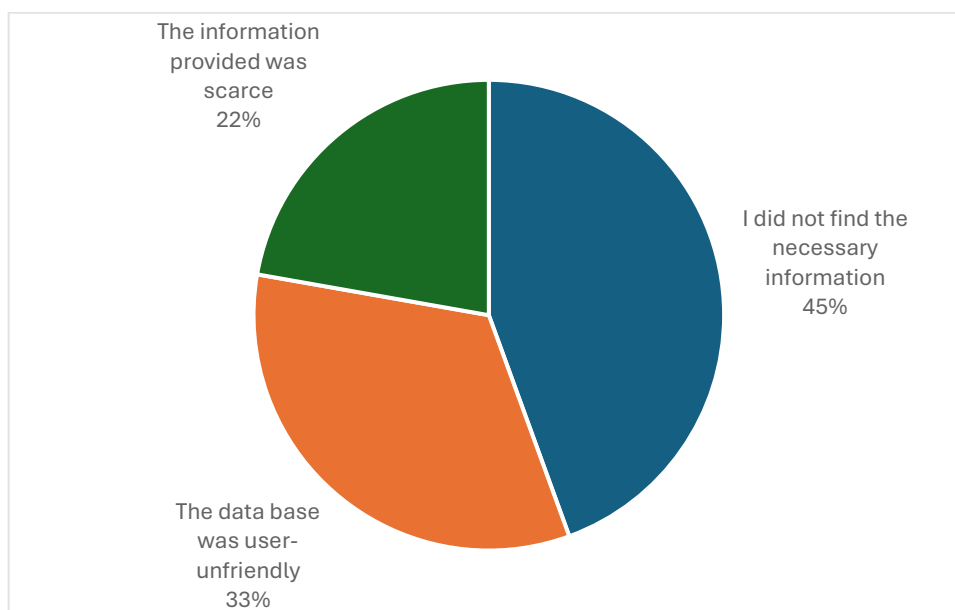


Figure 24. Reasons for unsatisfaction with the information contained in the database

The analysis shows that **50%** of respondents who used the database and were dissatisfied with the information found there were dissatisfied because they **could not find the necessary information**, indicating that the databases may be missing important details or is difficult to navigate. **33%** felt that the **database was user-unfriendly**, suggesting that the interface or structure of databases may be confusing or difficult for users to navigate. **22%** said that the **information provided was scarce**, suggesting that the databases may not provide enough comprehensive or detailed content for users to make informed decisions.
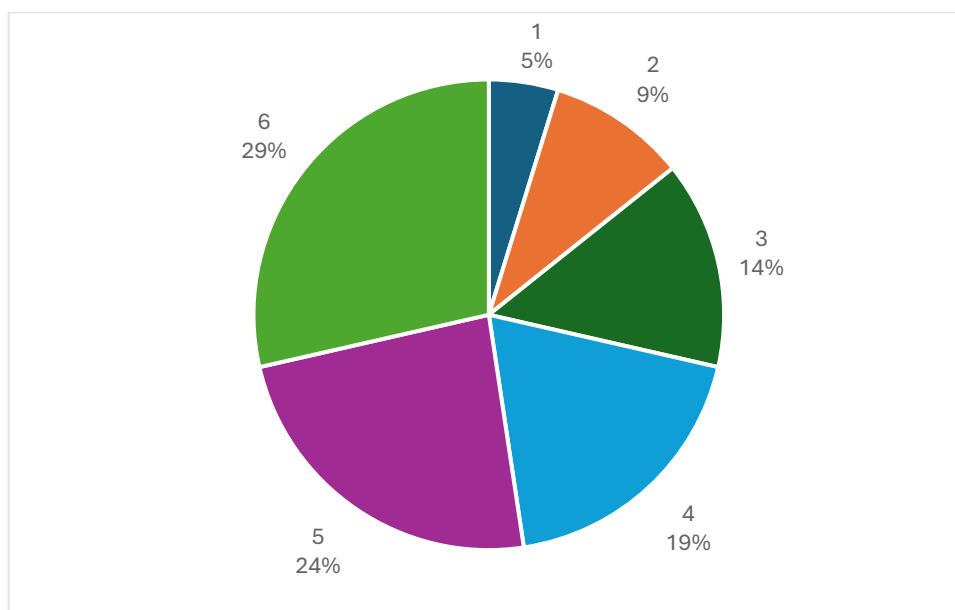
Figure 25. Level of trust in the database for educational information

The majority of respondents who have used the database (**70%**) have a medium to **high level trust** in the database (ratings of 4, 5 and 6), with 62% giving a rating of 4 or 5, and 8% giving the highest rating of 6. This indicates that most users have some confidence in the information provided, even if the confidence is not overwhelmingly strong for all.

However, **19%** of users have a neutral attitude (rating 3), **indicating uncertainty or indifference towards the trust** of the database. Although these users are open to further information or improvements, they are not completely convinced of the reliability of the database.

On the other hand, **12%** of respondents express **low trust** (ratings of 1 and 2), indicating concerns about the accuracy or reliability of the information in the database. This proportion of users is sceptical and suggests the need for improvements to increase the credibility of the database.

While the database is moderately to highly trusted by the majority of users, a significant proportion are either neutral or distrustful, suggesting that there are opportunities to improve credibility, accuracy and reliability to increase user trust.
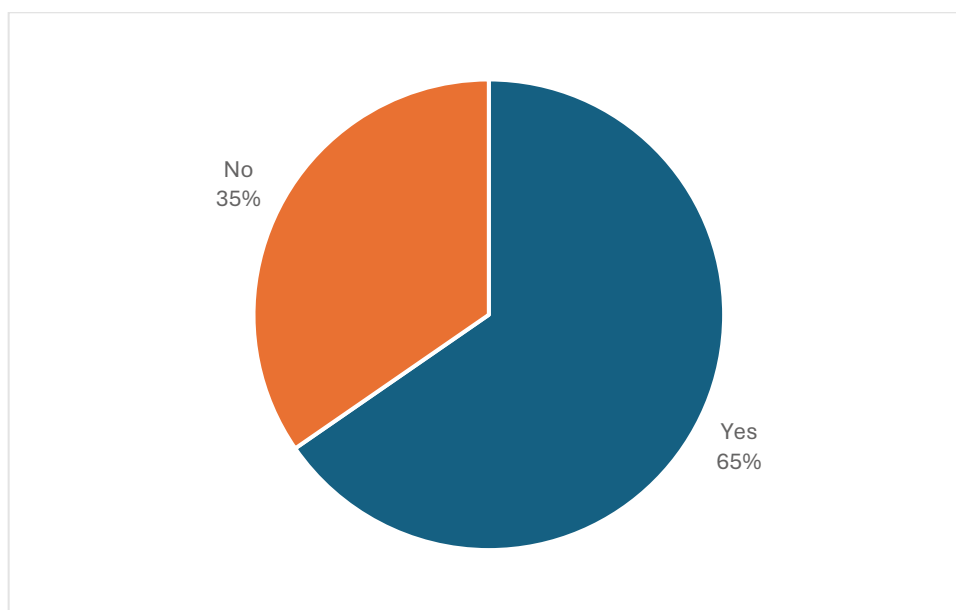
Figure 26. The influence of database information on the decision to select an adult education programme

The analysis shows that **65%** of respondents in whose countries or regions the database exists and who have used it **were influenced by the information provided in the database** when choosing an adult education programme, indicating that the database plays an important role in decision-making for most users. However, **35% were not influenced**, suggesting that for some users the database may not have been a deciding factor or they may have relied on other sources of information when making their decision, which is closely related to their trust in the information it contains.
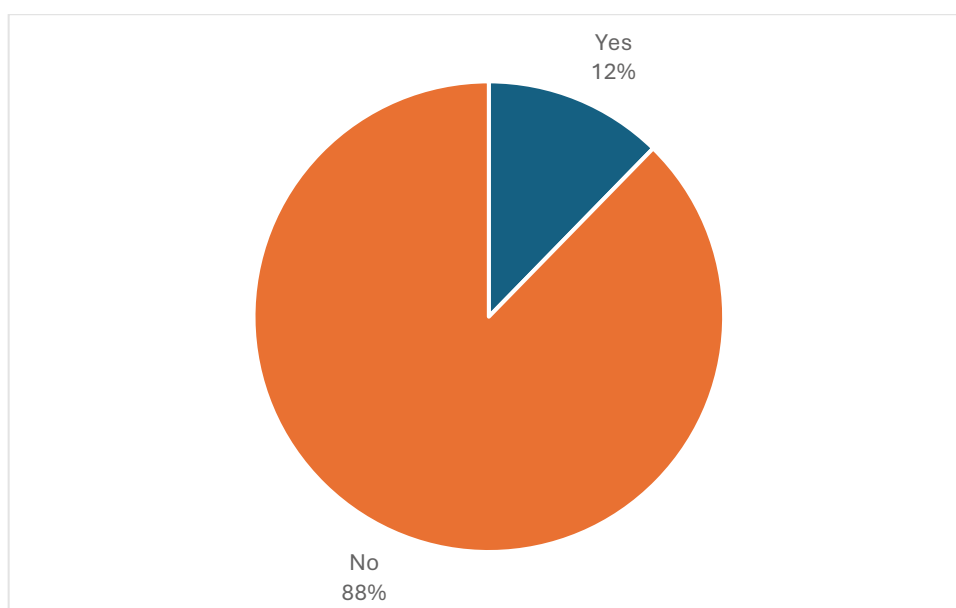


Figure 27. Familiarity with the concept of Individual Learning Accounts

The majority of respondents (**88%**) **are not familiar** with the concept of Individual Learning Accounts, indicating a significant lack of awareness of this initiative. Only **22% are aware** of it, suggesting that efforts to promote and educate the public about this concept are limited and could be significantly improved to increase understanding and engagement.
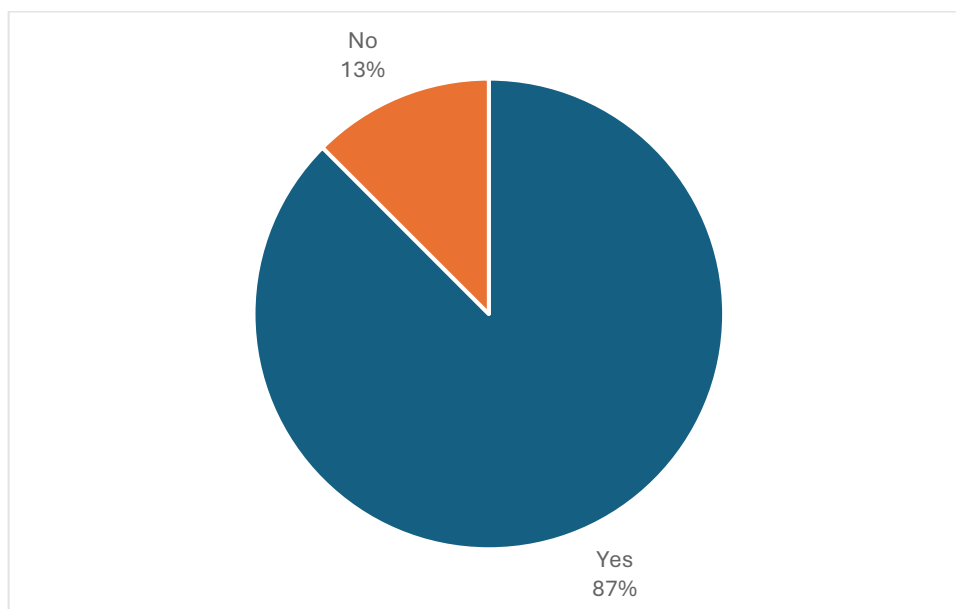


Figure 28. Perceived benefits of Individual Learning Accounts among familiar respondents

Of those respondents who are familiar with the concept of Individual Learning Accounts, the vast majority (**87%**) **see a personal benefit** in this initiative, indicating that those who understand the concept see a high value in it. However, **13%** of respondents **do not see any benefits**, suggesting that while the concept has potential, it may not appeal to everyone or fulfil all individual needs.
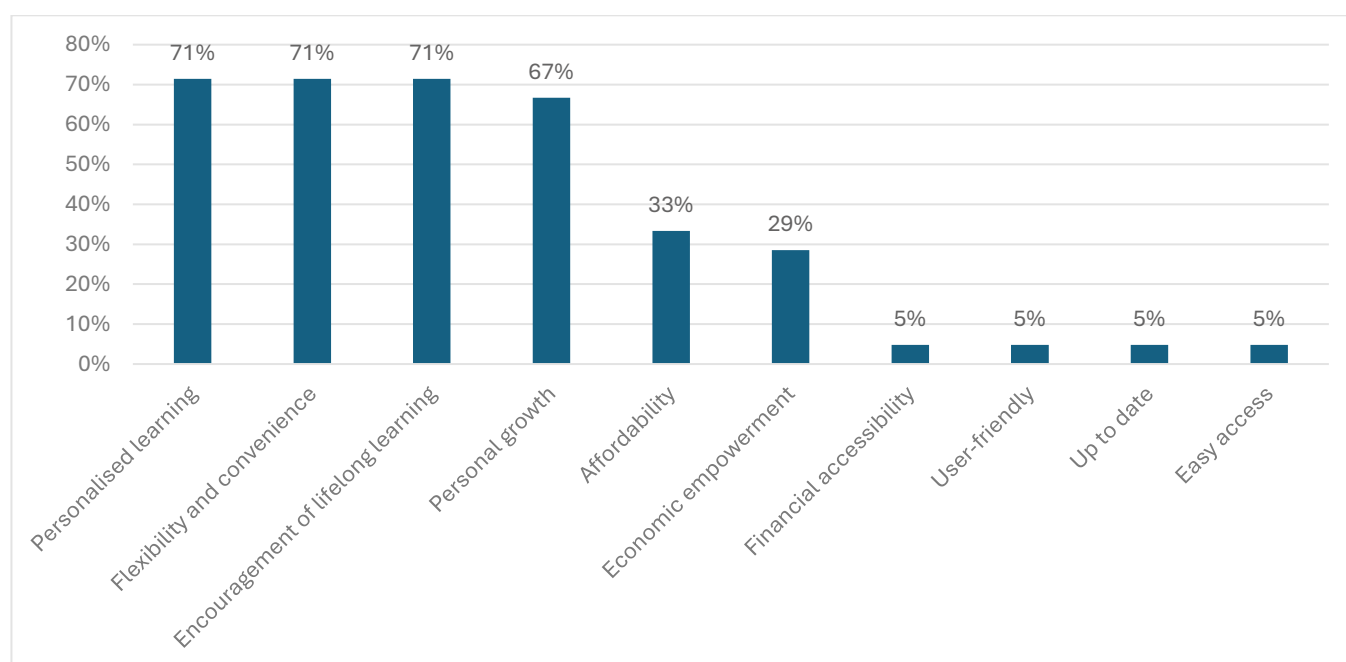
Figure 29. Perceived benefits of Individual Learning Accounts

The analysis shows that respondents who are familiar with the concept of Individual Learning Accounts see the greatest benefit in terms of the impact on learning and personal development. **71%** of respondents highlighted **personalised learning, flexibility and convenience, and the encouragement of lifelong learning** as the most important benefits, emphasising the value of tailored, adaptable and future-oriented educational offerings. **67%** cited **personal growth**, showing that respondents associated these accounts with promoting their individual development and skills. **33%** valued **affordability**, while **29%** cited **economic empowerment**, indicating that the financial benefits are recognised but de-emphasised compared to the learning-focused factors. A small percentage (5% each) valued aspects such as financial accessibility, user-friendliness, being up-to-date, and offering easy access, suggesting that these features are less widely recognised or important.

The results show that **respondents see Individual Learning Accounts primarily as tools to promote learning and personal development**, while financial and practical benefits are seen as secondary. This suggests that promotion of these accounts should focus on their ability to personalise education and promote lifelong learning, while addressing financial and accessibility concerns to increase their appeal.

## 1.2. Employers
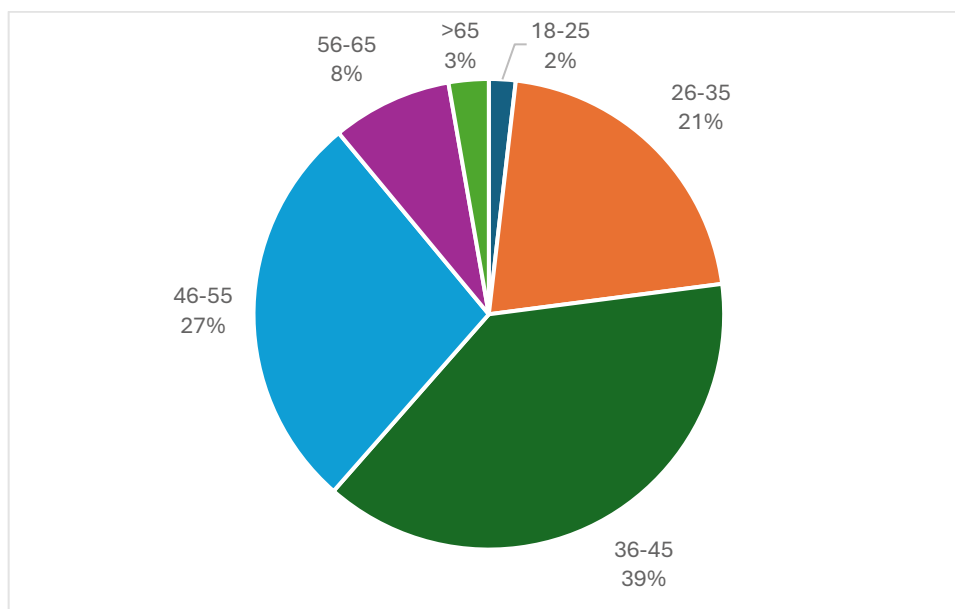


Figure 30. Age group

The data shows that the majority of respondents fall into the **36-45 age group** (**39%**), making it the largest demographic group to take part in the survey. The second largest group is **46-55 years old** (**27%**), followed by the **26-35 age group** (**21%**).

Younger participants (**18-25 years**) and older participants (**56-65 years and over 65 years**) are significantly less represented at only **2%, 8%** and **3%** respectively.

This suggests that employers are primarily mid-career (26-55 years) and both the younger and older demographics had lover participation.
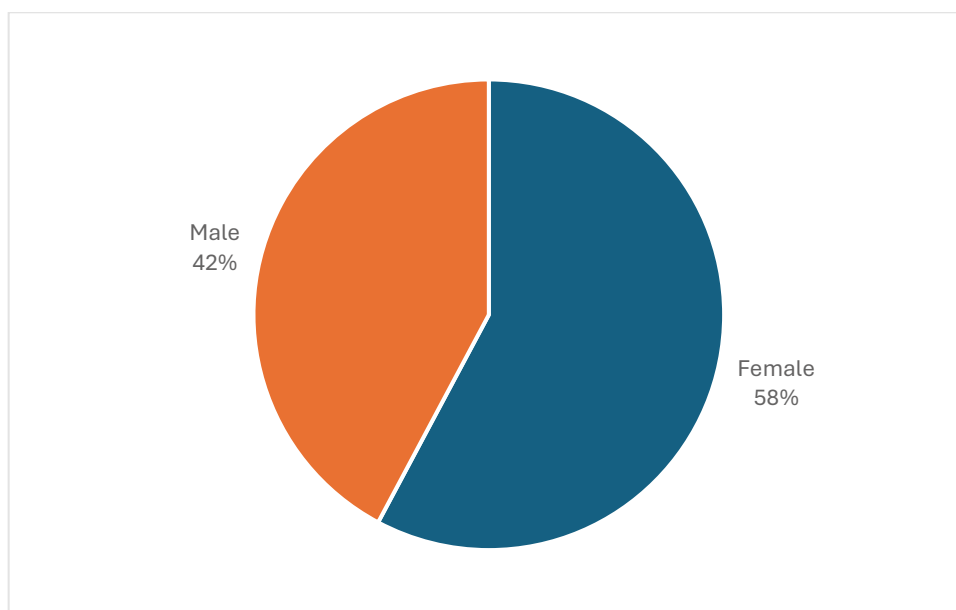
Figure 31. Gender

The results show that the majority of respondents are **female** (**58%**), while **male** respondents make up **42%**. This suggests that women are more active in this context.
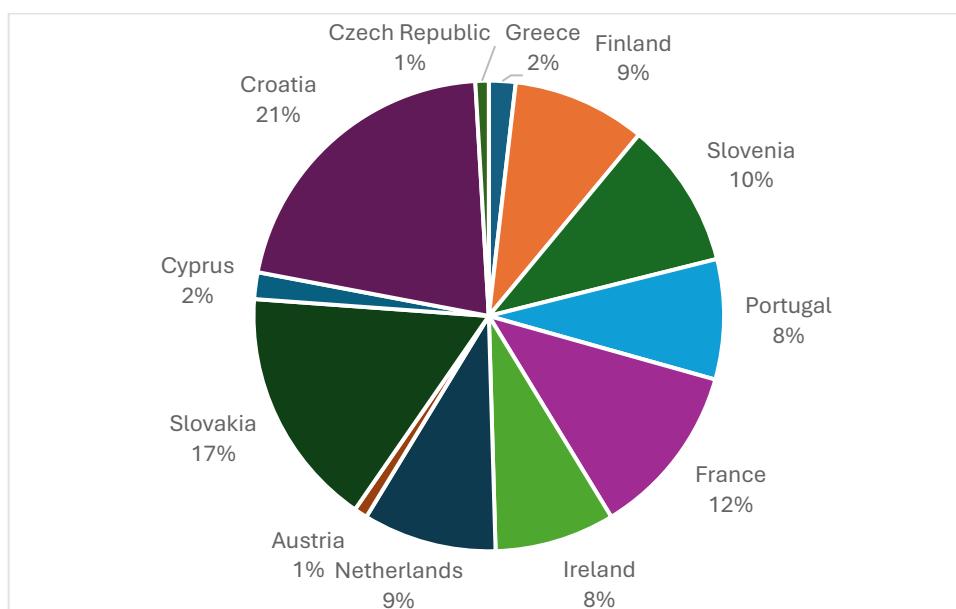


Figure 32. Country of residence

The highest percentage of respondents come from **Croatia** (**21%**), followed by **Slovakia** (**17%**). Together, these two countries account for a significant proportion of participants (41%). Other well-represented countries are **France** (**12%**), **Slovenia** (**10%**), **Finland** (**9%**) and **the Netherlands** (**9%**), each contributing a

similar proportion of responses. **Portugal** and **Ireland** each account for **8%** of responses, while **Greece** and **Cyprus** account for a smaller share (**2%**). **Austria** (**1%**) and the **Czech Republic** (**1%**) are the least represented in the research.
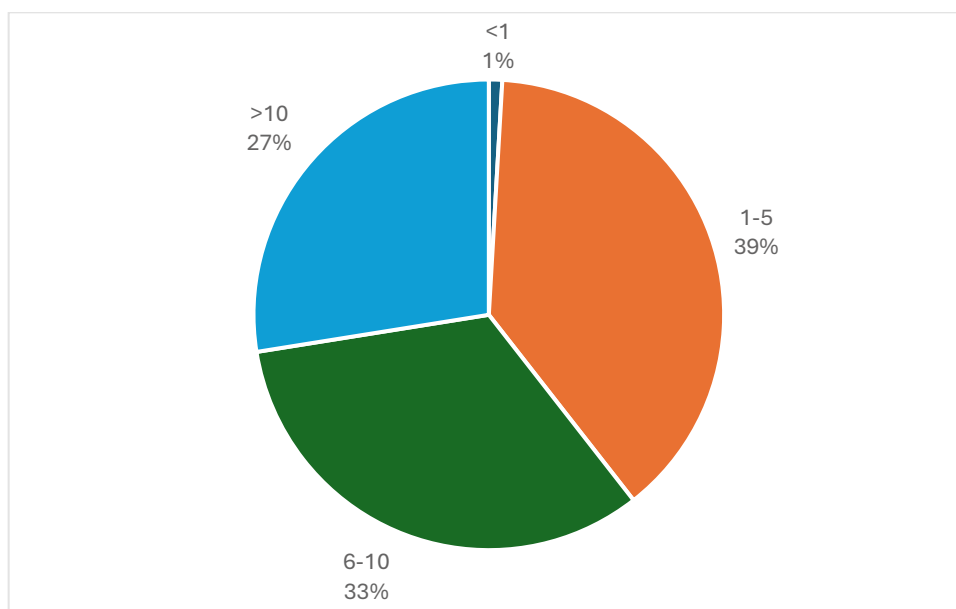


Figure 33. Years of experience

**39%** of respondents have **1-5 years of work experience**. This is the largest group and indicates that the organisations are relatively new. **33%** have **6-10 years of experience**, indicating a strong presence of medium seniority employers. **27%** have more than **10 years' experience**. Only **1%** have **less than 1 year of experience**, indicating that there are few newly employers. This distribution suggests that the participants consist mainly of employers with medium seniority, while there are relatively few new employers or employers with short seniority.
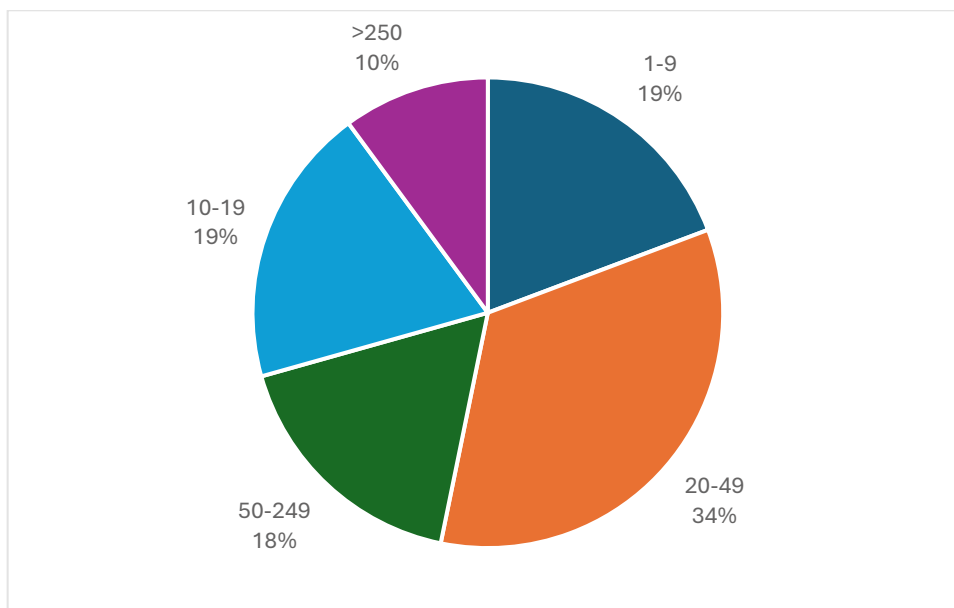
Figure 34. Number of employees

The largest group, **34%**, works in organisations with **20-49 employees**, which indicates that medium-sized companies are the most frequently represented. **19%** of respondents work in organisations **with 1-9 employees** and **10-19 employees**, indicating that small companies are relatively well represented in the data set. **18%** work in organisations with **50-249 employees**, indicating a significant proportion of medium to large companies. **10%** work in organisations with more than **250 employees** and therefore represent the smallest group, indicating a lower proportion of respondents from large companies. This distribution indicates that the majority of respondents come from small to medium-sized organisations and fewer respondents come from large companies or very small companies.
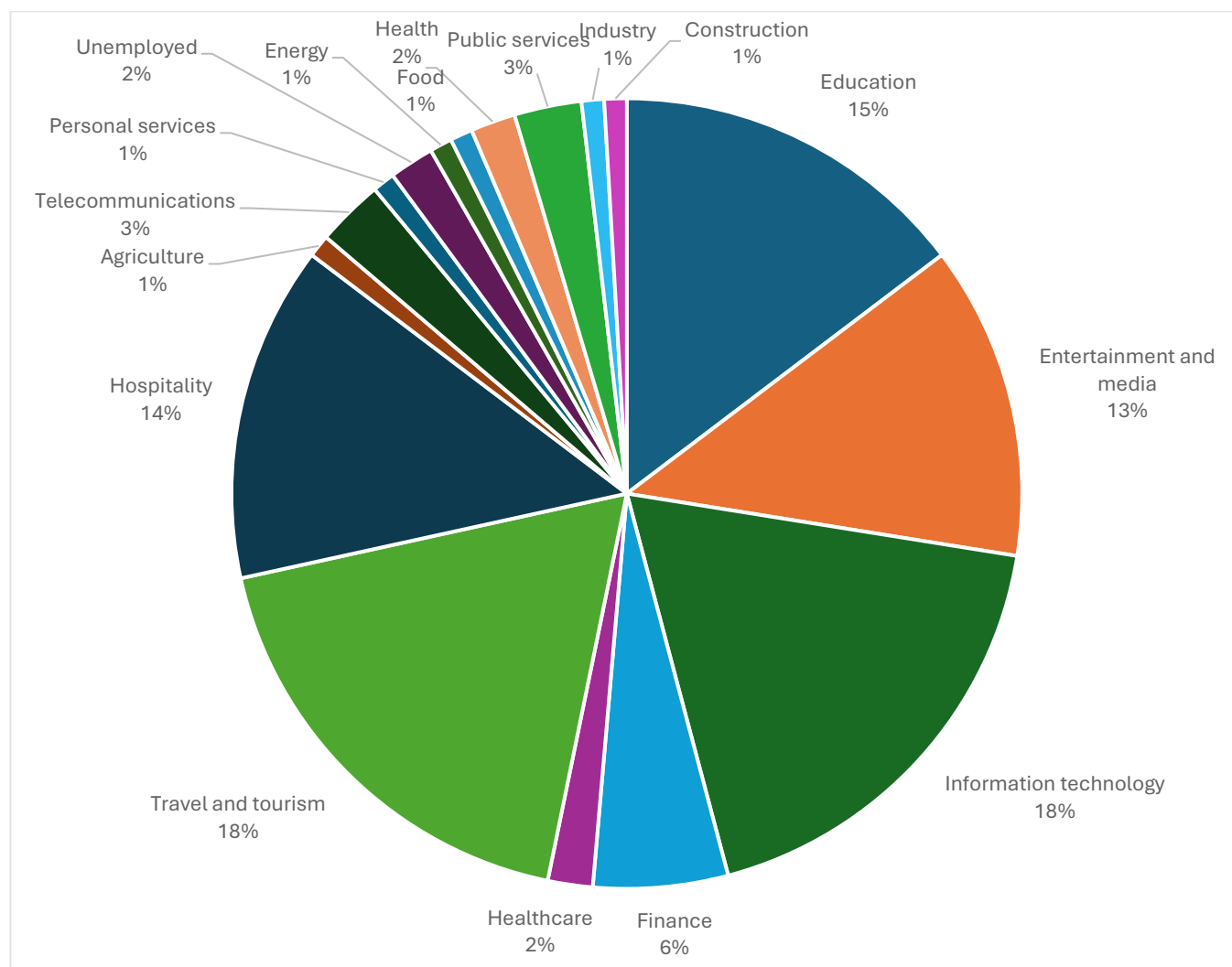
Figure 35. Industry sector

The most represented sectors are Information **Technology** (**18%**), **Travel and Tourism** (**18%**) and **Education** (**15%**), which together account for the largest share of respondents, indicating a strong presence of these industries. **Hospitality** (**14%**) and **Entertainment and Media** (**13%**) are also strongly represented, indicating notable engagement in these sectors. **Finance** (**6%**), **Public services** (**3%**) and **Telecommunications** (**3%**) are moderately represented. Sectors such as **Healthcare** (**2%**), **Energy** (**1%**), **Food** (**1%**), **Agriculture** (**1%**), **Construction** (**1%**), **Industry** (**1%**) and **Personal services** (**1%**) are less well represented, indicating that respondents from these sectors are in the minority. Unemployed respondents make up 2% of the total number of respondents, indicating a low proportion of individuals who are not currently employed in any particular sector. The results emphasise the diversity of sectors, with a few dominating participations.
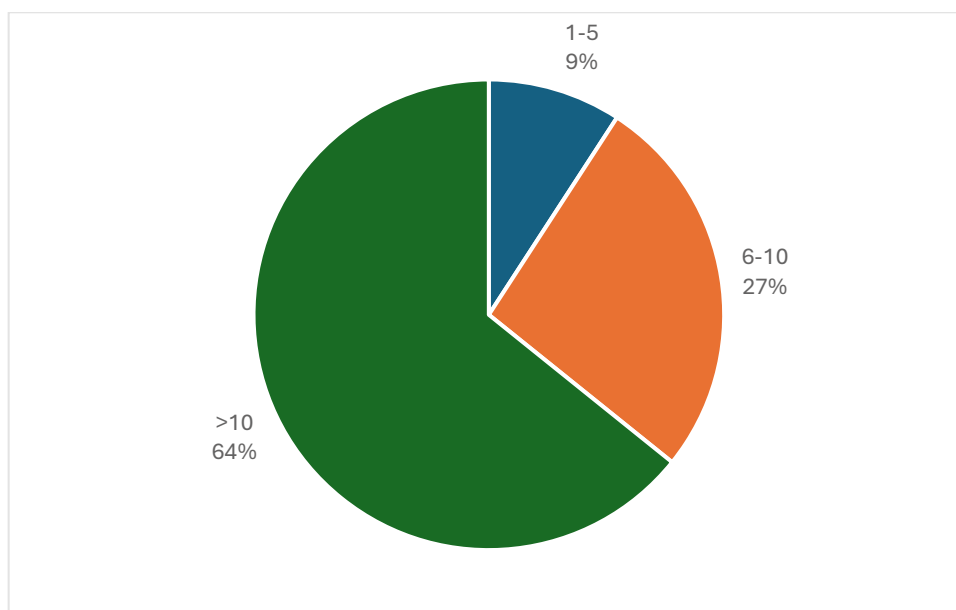
Figure 36. Length of existence of organizations

The majority of organisations, **64%**, have been in existence for **more than 10 years**, indicating that most of the respondents come from established organisations with a long history. **27%** of organisations have been in existence for **6-10 years**, indicating a moderate presence of relatively newer organisations that have been operating for some time but are not as long established. Only **9%** of organisations are in the **1–5-year** range, suggesting that a smaller proportion of respondents are very young or recently established organisations. The data suggests that most respondents come from long-established organisations.
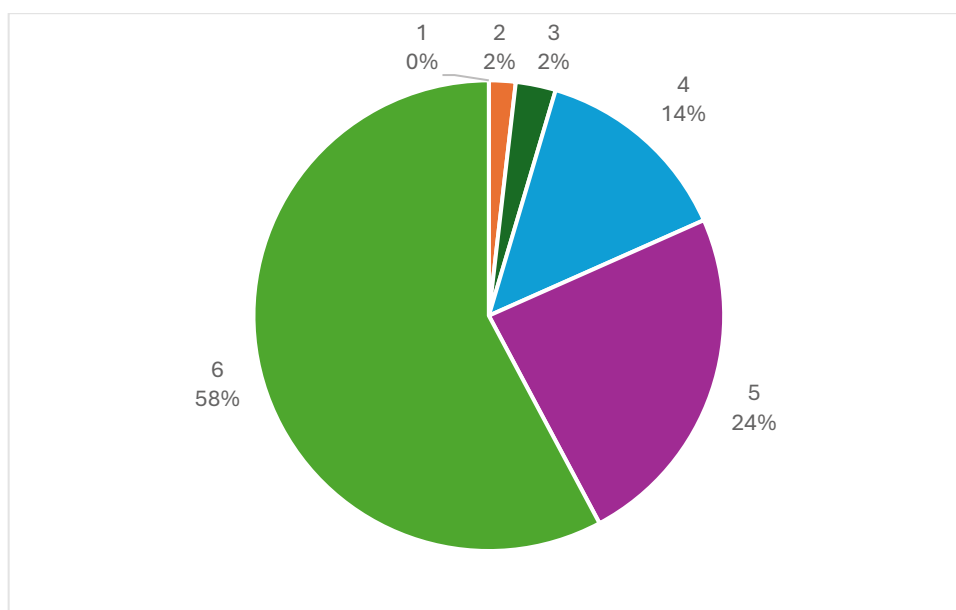


Figure 37. The importance of personal and professional development for organizations

**58%** of respondents rated the importance of personal and professional development as **very important** (6) **24%** rated it as **important** (5). This shows that the majority of organisations (82%) prioritise employee development. **14%** rated it as somewhat **important** (4), indicating that it is of medium importance to some organisations. Only **2%** rated it as **less important** (2) and **2%** as **neutral** (3), suggesting that only a very small proportion of organisations do not place much importance on employee development. Overall, these results suggest that employee development is a priority for most organisations.
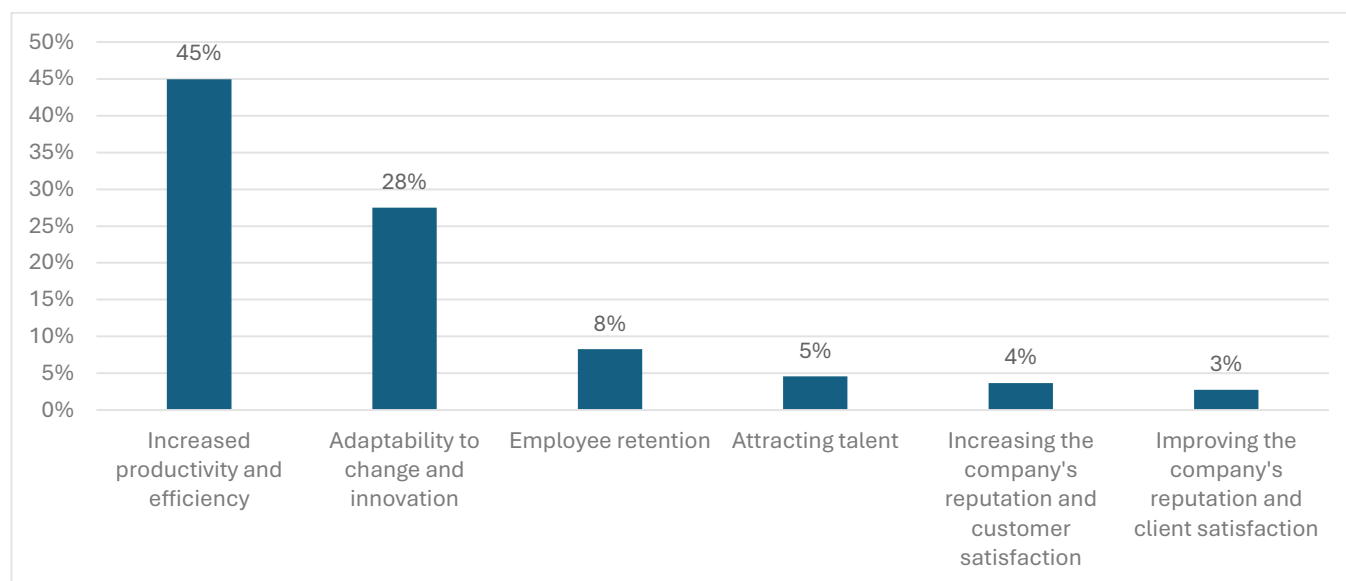


Figure 38. Reasons why the personal and professional development of employees is important

**45%** of respondents highlighted **increased productivity and efficiency** as a key benefit of personal and professional development, suggesting that employee development is seen as a direct contributor to better performance and results. **28%** pointed out that it promotes **adaptability to change and innovation**, suggesting that continuous development enables employees to stay relevant and respond to changes in the industry. **8%** mentioned **employee retention**, noting that investing in employee growth helps to retain talent and reduce turnover. **5%** believe this plays a role in **attracting talent** as it makes the organisation more attractive to potential candidates who value growth opportunities. A smaller proportion of respondents emphasised the role of employee development in **increasing the company's reputation and customer satisfaction** (**4% and 3%** respectively), showing that development not only affects internal operations but also has an impact on the external perception of the brand. Other responses, accounting for 1% each, reflect more specific reasons, including social inclusion, improving online communication skills, flexible working conditions and recognising that self-development helps employees overcome personal challenges (e.g. caring for disabled children).
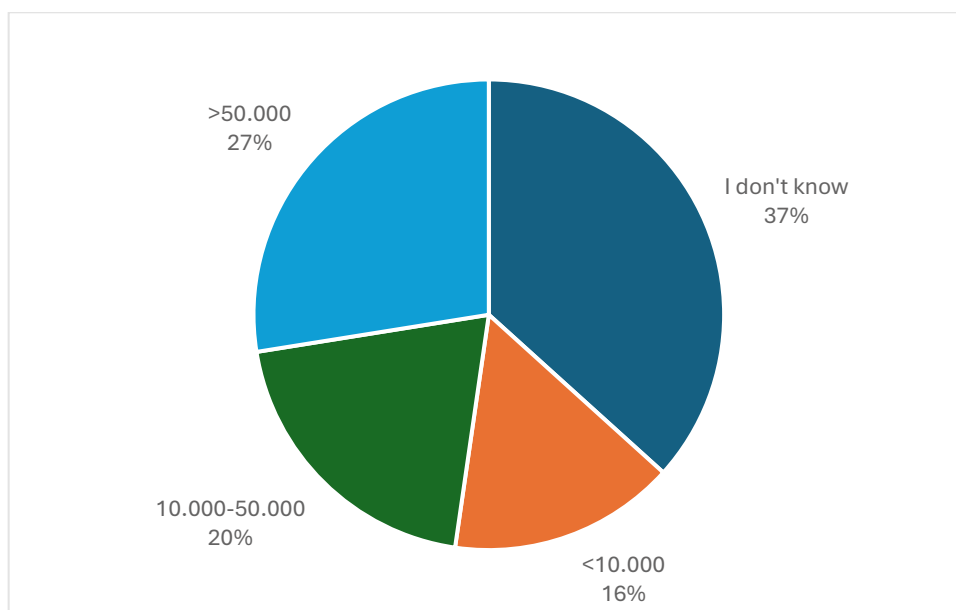
Figure 39. Total investment in the personal and professional development of employees

**37%** of respondents **do not know how** much their organisation invests in employee development, suggesting that budget is not visible or tracked in these organisations. **27%** of organisations invest **more than 50,000**, indicating a significant financial commitment to employee development in a quarter of the organisations surveyed. **20%** invest **between 10,000 and 50,000**, indicating a moderate investment in development, with many organisations committing significant resources to training and growth. **16%** invest **less than 10,000**, indicating that a smaller proportion of organisations are making relatively modest investments in this area.
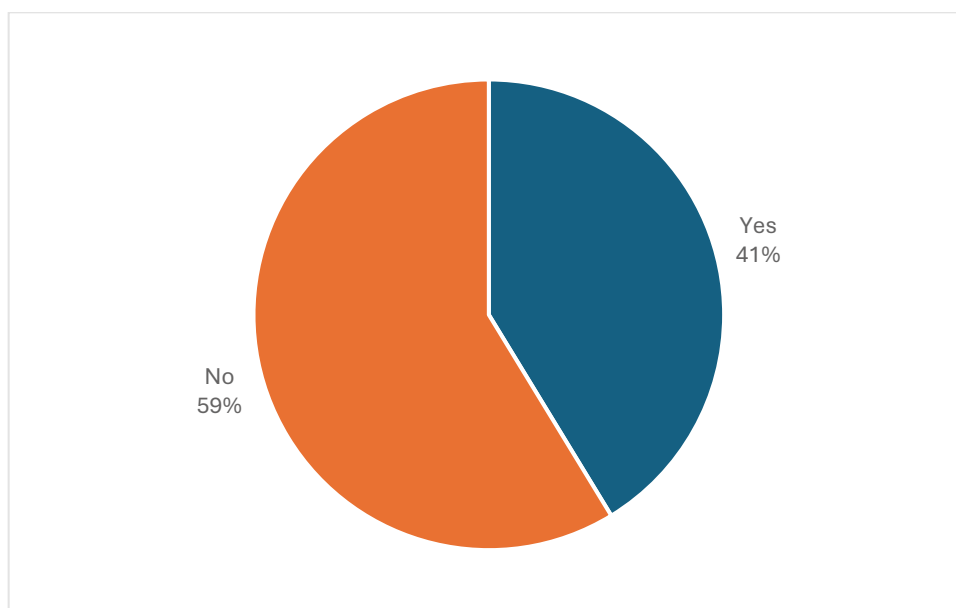


Figure 40. Availability of adult training in the company for employees

**41%** of organisations **offer in-house adult education** programmes for their employees. On the other hand, **59%** of organisations **do not offer in-house adult education**, suggesting that the majority of organisations either rely on external training programmes or have no formal development initiatives within their organisation.
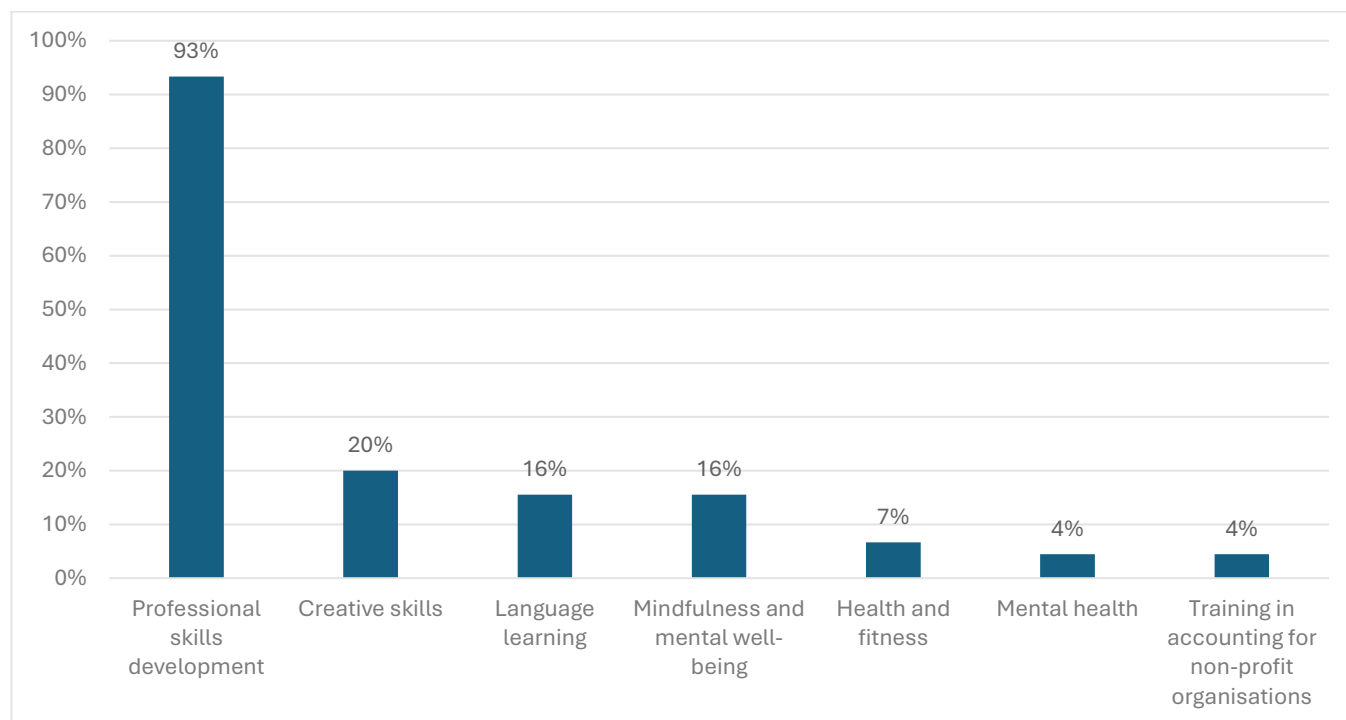


Figure 41. In-house education programmes for employees

Among the organisations that offer in-house education, **93%** of organisations prioritise the **professional skills development**. This shows that the main objective of in-house education is to improve the core competences of employees that are relevant to their roles. **20%** focus on fostering **creative skills**, suggesting that some organisations value creativity as an important aspect of employee growth. **16%** offer opportunities to **learn foreign languages**. This reflects the growing need for employees to acquire additional language skills in an increasingly globalised working environment. **16%** also offer programmes related to **mindfulness and mental well-being**, highlighting an awareness of the importance of employee well-being in maintaining a healthy and productive workforce. Other topics include **health and fitness** (**7%**), **mental health** (**4%**) and **accounting for non-profit organisations** (**4%**), illustrating a more specialised range of offerings. A smaller percentage (2%) focus on niche topics such as peer learning opportunities, job shadowing, professional ethics, inclusive education, communication and work-life balance. In summary, the data shows that the majority of organisations offering in-house education focus on developing professional skills. However, a range of other topics such as creativity, language learning and well-being are also important aspects of employee development in these organisations.
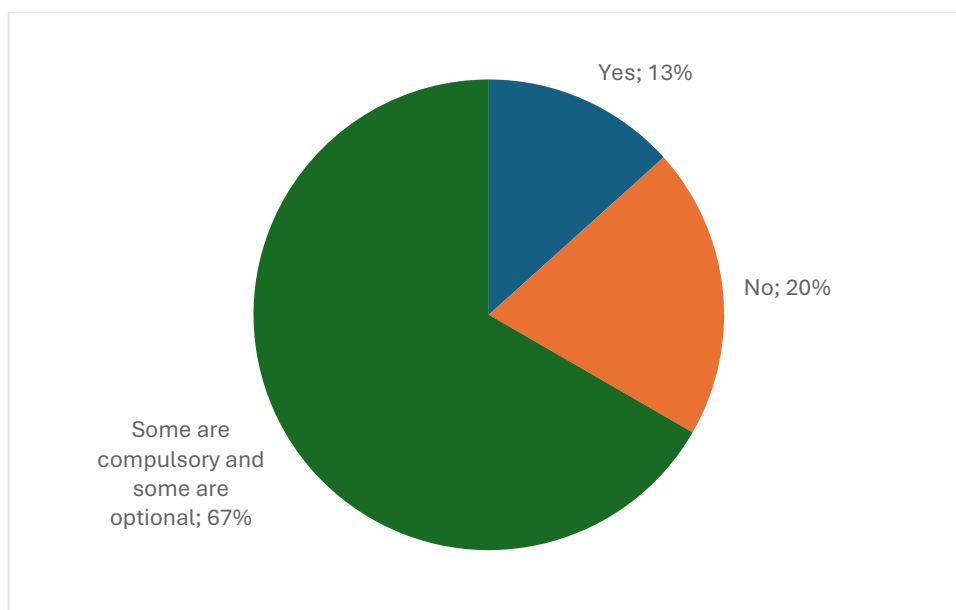
Figure 42. Compulsory vs. optional participation in in-house education programmes

**13%** of organisations make participation in all in-house educational programmes **compulsory** for their employees, indicating that a small proportion of employers enforce mandatory training and development. **20%** of companies **do not make** participation **compulsory**, suggesting that employees are free to choose whether or not to participate in the available educational programmes. **67%** of companies have a **mixed approach**, where some programmes are compulsory and others are optional. This indicates a more flexible approach that allows employees to choose certain programmes according to their needs, but mandates participation in other programmes that are considered essential for their development.
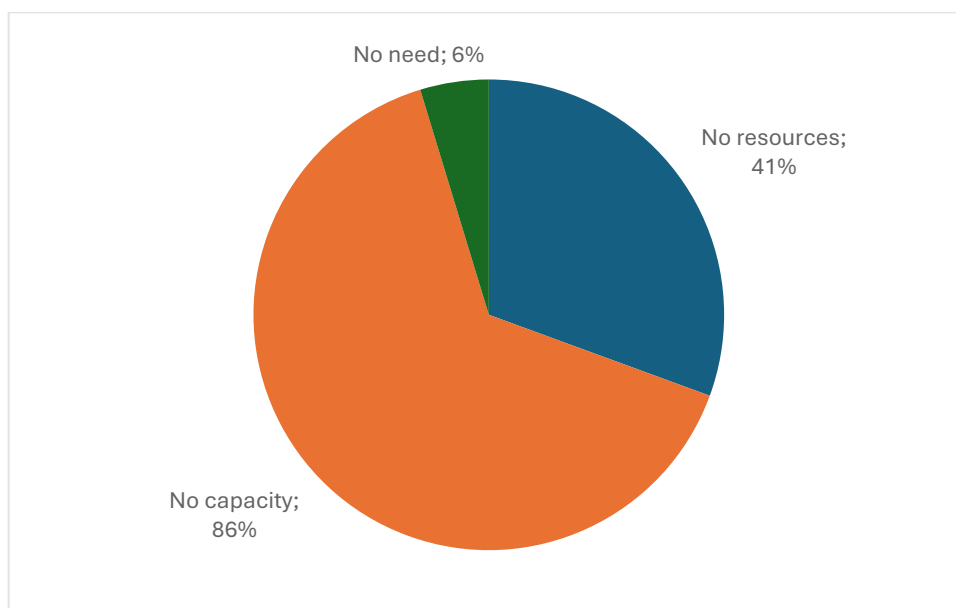


Figure 43. Reasons for not offering in-house education

The majority, **86%,** cite **lack of capacity** as the main obstacle to not offering in-house education, meaning that these organisations are unable to provide the necessary infrastructure, time or staff for in-house training. **41%** cite **lack of resources**, such as financial constraints, as the main barrier preventing them from offering in-house educational opportunities. A small percentage, **6%**, feel that there is **no need** for in-house education, suggesting that they rely on external providers or see training as unnecessary for their business. This data highlights that capacity and resources are the main barriers for most organisations, rather than a lack of perceived value in employee development.
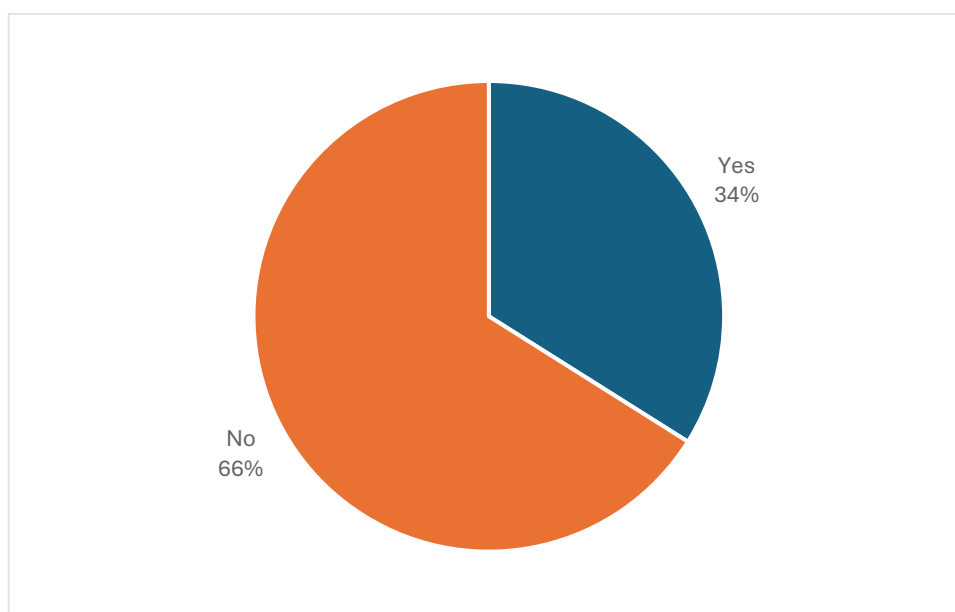


Figure 44. Organizational contracts with professional adult education providers

The majority of organisations (**66%**) **have no contracts with professional adult education providers**. This suggests that many employers either rely on alternative methods such as in-house training or ad hoc external resources, or do not prioritise formalised partnerships for staff education. On the other hand, **34%** of organisations **have contracts with professional adult education providers**. These employers are likely to recognise the value of specialist expertise and structured programmes offered by external providers to support the development of their workforce.
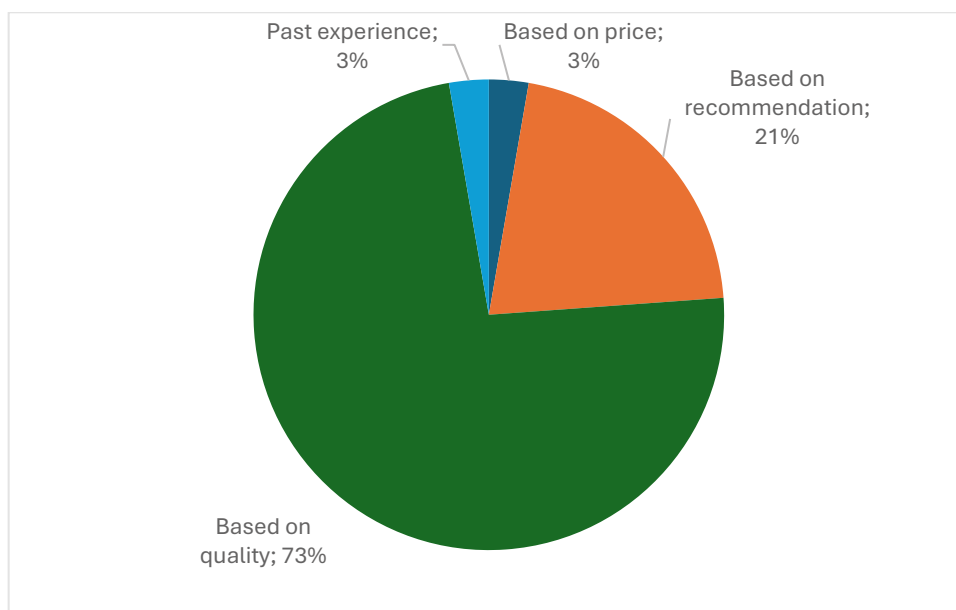
Figure 45. Criteria for choosing professional providers of adult education

For the organisations that have contracts with professional adult education providers, the choice of provider is primarily dependent on **quality**, which is mentioned by **73%** of respondents. **Recommendations** also play an important role and influence **21%** of organisations. Meanwhile, factors such as **price** and **past experience** are less important, with only **3%** of respondents citing these as decision criteria in each case. This shows that organisations prioritise the perceived effectiveness and reputation of education providers over cost or previous engagements when selecting partners.
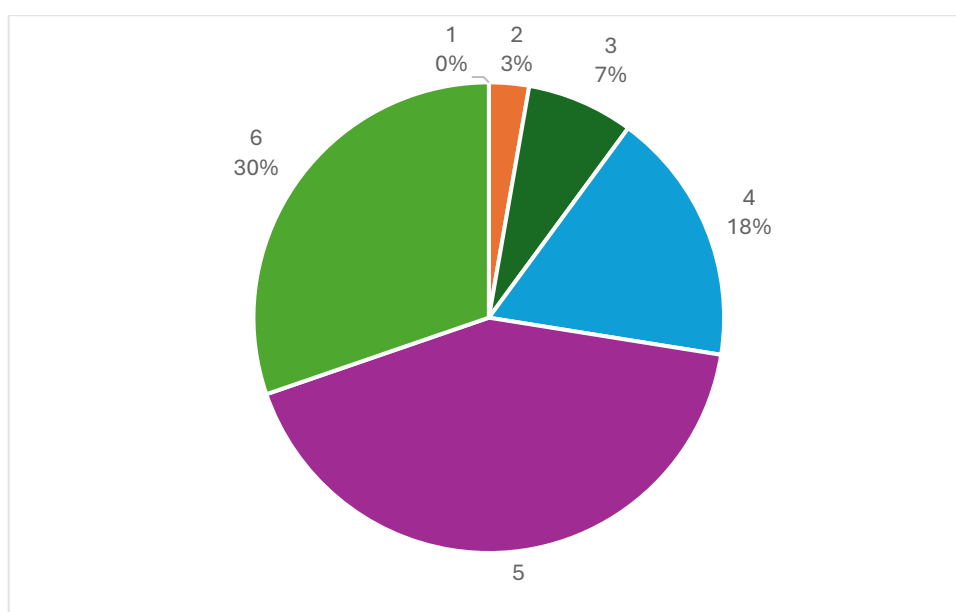


Figure 46. Organizations' experiences with adult education providers

The results show that organisations, that have contracts with professional adult education providers, have generally had a positive experience with adult education providers. **72% rated their experience as 5 or 6** on a 6-point scale. This indicates a high level of satisfaction and effectiveness in these partnerships. Moderate satisfaction is indicated by the fact that **18%** of respondents **gave a score of 4**, while **10% rated their experience as 3 or lower**, indicating room for improvement in meeting specific organisational needs or expectations. Overall, the data shows that most organisations rate their interactions with adult learning providers positively.
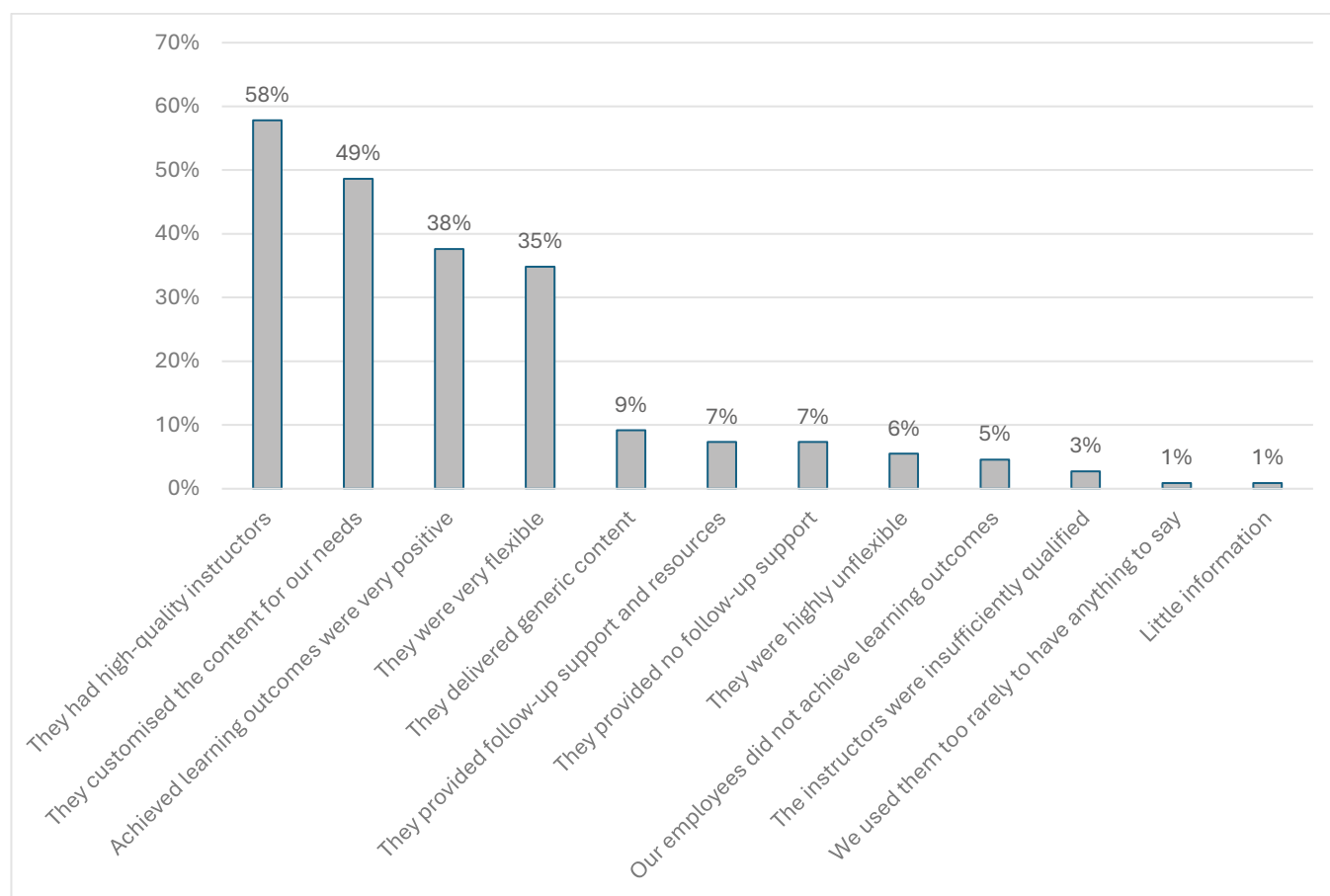


Figure 47. Factors influencing organizations' experiences with adult education providers

The most influential positive factors shaping organisations' experiences with adult education providers were the **high-quality instructors** (**58%**) and the ability to **customise content** to the specific organisational needs (**49%**), reflecting the importance of tailored, expert-led learning. In addition, **positive learning outcomes** (**38%**) and **flexibility** (**35%**) were cited as important factors for satisfaction, further emphasising the value of adaptability and results-driven approaches. On the other hand, challenges and dissatisfaction were associated with the **delivery of generic content** (**9%**), a **lack of follow-up support and resources** (**7%**) and **inflexibility** (**6%**). Less commonly expressed concerns were that staff were not achieving the desired outcomes (5%) or that trainers were not sufficiently skilled (3%).
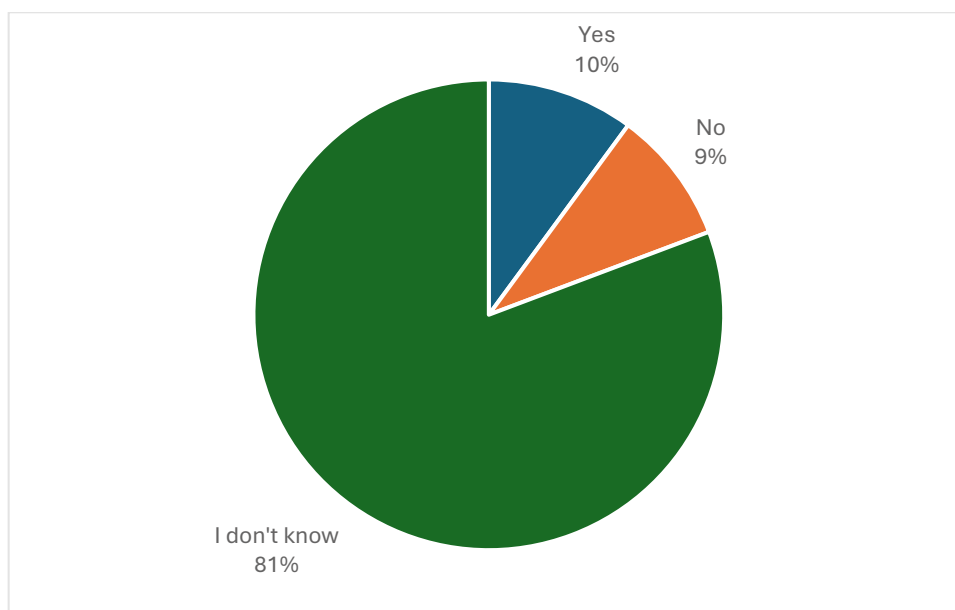
Figure 48. Awareness of a centralized database for adult education programmes

**81%** of respondents stated that they **do not know** if a centralized database of educational programmes for adult learners exists. Only **10%** of respondents **are aware** of the existence of such a database, while a small minority (**9%**) are convinced that **no such database exists**. This suggests a need for greater awareness and possibly the development or promotion of centralised platforms that could better inform adult learners and employers about available educational programmes.
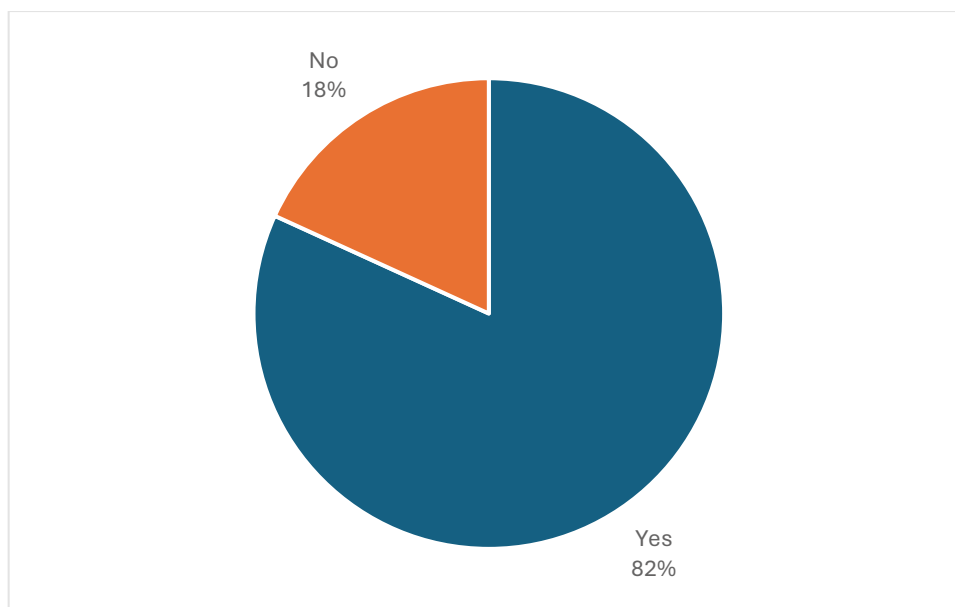


Figure 49. Usage of the adult education database among aware respondents

Of those who are aware of the existence of a centralized database of educational programmes for adult learners, a large majority (**82%**) said they **had used it**. On the other hand, **18%** of respondents, despite knowing about the database, **have not used it**. This could be due to factors such as lack of relevance to their needs, difficulty navigating the platform or a preference for other sources of information.
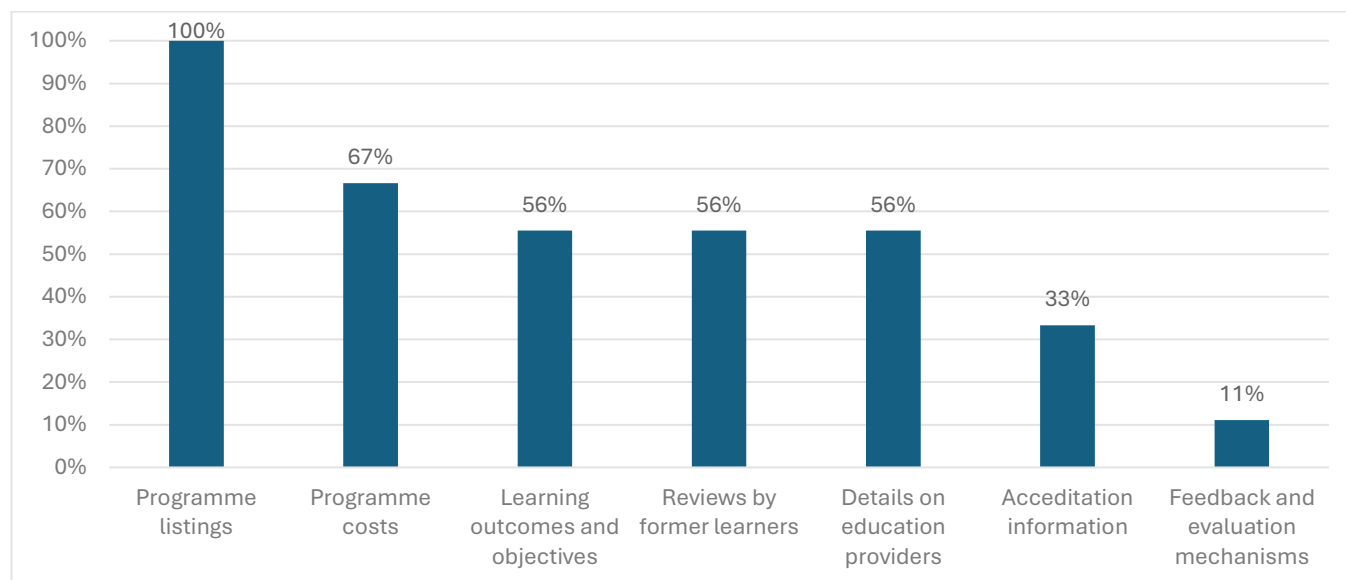


Figure 50. Information sought by employers in the adult education database

Of the employers who are aware of and have used the adult education database, **100%** have searched for **programme listings**, suggesting that the databases are primarily used to explore available educational programmes. A significant number of respondents also searched for **programme costs** (**67%**), **learning outcomes and objectives** (**56%**) and **reviews by former learners** (**56%**), suggesting that these are key factors in making informed decisions about employee training opportunities. In addition, **56%** searched for **details on education providers**, indicating that they want to know who is offering the programmes, while **33%** searched for **accreditation information**, suggesting that the credibility and formal recognition of the programmes are also important considerations. Finally, only **11%** of users searched for **feedback and evaluation mechanisms**, which may suggest that while the overall quality of programmes is important, detailed evaluations may not be a priority for employers when using the database. This analysis shows that employers prioritise information on programme content, cost and provider details when selecting training opportunities for their employees.
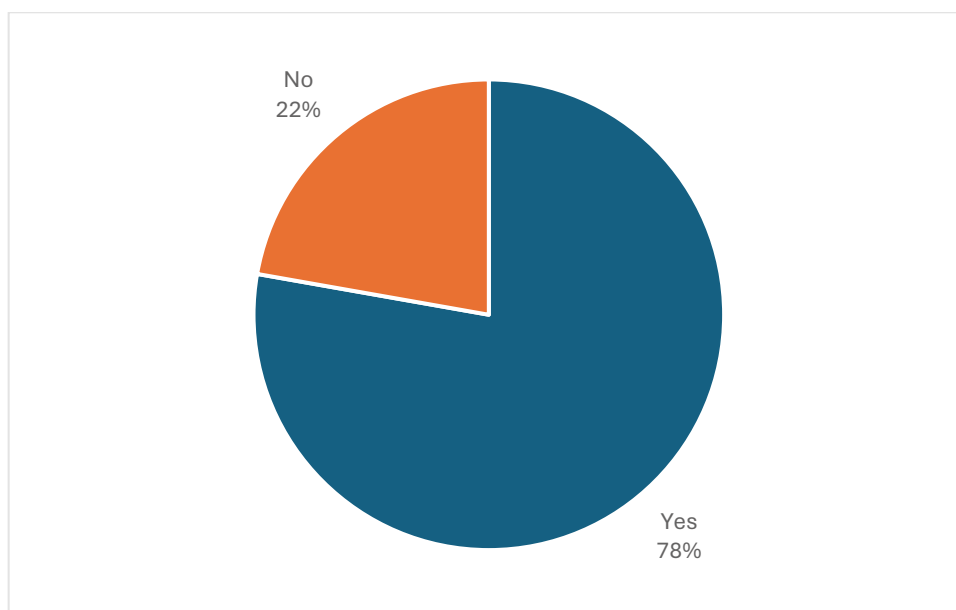
Figure 51. Efficiency of information retrieval in the adult education database

Of the employers who were aware of and used the adult education database, **78% were able to find the information they were looking for quickly**. This shows that the majority of users found the databases to be user-friendly and efficient in finding the information they were looking for. On the other hand, **22%** reported that they **could not find the information quickly**, suggesting that there are difficulties or inefficiencies for some users in navigating the databases.
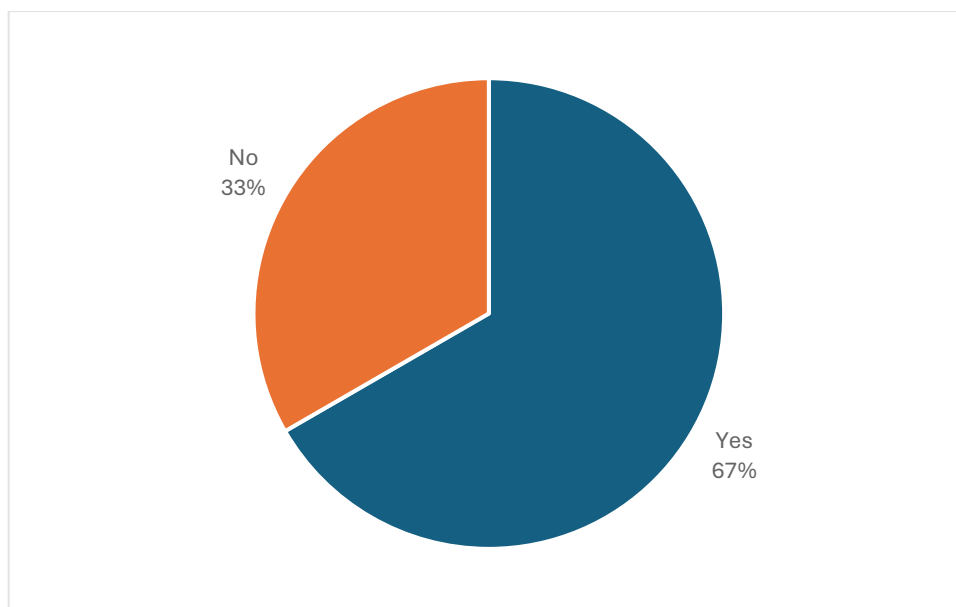


Figure 52. Satisfaction with information provided in the adult education database

Of the employers who are aware of and have used the adult education database, **67%** said they **were satisfied with the information provided**. This suggests that the majority of users found the content of the databases relevant, comprehensive and useful to their needs. However, **33%** of employers **expressed dissatisfaction with the information**, which could indicate areas for improvement.
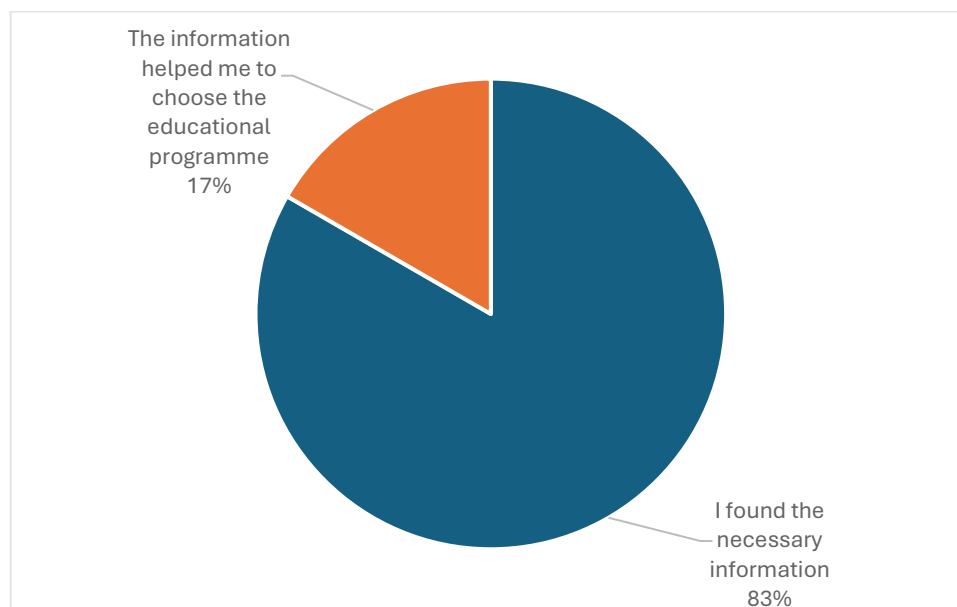


Figure 53. Reasons for satisfaction with the information provided in the database

Of the employers who were satisfied with the information provided in the adult education database, **83%** stated that they had **found the necessary information**. **17%** of satisfied employers stated that the database **helped** them **to choose a educational programme**.
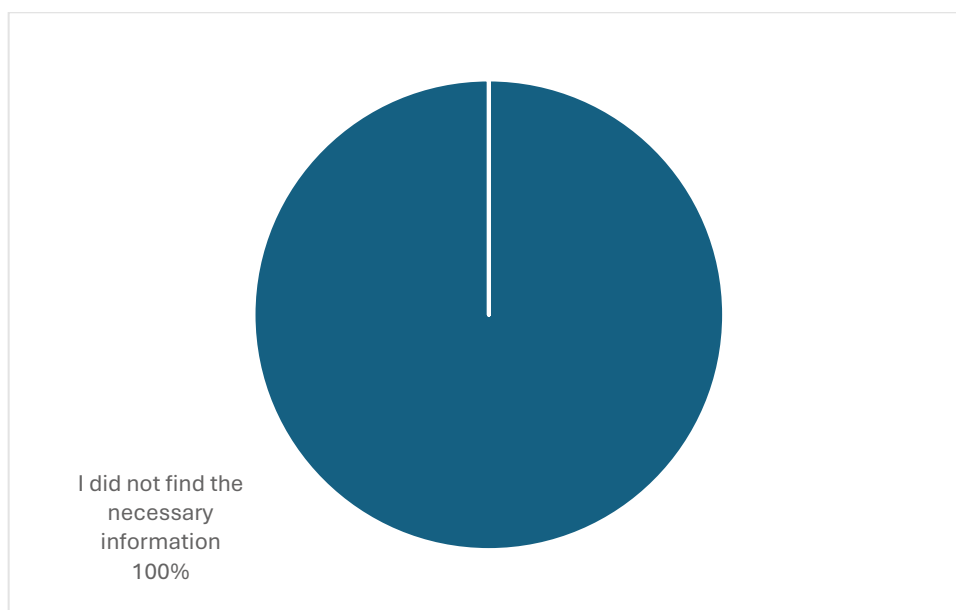
Figure 54. Reasons for dissatisfaction with the information provided in the database

Of the employers who are familiar with the database and have used it but were not satisfied with the information provided, **100%** stated that the problem was that they **could not find the information they needed**. This suggests that the main reason for dissatisfaction was the inadequate or incomplete content of the database in relation to their needs.
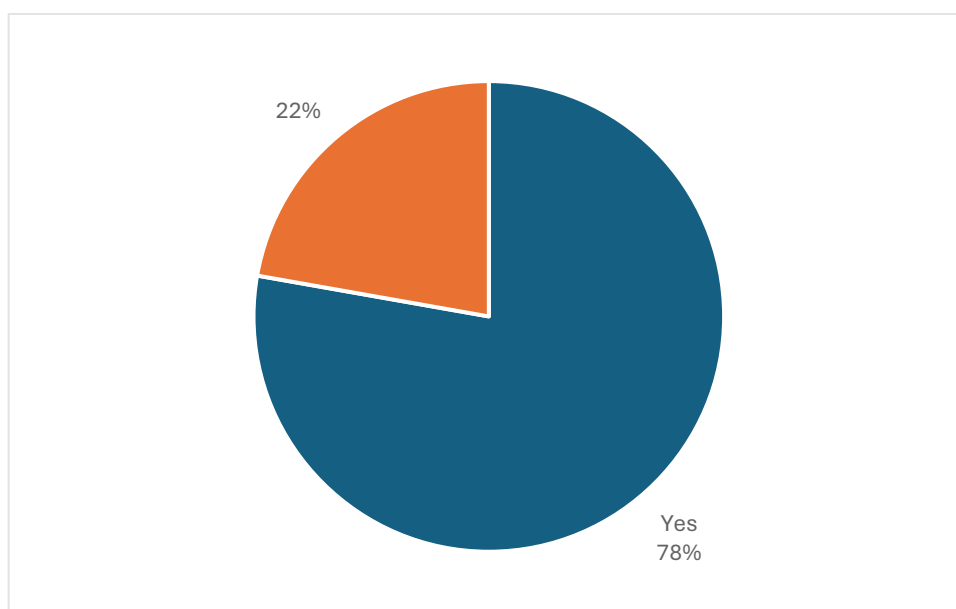


Figure 55. The impact of database information on employers' decisions about choosing adult education programmes

The majority of employers (**78%**) who are familiar with and have used the database have found it **influential in selecting adult education programmes** for their employees. This suggests that the information available in the databases has played an important role in the selection of educational programmes. On the other hand, **22%** of employers stated that the **database had no impact on their decision**, suggesting that other factors may have been more influential in their choice.
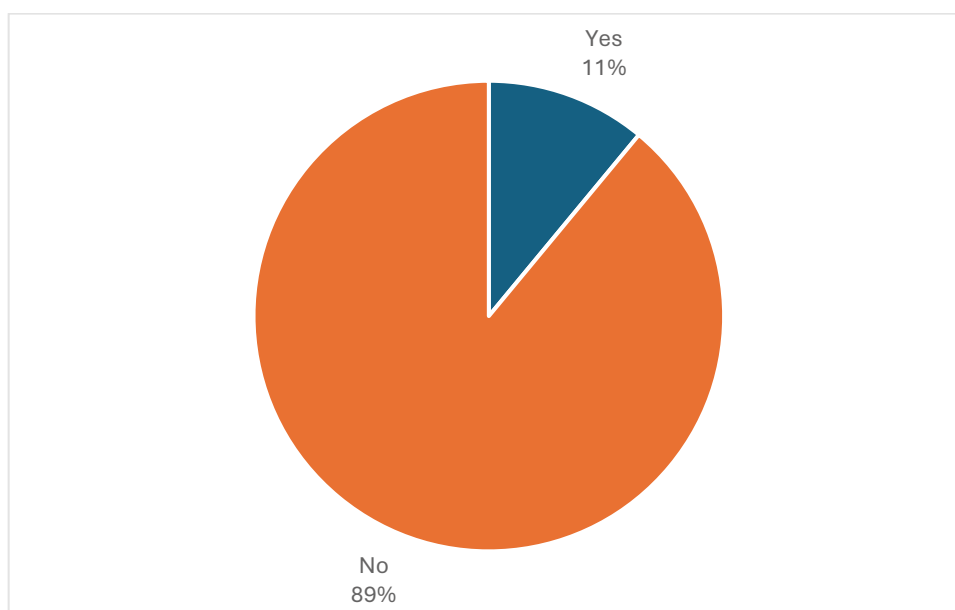


Figure 56. Familiarity with the concept of Individual Learning Accounts among employers The data shows that a significant majority of employers (**89%**) **are not familiar** with the concept of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), while only **11%** of them **are familiar** with them.
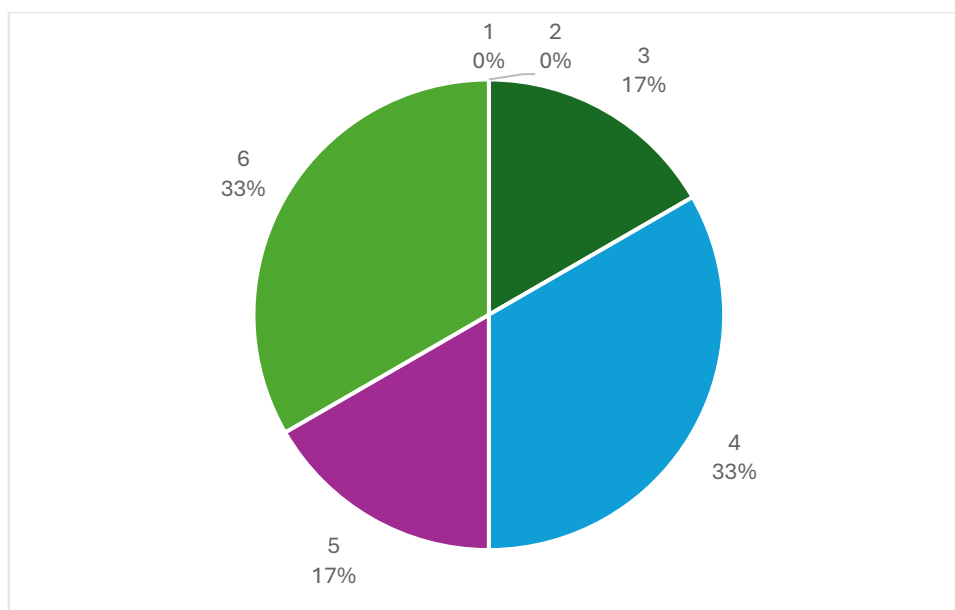
Figure 57. Perceived benefits of Individual Learning Accounts for employers

Employers who are familiar with the concept of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) generally find it beneficial (50%), with **33%** rating it as **very beneficial** (6) and **17%** rating it as **beneficial** (5). A further **33%** gave it **a score of 4**, suggesting that they also view it positively, albeit perhaps with some reservations. However, **17%** rated the concept as **moderately beneficial** (3), suggesting that a smaller proportion of employers see ILAs as having limited benefit for their organisation. Remarkably, no one rated the concept as not at all beneficial (1) or not very beneficial (2).
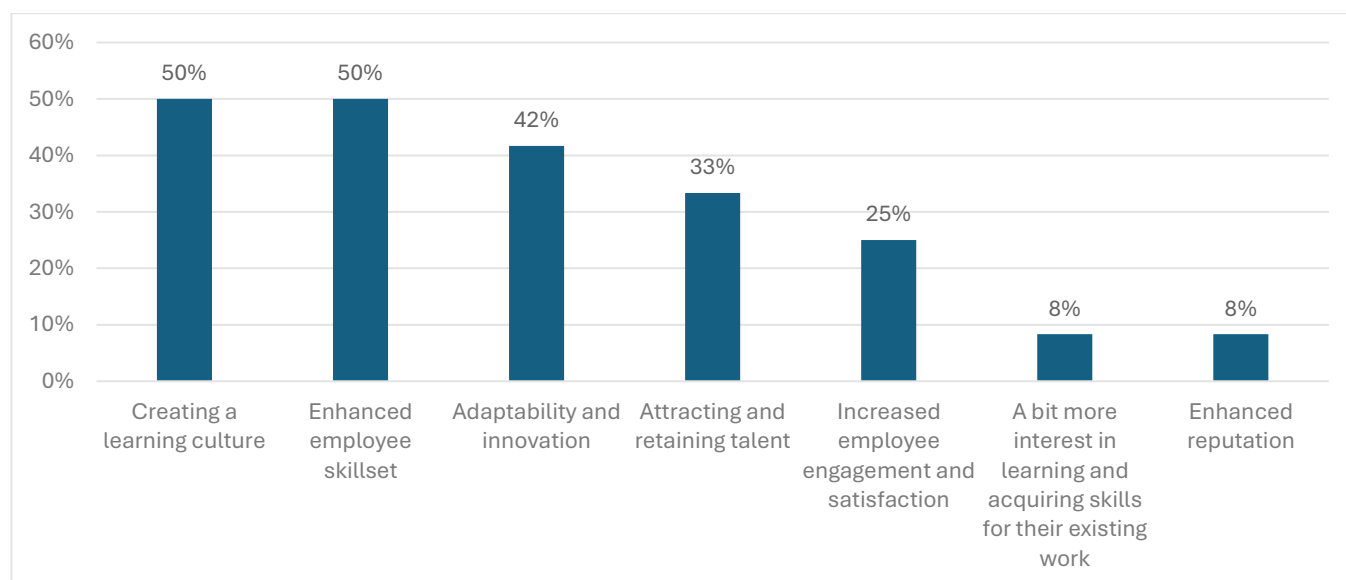


Figure 58. Perceived benefits of Individual Learning Accounts among employers

Among employers who are familiar with the concept of ILAs and perceive its benefits, the most frequently cited benefits are the **creation of a learning culture** (**50%**) and the **enhancement of employee skillsets** (**50%**). This suggests that employers see ILAs as a tool that can promote continuous professional development and improve the overall competences of their employees. In addition, **42%** of employers emphasised that ILAs contribute to **adaptability and innovation**, suggesting that they view ILAs as a means to keep employees versatile and equipped for change. A third (**33%**) of employers believe that ILAs help to **attract and retain talent**, highlighting the importance of offering learning opportunities to remain competitive in the labour market. Other benefits cited include **increased employee engagement and satisfaction** (**25%**). However, only a small percentage (**8%**) believe that ILAs have a **direct impact on employees' interest in learning new skills** for their current roles or on **enhancing the organisation's reputation**.

# Conclusion

The surveys conducted among adult learners and employers provide valuable insights into the state of adult education and highlight key motivations, experiences and challenges.

## Adult learners:

**Motivations for participation.** The majority (94%) of adult learners cited the development of professional skills as the main motivation for participating in adult education, highlighting the close link between learning and career progression. In addition, personal growth was an important factor, with 25% seeking creative skills and 24% focussing on mindfulness and mental well-being, indicating the multifaceted role of adult education.

**Experiences of adult learning.** The overall experience of adult learners was largely positive, with 73% rating their participation as positive or very positive. This underlines the effectiveness and satisfaction associated with adult education programmes.

**Awareness of centralised databases.** There is a significant knowledge gap or there are no databases. 76% of adult learners stated that there are no centralised databases for adult education programmes. Of those who were aware, only 55% reported using such databases, suggesting that these resources need to be better advertised and made accessible.

## Employers:

**Importance of employee development.** Employers showed a strong commitment to professional development. 82% of respondents considered it important or very important. Key benefits include increasing productivity (45%), adaptability to innovation (28%) and talent retention (8%).

**Investment in development.** The level of investment in employee development varied widely, with 27% of employers spending more than €50,000, 20% spending €10,000–50,000 and 16% spending less than €10,000 annually. However, 37% of employers were unsure of their total investment.

**Collaboration with external providers.** While 66% of employers do not have contracts with external education providers, those that do prioritise quality (73%) and recommendations (22%) when selecting their partners.

**Awareness and use of databases**. A clear majority (81%) of employers were unaware of centralised databases for adult education. Of those who were aware of them, 82% had used these resources, primarily to search for programme listings, costs and learning objectives. Satisfaction with the information provided was high among most users, although 33% were dissatisfied, citing a lack of necessary detail.

## Comparative insights:

Both groups – adult learners and employers – view adult learning as a valuable tool for professional development. However, there are notable differences:

- **Utilisation rates:** Employers were more likely to use the centralised databases (82%) than learners (55%).

- **Priority areas:** While learners are motivated by personal and professional goals, employers focus on benefits to the organisation, such as productivity and innovation.

## Recommendations:

**Create and promote centralised databases**: both groups need more awareness of and access to centralized platforms for adult educational programmes. This could include targeted outreach and clearer communication of the benefits.

**Tailored programmes:** Providers should design flexible, high-quality programmes that meet both professional and personal development needs to address the different motivations of learners and employers.

**Employer support**: Encourage employers to invest more consistently in training and development through incentives or subsidies, emphasising the long-term benefits for business growth.

In summary, while adult learning is highly valued, improving access to information and tailoring programmes to the specific needs of learners and employers is critical to maximising their impact.

## List of figures

LEAD PARTNER/AUTHOR
**Algebra University**

CARDET

Knowledge
**INNOVATION**
Centre

**ALGEBRA**

eaea
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

AIVA
ASOCIÁCIA INŠTITÚCIÍ
VZDELÁVANIA DOSPELÝCH