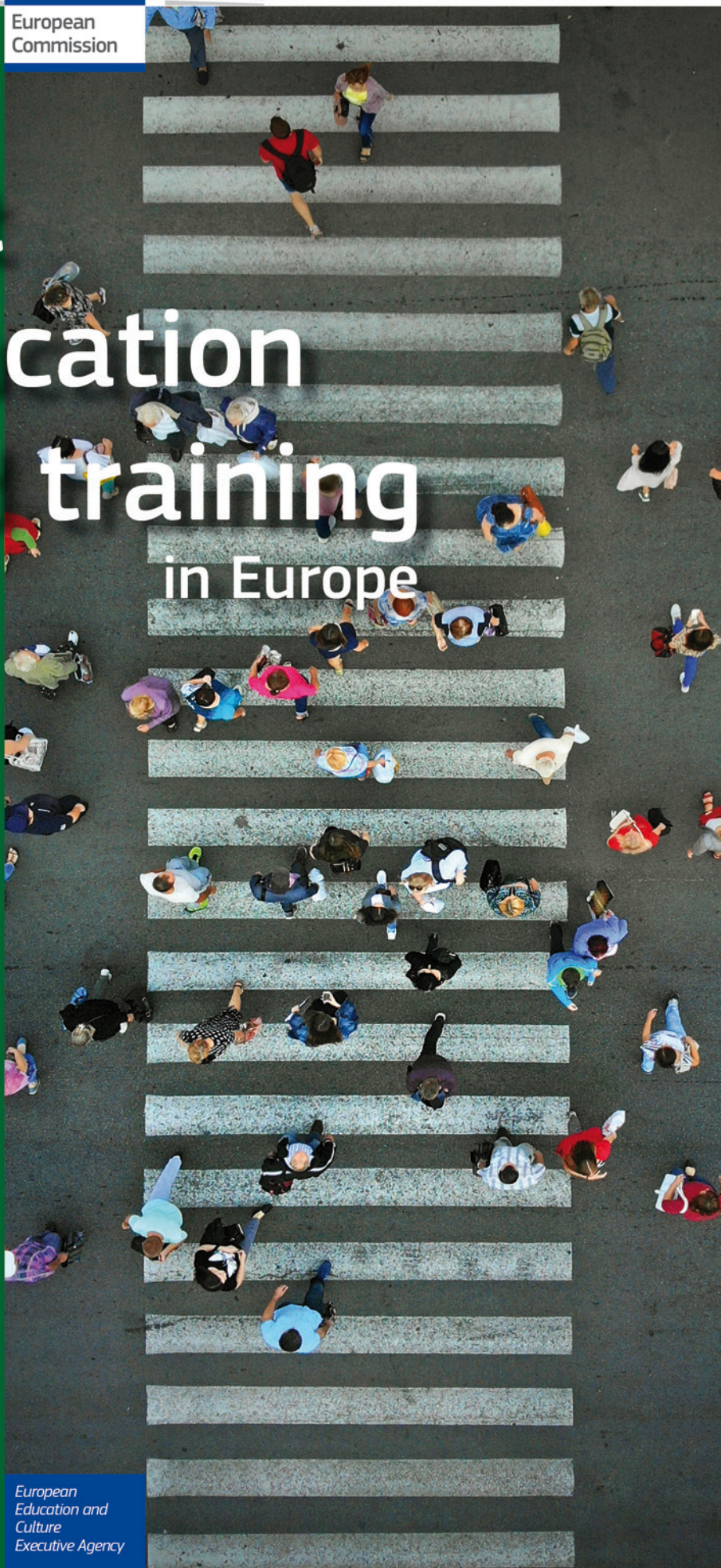
European Commission

Adult education and training in Europe

Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications



Eurydice report

European Education and Culture Executive Agency

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FOREWORD

Learning throughout life is the driving force of our social and economic progress. It contributes to people's employability and professional growth as well as to their personal development and well-being. Continuous learning can also help us face important challenges, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift towards a digital and environmentally sustainable European society.

Especially in the current context, adult skills and qualifications are of high importance. Survey data show that around one fifth of adults aged 25-64 in the European Union have not completed upper secondary education and that these adults are less likely to participate in education and training compared to those with higher educational attainment levels. Moreover, many adults in Europe have low levels of literacy, numeracy or digital skills.

European policy recognises that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning. This idea has been highlighted in the European Pillar of Social Rights and its recently adopted action plan that sets a new EU headline target of 60% of adults participating in training every year by 2030. The latter has been recently endorsed by the Porto Declaration, showing the highest-level political commitment to adult learning. Several other major EU policy initiatives equally underline the importance of investing in adult skills and lifelong learning, including the European Skills Agenda and the European Education Area communication. Through these initiatives we not only promote ambitious objectives for adult participation in education and training, but also encourage the use of instruments that may help adults engage in learning, such as micro-credentials or individual learning accounts. It is moreover clear that we need to ensure access to learning opportunities especially for those adults who may benefit from upskilling and reskilling the most. This aspect is central to the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways and the ongoing EU support measures countries can make use of to develop their education and training systems.

This new Eurydice report is an excellent addition to the resources at our disposal for improving the adult education and training sector. It provides a useful overview of national policies and measures in this field across Europe, with a special focus on initiatives targeting adults with low levels of basic skills and those with low or no qualifications. By exploring a wide range of key topics, it contributes to our understanding of the

situation in the field of adult learning and allows us to reflect on how we can better respond to current and future challenges.

We are convinced that this report will be of great interest to policy makers and other stakeholders involved in both education and employment. We hope that it will encourage countries to exchange practices and to learn from each other with a view to building strong, inclusive and effective adult education and training systems.

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Commissioner responsible for
Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

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Jobs and Social Rights

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CODES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Country codes

EU	European Union	**IT**	Italy	**EEA, candidate countries and non-EU countries**	
Member States		**CY**	Cyprus	**BA**	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BE	Belgium	**LV**	Latvia	**CH**	Switzerland
BE fr	Belgium – French Community ([1])	**LT**	Lithuania	**IS**	Iceland
BE de	Belgium – German-speaking Community	**LU**	Luxembourg	**LI**	Liechtenstein
BE nl	Belgium – Flemish Community	**HU**	Hungary	**ME**	Montenegro
BG	Bulgaria	**MT**	Malta	**MK**	North Macedonia
CZ	Czechia	**NL**	Netherlands	**NO**	Norway
DK	Denmark	**AT**	Austria	**RS**	Serbia
DE	Germany	**PL**	Poland	**TR**	Turkey
EE	Estonia	**PT**	Portugal	**UK**	United Kingdom
IE	Ireland	**RO**	Romania	**UK-ENG**	England
EL	Greece	**SI**	Slovenia	**UK-WLS**	Wales
ES	Spain	**SK**	Slovakia	**UK-NIR**	Northern Ireland
FR	France	**FI**	Finland	**UK-SCT**	Scotland
HR	Croatia	**SE**	Sweden		

Other codes

(:) or :	Data not available	**✗**	Not participating in the data collection	**(-) or –**	Not applicable

Abbreviations and acronyms

AES	Adult Education Survey
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU LFS	EU Labour Force Survey
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

The above list refers to international abbreviations and acronyms. National abbreviations and acronyms are explained directly in the text.

([1]) In the French-speaking part of the Belgian federal state, the French Community is the institutional and political authority responsible for education-related matters, while the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region are responsible for training-related matters. In this report, though, the term 'French Community' is used to refer to the three institutional and political authorities.

MAIN FINDINGS

We are living in a time of fast-paced change. New technologies and the digital transformation are rapidly changing the ways in which we live and work. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the pace of change. Against this backdrop, the lifelong and lifewide development of skills has become more essential than ever. Everyone needs the opportunity and has the fundamental right to acquire new knowledge and skills, thereby safeguarding their opportunities in the labour market and allowing them to remain active, autonomous members of society.

A multitude of evidence has been gathered over the years showing that adult education and training – both formal and non-formal – can contribute to individuals' employability, health and well-being. Adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications are known to be among the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market and in society. With the mounting economic and social pressures, their situation is likely to worsen further.

Education systems can play an important role in identifying and reaching out to the most vulnerable groups of adult learners in order to encourage their participation in education and training. However, this requires that all stakeholders, including governments and employers, play their part through high levels of commitment, targeted support and dedicated funding.

This Eurydice report aims to provide insights into the field of adult education and training in Europe. It investigates current approaches to promoting lifelong learning, with a particular focus on policies and measures supporting adults with low levels of skills and qualifications to access learning opportunities. In doing so, the report takes a broad perspective, considering and exploring a range of interlinked areas vital to this cause (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Areas related to adult education and training analysed in the report

Source: Eurydice.

Starting with a range of quantitative indicators related to adult education and training (Chapter 1), the report examines national arrangements for coordinating adult learning policies and measures and policy commitments that aim to support adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (Chapter 2). It then provides a cross-country overview of publicly subsidised programmes that seek to provide opportunities for adults to upgrade their skills and qualifications throughout adulthood (Chapter 3). The report also addresses the question of financial support, paying particular attention to the financial incentives for groups with low qualification levels (Chapter 4). Approaches to achieving flexible learning pathways constitute another area of investigation (Chapter 5). This is followed by an analysis of arrangements for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning (Chapter 6). The report finally looks at the extent to which awareness-raising and outreach actions (Chapter 7) and guidance services (Chapter 8) underpin the available learning provision.

The report draws on several data sources. The prime source is the policy information collected from Eurydice National Units, representing 42 education and training systems across 37 European

countries. Eurydice data have been complemented with qualitative and quantitative data provided by other organisations, including Cedefop, Eurostat and the OECD.

In the summary below, key messages are highlighted for each of the thematic areas investigated in the report. This is followed by some concluding cross-thematic observations.

Background data on adult education and training in Europe

Around one in five adults in the EU have not completed upper secondary education

- In 2019, 21.6 % of adults (aged 25-64) in the EU – 51.5 million people – had not completed upper secondary education (ISCED 3; EQF 3 or 4). Of these, 12.5 million left the education system with less than lower secondary education (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1, Figure 1.1).
- Southern European countries are those most affected by low levels of educational attainment among the adult population (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1, Figure 1.1).
- On average, younger adults (aged 25-34 and 35-44) have higher educational attainment levels than the older population (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1, Figure 1.2).
- The proportion of adults who have not completed upper secondary education is, on average, higher among adults born outside their country of residence (foreign born) than among the native population (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1, Figure 1.3).

A substantial proportion of adults in Europe is affected by low levels of literacy, numeracy and/or digital skills

- European countries register between 15 % and 57 % of adults with low levels of achievement in literacy and/or numeracy (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2.1, Figure 1.4).
- On average, around 40 % of adults in the EU are at risk of digital exclusion: they have either low levels of or no digital skills or their use of the internet is very limited or non-existent (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2.2, Figure 1.5).

Countries vary in terms of adult participation in education and training; however, a common feature is that most learning activities in which adults take part have a non-formal character

- Adult participation in education and training is uneven across European countries, with Nordic countries and some western European countries generally registering participation rates that are much higher than the EU average (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.2, Figures 1.6 and 1.7).
- In 2019, fewer than one third of European countries had reached the EU 2020 benchmark of 15 % adult participation in education and training during the four weeks prior to the survey (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.2, Figure 1.6).
- Despite the relatively low number of countries that have reached the EU 2020 benchmark, there has been a slow but steady increase in adult participation in education and training across European countries, with the EU average participation rising from 7.9 % in 2009 to 10.1 % in 2014 and 10.8 % in 2019. However, in 2020, the year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU average dropped to 9.2 % and participation decreased in virtually all European countries (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.2).

- Adults mainly take part in shorter non-formal education and training courses. This goes hand in hand with the fact that formal learning activities, which commonly lead to qualifications, require a considerable investment in terms of time (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.2, Figures 1.8 and 1.9).

Low-qualified adults participate less in education and training than those with higher levels of educational attainment

- Educational attainment appears to be a strong determinant of participation in adult education and training: across all countries analysed, low-qualified adults participate less in education and training than those with higher educational attainment levels (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.3, Figure 1.10).
- In 2019, in some European countries, at most, 1 % of low-qualified adults participated in education and training, while in other countries participation rates were between 10 % and 25 % (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.3, Figure 1.10).
- On average, 3.2 % of adults across the EU had completed upper secondary education during adulthood (2019). However, there are significant differences between countries, with the proportions of people completing upper secondary education during adulthood ranging from less than 1 % to around 14 % (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.4, Figure 1.11).

Three country profiles emerge when considering the interplay between the proportions of low-qualified adults in the population and the participation of these adults in education and training

- Around one third of European countries register a relatively low proportion of adults who have not completed upper secondary education (below the EU average) and a relatively high rate of participation of low-qualified adults in education and training (above the EU average). Countries with this profile are mainly situated in northern and western parts of Europe (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4, Figure 1.13).
- Another group of European countries (around one third) register a low proportion of low-qualified adults and, at the same time, a low participation rate of low-qualified adults in education and training. Most of these countries are situated in eastern Europe, although some western European countries also belong to this group (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4, Figure 1.13).
- Several countries situated in southern Europe register a high proportion of low-qualified adults and a relatively low participation rate of low-qualified adults in education and training (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4, Figure 1.13).

Governance and policy frameworks

The coordination of adult learning policies is generally well established across Europe; however, just over half of the countries analysed have concrete national targets related to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications

- Most European countries have one or more intersectoral bodies that are responsible for the coordination of adult learning policies and measures (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1, Figure 2.1).
- Between 2015 and 2020, all but seven top-level authorities adopted strategic policy documents referring to adults with low levels of qualifications or low basic skills. Moreover, more than half of all European countries report having introduced other key policy initiatives that aim to support

adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1, Figure 2.2 and Section 2.2.2).

- The number of countries with national quantitative targets relating to the education and training of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications seems to have increased over time across Europe. However, still only just over half of all countries report having set – in either their strategic policy documents or other key policy initiatives – national targets covering this area (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3, Figure 2.3).

Learning provision

Across Europe, adults can improve their basic skills through various types of publicly subsidised programmes, ranging from formal basic education programmes to non-formal basic skills courses

- Most European countries subsidise 'compensatory' or 'remedial' basic education programmes, i.e. programmes for mature learners linked to the initial education system through to the end of lower secondary education (ISCED 2). These programmes sometimes include vocational elements and thus lead to recognised vocational qualifications (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1, and Annex II).
- Compensatory or remedial basic education programmes commonly have a substantial workload. Some countries, however, organise such programmes on a subject-by-subject basis, allowing adults to take shorter courses in distinct subject areas. In this case, the provision can have a formal or non-formal character, depending on learners' needs (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1, and Annex II).
- Across Europe, public authorities subsidise various (rather short) basic skills courses for adults. This type of provision is generally less structured and systematised than formal basic education programmes. Nevertheless, there are some frameworks across Europe that structure and institutionalise the delivery of non-formal basic skills courses (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2, and Annex II).
- In some countries, large-scale programmes are available that target migrants who have recently entered the country. While language skills are at the centre of these programmes, other skills (e.g. literacy in general) or even wider integration aspects may also be included (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2, and Annex II).
- A range of providers, including public and private education and training institutions and organisations such as libraries, volunteer organisations and enterprises, deliver programmes targeting the development of basic skills (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3, and Annex III).

Pathways to recognised qualifications are becoming more and more diversified across European countries

- Countries organise upper secondary studies (ISCED 3) for mature learners in various ways. Some have developed dedicated programme frameworks that refer specifically to adult upper secondary education, while elsewhere the provision for adults is delivered within the main upper secondary education system. In addition, some countries have developed frameworks for adults that cover several qualification levels, ranging from very basic qualifications to higher education degrees (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1, and Annex II).

- Almost all European countries are working towards a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF), which means that, as well as the main formal qualifications, NQFs will increasingly include qualifications awarded by private providers, sectors, companies and international bodies (see Chapter 3, Section 3.1.3, Figure 3.1).
- A number of countries have invested in developing qualification systems that complement the mainstream education system. Qualifications falling under these systems commonly involve a less substantial workload and, therefore, can be a more accessible option for adults with limited prior formal learning. When formally recognised by national authorities (e.g. within NQFs), these qualifications can potentially become a stepping stone towards further learning achievements (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1, and Annex II).
- Some countries have large-scale programmes open to adults in place that use work-based learning (apprenticeships) as a mode of delivery. In some instances, these programmes incorporate flexible learning options, such as opportunities for accelerated learning (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1, and Annex II).
- Publicly subsidised adult education and training programmes leading to recognised qualifications mainly take place in public education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults and/or in public schools that deliver initial education and training to young people (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3, and Annex III).

Financial support

In many European countries, publicly subsidised programmes leading to recognised qualifications are offered for free – this may contribute to lowering financial obstacles to participation

- In 2016, for around one third of adults in the EU who wanted to participate (or participate more) in education and training, financial issues presented an obstacle to participation. For around one in five adults expressing a wish to participate in education and training, funding was the main obstacle to participation. Adults with lower levels of educational attainment were more affected by funding as an obstacle to participation than those with higher educational attainment levels (see Chapter 4, Section 4.1, Figure 4.1).
- In most European countries, low-qualified adults are generally not expected to pay fees when they participate in publicly subsidised education and training programmes at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 or EQF level 4 (i.e. upper secondary education or equivalent). In around one third of countries, adults may or may not pay fees for this type of provision, depending on additional factors (e.g. their employment status, type of programme or programme level). Only a few countries charge fees systematically (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2, Figure 4.2).

Various demand-side financial support measures are available across Europe; however, these generally do not specifically target low-qualified adults

- Financial incentives that may reduce learners' financial burden (demand-side funding) are in place across most of Europe. The existing schemes, however, differ greatly in a number of aspects. Some aim to subsidise immediate expenses related to learning activities (e.g. course or examination fees or various other expenses), while others allow for compensation for a loss or reduction of income as a result of undertaking the education and training. Moreover, the support measures differ in terms of the eligible beneficiaries: some are open to all adults, some specifically target employees, and others aim to support various vulnerable groups, in particular unemployed jobseekers (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3, Figure 4.3).

- Alongside learners, employers providing education and training opportunities can often benefit from public financial support schemes. These differ greatly in terms of the eligible expenses and/or beneficiaries (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3, Figure 4.4).
- Only a few countries have financial support schemes in place that explicitly target low-qualified adults or offer them preferential treatment compared with other groups. When in place, the support is directed either at low-qualified adults themselves or at employers investing in the education and training of these adults (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3, Figures 4.3 and 4.4, and Annex IV).

EU funding makes a substantial contribution to creating education and training opportunities for low-qualified adults

- In most European countries, EU funding is widely used to support adult education and training provision, including learning opportunities for adults with low levels of basic skills and those with low levels of or no qualifications (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3, and Annex II).
- As well as being used to fund education and training programmes, EU subsidies are also commonly used as a funding source to contribute to the accomplishment of policy objectives stipulated in key national strategies related to adult education and training (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3, and Annex I).

Flexible learning

Adults, including those with low levels of or no qualifications, often need to balance multiple commitments; thus, flexibility in adult education and training is of key importance

- In 2016, across the EU, around one in three adults with low levels of educational attainment who wanted to participate (or participate more) in education and training cited family reasons and/or conflicting schedules among the obstacles that prevented them from doing so (see Chapter 5, Section 5.1, Figure 5.1).
- In 2016, around one in five adults with low levels of educational attainment across the EU reported distance and/or the lack of suitable learning provision among the obstacles (see Chapter 5, Section 5.1, Figure 5.1).

Distance learning, which is recognised as one of the approaches that can enhance learning flexibility, is being developed through a range of initiatives at different scales

- A limited number of countries have in place major publicly subsidised institutions or e-learning platforms open to adults that provide formal distance learning programmes at levels up to (and including) upper secondary education. Other large-scale distance learning initiatives in place include major infrastructure for the delivery of non-formal distance learning courses, support for the implementation of distance learning in (traditional) education and training settings, quality control of distance learning and development of the competences of staff providing distance learning (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1, Figure 5.2).
- As well as system-wide distance learning measures, local providers and initiatives often promote this mode of delivery. Thus, having no national provider of distance learning or no large-scale initiatives in this area does not imply that distance learning is underdeveloped or non-existent (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1).

- In the first months following the COVID-19 outbreak, public authorities across Europe supported a number of distance learning initiatives in all sectors of education and training, including the adult education and training sector. Some of these initiatives could potentially become permanent and institutionalised elements of adult learning systems (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2).
- Distance learning, however, runs the risk of excluding the adult population with low levels of or no ICT skills (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2.2, Figure 1.5) and/or no access to a computer or the internet. Thus, this mode of delivery might not be suitable for all learners, especially when not accompanied by appropriate support measures (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2).

While modularisation is quite common in adult education and training in many European countries, credit-based programmes are less widespread

- Modularisation, which refers to breaking down qualifications and/or education and training programmes into smaller parts or units, is now rather well established in many European education and training systems. This area also appears to be a dynamic field that has been subject to a number of national reforms in recent years (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Figure 5.3).
- Compared with modules, the use of credits is noticeably less widespread in adult education and training. The number of European countries that have undertaken reforms in this area in the last few years is also quite limited. Moreover, even when in place, credit-based programmes do not always appear to enhance the flexibility of adult education and training (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4, Figure 5.4).

Adults with low levels of educational attainment often have restricted options for progressing within the formal education system

- In around half of all European countries, most of which are situated in the eastern part of Europe, the completion of lower secondary education is a necessary (legal) condition for progressing towards upper secondary qualifications. This applies not only to young people, but also to adults. In some other countries, access to upper secondary education for those with very limited prior formal learning is possible but remains restricted to a number of (mostly short vocational) programmes (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5, Figure 5.5).
- In around one third of all European countries, legislation does not restrict the access of adults who have not completed lower secondary education to upper secondary education and training. However, non-restrictive regulations in terms of access to upper secondary education do not necessarily imply a widespread use of flexibility in practice. Indeed, education and training providers – rather than top-level authorities – may specify rather strict access requirements, which may in practice exclude adults with limited prior formal learning (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5, Figure 5.5).

European countries take different approaches to achieving the individualisation of adult education and training programmes

- Around two thirds of European countries report that the individualisation of programmes – i.e. tailoring of programmes to the needs of adults – is systematically embedded in education and training provision (see Chapter 5, Section 5.6, Figure 5.6).
- Countries take different approaches to the individualisation of programmes, including individual study plans, initial assessments of skills and competences, flexible modes of delivery of programmes and demand-side financial incentives allowing learners to choose their programme provider (see Chapter 5, Section 5.6, and Annex V).

Recognition and validation of learning outcomes

Most European countries have skills audits in place, but the service is not always widely accessible to those who might need it the most

- Around two thirds of European countries have skills audits in place that are compatible with those defined in EU steering documents. Since 2014, the implementation of skills audits across Europe seems to have increased (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2, Figure 6.1).
- While the use of skills audits is currently rather widespread across Europe, they are not always included in standard services for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment. Moreover, when offered to these groups, skills audit services are not necessarily delivered within a reasonable period of time (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2, Figure 6.1).
- In 2016, 3.2 % of adults across the EU reported having received an assessment of skills and competences by means of tests, skills audits or interviews during the previous 12 months (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2, Figure 6.2).

While national regulatory frameworks now commonly cover the validation of non-formal and informal learning, actual validation opportunities and the extent to which they are subject to national monitoring differ greatly across countries

- Virtually all European countries now have some arrangements in place for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the education and training sector. However, the number of education and training areas (subsectors) covered by the validation arrangements varies between countries (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1, Figure 6.3).
- Across Europe, the validation of non-formal and informal learning leads to different qualification outputs. In some countries, the process can lead to full formal qualifications, while in other countries it is possible to obtain only parts of formal qualifications and/or non-formal certificates. In a limited number of countries, none of the above is possible (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1, Figure 6.4).
- Countries with validation arrangements in place do not always monitor different aspects of the process. Those with data on beneficiaries often indicate that at least some categories of learners commonly regarded as 'disadvantaged' (e.g. individuals with low levels of skills or qualifications, early school leavers, jobseekers, older workers, migrants and refugees, and people with disabilities) are among those making greater use of validation in at least one education and training area (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2, Figure 6.5).
- In 2016, on average, across the EU, 3.1 % of adults reported having received information or advice on the validation or recognition of skills, competences or prior learning during the previous 12 months (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3, Figure 6.6).

Awareness-raising and outreach activities

Most adults across Europe who have not recently participated in education and training did not wish to do so – especially those with lower levels of educational attainment

- In 2016, around 80 % of adults across the EU who did not participate in education and training reported that they did not wish to do so. The rates were higher among adults with lower levels of educational attainment than among those who hold a tertiary education qualification (see Chapter 7, Section 7.2, Figure 7.1).

- Also in 2016, around three quarters of adults across the EU had not even looked for information about learning opportunities within the last 12 months. This was the case especially for adults with lower levels of educational attainment and less so for those with higher educational attainment levels (see Chapter 7, Section 7.2, Figure 7.2).

Although public initiatives and campaigns for raising awareness of adult learning opportunities are widespread across Europe, increased efforts may be needed to reach out to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications

- Between 2015 and 2020, most top-level authorities across Europe provided financial support to at least one large-scale initiative or campaign to raise awareness of existing adult learning opportunities and highlight the benefits of lifelong learning (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3, Figure 7.3).
- Publicly subsidised outreach activities targeting, in particular, adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, to encourage them to take up learning opportunities, are reported by just over half of all European countries (see Chapter 7, Section 7.4, Figure 7.4).

Guidance services

Around one quarter of adults across the EU report having received information or advice on learning opportunities, with the lowest use recorded by adults with low levels of educational attainment, the economically inactive and older adults

- In 2016, across the EU, 23 % of adults reported having received free information or advice on learning opportunities from institutions or organisations within the last 12 months. The rates varied, however, depending on adults' socio-economic characteristics: they were lower for adults with low educational attainment levels, for economically inactive adults and for older adults (see Chapter 8, Section 8.2, Figures 8.1 and 8.2).
- Regarding the different modes of guidance delivery, in 2016, 8.4 % of adults across EU countries indicated that they had received free face-to-face guidance services, while 2.8 % of adults reported that they had received information or advice on learning opportunities through computer-based applications (see Chapter 8, Section 8.2, Figures 8.3 and 8.4).

Public or publicly subsidised guidance services are widespread across Europe; however, they are rarely targeted at adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications

- Guidance services provided by a counsellor through public employment services (PESs) are available across Europe. In around half of the countries analysed, these services are available to all citizens; in other countries, they are available only for registered unemployed people, jobseekers and other specific groups (e.g. people wanting to change careers, students, etc.) (see Chapter 8, Section 8.3.1, Figure 8.5).
- In addition to guidance provided through PESs, over half of all European countries report having other large-scale publicly subsidised personal guidance services in place involving direct contact with a counsellor, which are generally open to all individuals. This represents an increase compared with the previous Eurydice investigation in this area (in 2013/14), when publicly subsidised guidance services provided outside PESs were limited in most European countries (see Chapter 8, Section 8.3.1, Figure 8.6).

- Self-help guidance tools are available in most European countries; however, they rarely target adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (see Chapter 8, Section 8.3.2, Figure 8.7).
- Publicly subsidised online databases of learning opportunities are available in around two thirds of all European countries – again, this represents an increase compared with the situation in 2013/14, when only around half of all European countries provided comprehensive online databases of learning opportunities for adults. However, as in 2013/14, online databases tailored specifically to the needs of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications are still not widespread (see Chapter 8, Section 8.3.3, Figure 8.8).

Concluding cross-thematic observations

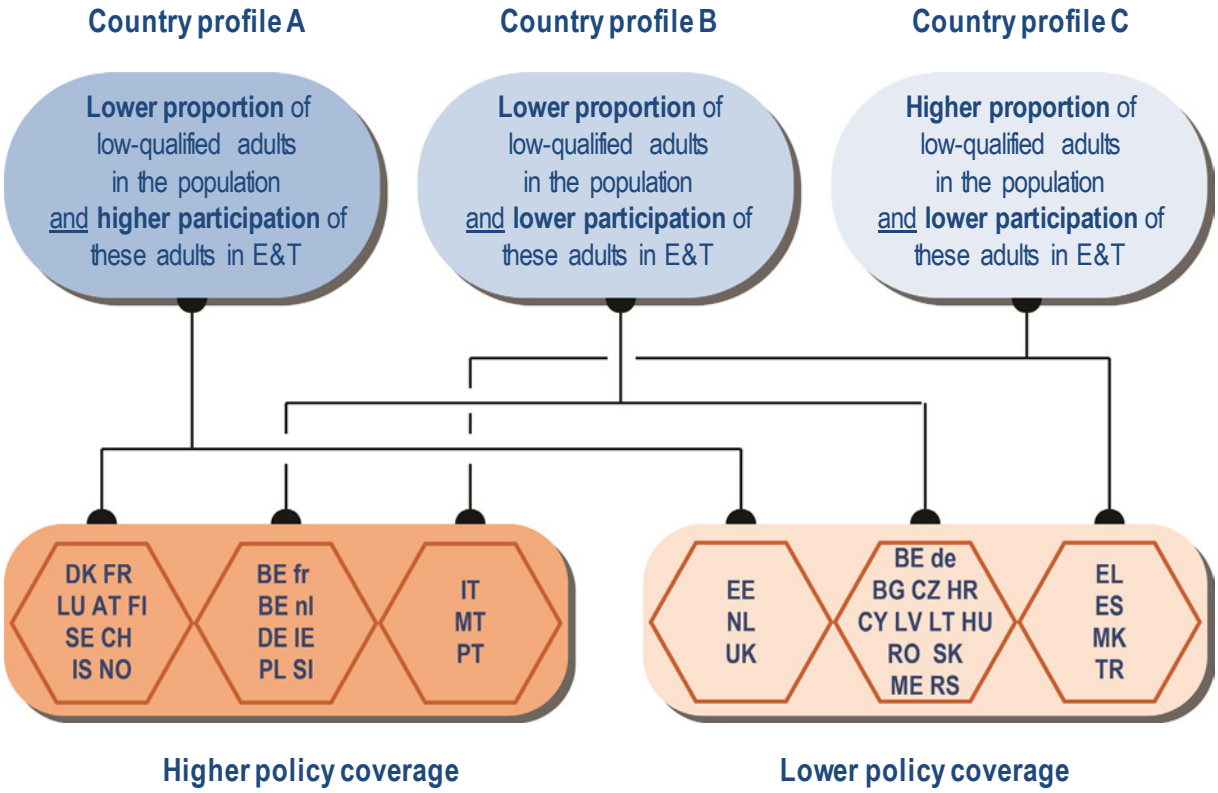
This report has identified a wide range of policies and measures across European countries that can contribute to skills development and qualification enhancement of the adult population. It has shown that adults in every country can benefit from (at least some) publicly subsidised opportunities for upskilling and qualification upgrading. Figure 2 attempts to bring together the different dimensions discussed in the report. It considers, first, country profiles based on the interplay of the proportions of adults with low levels of educational attainment (low-qualified adults) and the participation of these adults in education and training (Chapter 1, Figure 1.13). Second, it takes into account the policies and measures surveyed in the report and displayed in the summary figures at the end of Chapters 2 and 4-8 (27 policies/measures in total).

As Figure 2 shows, most countries characterised by a relatively low proportion of low-qualified adults and relatively high rates of participation of low-qualified adults in education and training (profile A) show a higher policy coverage (Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland and Norway). This means that they have at least two thirds (at least 18 out of 27) of the mapped policies and measures in place. These countries tend to cover not only general policies and measures for adult education and training – i.e. those covering all adults – but also policies and measures targeting the least qualified (e.g. targeted policy frameworks, financial support schemes, or guidance tools and services). Among the countries falling under profile A, only Estonia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom show a lower policy coverage level.

Countries with a relatively low proportion of low-qualified adults and, at the same time, low rates of participation of low-qualified adults in education and training (profile B) are mostly characterised by lower policy coverage (German-speaking Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Montenegro and Serbia). Indeed, in most of these countries, fewer than two thirds (i.e. fewer than 18) of the studied policies and measures have been identified. Only five countries falling under this group show a higher policy coverage level (French and Flemish Communities of Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Poland and Slovenia).

The third group of countries – those with a relatively high proportion of low-qualified adults and relatively low rates of participation of low-qualified adults in education and training (profile C) – shows the least clear policy pattern. In this small group of countries, three are characterised by higher policy coverage (Italy, Malta and Portugal), while in four the number of identified policy measures is lower (Greece, Spain, North Macedonia and Turkey).

Figure 2: Country profiles related to the proportion of low-qualified adults in the population and the participation of these adults in education and training (E&T) AND policy coverage, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

For more details on country profiles A, B and C, see Chapter 1, Figure 1.13.

'Low-qualified adults' are individuals who have completed education or qualifications corresponding to ISCED levels 0-2 at most. This means that they have not completed upper secondary education (or equivalent) (see 'Glossary').

The categories 'higher policy coverage' and 'lower policy coverage' are based on the summary figures at the end of Chapters 2 and 4-8. These summary figures include 27 policies and measures in total. The category 'higher policy coverage' refers to countries reporting at least 18 of the 27 policies/measures. The category 'lower policy coverage' refers to countries reporting fewer than 18 of the policies/measures.

The reference period for most of the qualitative indicators contributing to the figure is 2019/20. Thus, the title of the figure specifies this as the reference year. Nevertheless, some of the indicators contributing to the figure have different reference periods, namely Eurostat EU LFS data (Chapter 1), which relate to 2019, and data on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Chapter 6), which relate to 2018.

The main data source for the figure is the information collected through Eurydice. Thus, the source of the figure is given as Eurydice. Nevertheless, the figure also includes data based on other sources, namely quantitative Eurostat data and qualitative data on the recognition and validation of learning outcomes produced by Cedefop, the European Commission and ICF.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE de) and **Serbia**: The identification of these countries as having lower policy coverage may be influenced by the absence of data on the recognition and validation of learning outcomes (see Chapter 6).
Croatia, Romania, Slovakia and **Montenegro**: No data are available on the participation of low-qualified adults in education and training. The figure considers data on the overall participation of adults in education and training.
Bosnia and Herzegovina and **Lichtenstein**: Not included in the figure as not covered by the EU LFS.

While the above observations suggest some links between the participation of low-qualified adults in education and training and policy coverage, these should be interpreted with caution. In particular, this report concentrates on the presence of policies and measures and does not examine to any substantial extent their implementation, effectiveness and/or whether they are adequate for adults with the lowest levels of qualifications. Furthermore, the report focuses on policies and measures promoted

by top-level authorities only and investigates only a selection of areas related to adult education and training. Thus, the picture emerging from the analysis should be subject to further policy research.

However, overall, this report identifies various policies and measures supporting adult learning, including those that may facilitate access to education and training for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. The lower participation rates of this group in education and training, which may be exacerbated in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related shift towards more online provision, point to an urgent need to continue reaching out to and guiding this specific target group.

INTRODUCTION

People today go through multiple changes and transitions in their personal and professional lives. The continuous development of skills and competences is therefore of crucial importance. The 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights ([2]) recognises this need by addressing lifelong learning in the first of its 20 principles. The principle in question states that '[e]veryone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market'. An accelerated digital transition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has further emphasised the need for social fairness in access to lifelong learning.

In response to the above challenges, the European Commission presented in summer 2020 a five-year plan – the European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020b) – that aims to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills. Alongside its 12 actions, the agenda includes quantitative objectives for upskilling and reskilling to be achieved by 2025. The latter not only refer to the overall participation of adults in education and training, but also prioritise the involvement of adults with low levels of qualifications and the unemployed in learning, and raising the digital skills level of European citizens ([3]).

The need for reskilling and upskilling among adults remains high on the European policy agenda within the renewed strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training for 2021-2030 ([4]). The framework emphasises the importance of enabling and motivating adults to acquire basic skills, and it sets an EU-level target of 47 % of adults participating in learning activities every year by 2025 ([5]). This objective has been scaled up in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (European Commission, 2021), which aims at 60 % of adults participating in education and training every year by 2030. The latter target has been endorsed during the Porto Social Summit in May 2021 ([6]).

These more recent policy developments are closely linked to previous policy initiatives in adult education and training. In particular, between 2011 and 2020, European cooperation in adult education and training was guided by the renewed European agenda for adult learning ([7]). The agenda concentrated on a set of priority areas aligned with those established in the ET 2020 strategic framework ([8]). Among the priorities set, specific attention was paid to measures aimed at enabling all adults, including those furthest away from education and training, to develop and enhance their skills and competences throughout their lives.

Further support for widening access to lifelong learning for the most vulnerable groups of learners was expressed in the 2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways ([9]). The recommendation, which is still relevant today, invites national authorities to provide adults who have a low level of skills, knowledge and competences – for example, those who have left initial education or training without

([2]) The European Pillar of Social Rights was proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017.

([3]) For more details, see Chapter 1.

([4]) Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), OJ C 66, 26.2.2021.

([5]) For more details, see Chapter 1.

([6]) See the Porto Social Commitment of 7 May 2021 and the Porto Declaration of 8 May 2021.

([7]) Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, OJ C 372, 20.12.2011.

([8]) Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009.

([9]) Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484, 24.12.2016.

completing upper secondary education or equivalent – with access to upskilling and opportunities to upgrade their qualifications. This should include opportunities to (a) acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence; and/or (b) acquire a wider set of skills, knowledge and competences, by making progress towards a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4.

Building on European policy priorities in adult education and training, in particular the 2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, this report investigates adult education and training across Europe, with a special focus on learning opportunities for adults with low levels of basic skills and those with low or no qualifications. For continuity with the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015), the present report addresses the following questions:

- Are top-level authorities formally committed to facilitating access to education and training for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications?
- What type of provision exists for these learners?
- What means are being used to facilitate their return to education and training?

Content of the report

The report is structured in eight chapters.

Chapter 1 presents a selection of indicators that set the context for further analysis of the learning opportunities available to adults in Europe. It looks at the educational attainment of the European adult population, the level of skills and competences of adults, and their involvement in education and training.

Chapter 2 investigates whether and how different stakeholders involved in adult learning coordinate their initiatives and approaches. It also examines policy commitments and targets aiming to promote adult learning and, in particular, the participation of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications in education and training.

Chapter 3 outlines some key types of learning provided in European countries that may contribute to upskilling and upgrading of qualifications of the adult population. The focus is on large-scale publicly subsidised learning offer, i.e. institutionalised provision that is established and systematic.

Chapter 4 investigates funding arrangements related to publicly subsidised programmes open to adults, as well as financial support measures that may help in meeting direct or indirect education and training costs. The role of EU funding in creating learning opportunities for adults with low or no qualifications is also outlined.

Chapter 5 addresses the question of flexibility in adult leaning, examining the measures that are likely to help adults return to education and training. Distance learning, modularisation, credit-based approaches, progression between educational levels and the individualisation of learning pathways constitute the core elements of this chapter.

Chapter 6 looks at the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. It investigates skills audits, i.e. an area closely related to the validation of learning outcomes, as well as the actual validation arrangements in the education and training sector.

Chapter 7 presents an overview of awareness-raising activities promoting adult learning, in particular those targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. It also discusses public authorities' specific efforts to reach out to and re-engage these particular target groups.

Finally, **Chapter 8** investigates publicly supported personal guidance services that are available to adults, as well as self-help guidance tools and on-line databases on learning opportunities.

The chapters are accompanied by a glossary that explains the key concepts used. Annexes at the end of the report provide complementary information on various aspects discussed in the report.

Data sources and methodology

This report is mainly based on information gathered by the Eurydice Network in May and June 2020 ([10]). The data collection was based on an in-depth questionnaire prepared jointly by the Education and Youth Policy Analysis Unit of the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), and the National Units of the Network. The data gathered cover 42 education and training systems in 37 countries ([11]) and constitute the basis for the analysis in Chapters 2-5, 7 and 8 of the report.

The Eurydice data and indicators are generally qualitative. They capture top-level (national) policies and measures, rather than regional or local initiatives and schemes.

Throughout the report, the information submitted by Eurydice National Units was complemented by data from other sources. In particular, Chapter 6 relies on the information from the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning ([12]). Alongside qualitative information, most chapters also present statistical data from international surveys. These sources include the Adult Education Survey, the EU Labour Force Survey, the Community survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals, and the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC).

The reference year for Eurydice indicators is the 2019/20 school/academic year. This generally refers to the period between September 2019 and June 2020 ([13]). For programmes and initiatives that do not operate according to school/academic years, the 2019/20 period refers to the situation as of 1 January 2020. Eurydice indicators that refer to policy developments or changes cover the period between 1 January 2015 and the reference year.

Data from sources other than Eurydice have various reference years. The reference period is always specified in the indicator title and/or the text.

All those who contributed to the production of this report are acknowledged at the end of the report.

([10]) Data collection took place at an early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, the report includes only a few references to initiatives that were introduced in response to the pandemic and the related sanitary measures and does not provide a full picture of the changes that occurred as a result of the pandemic.

([11]) All 27 EU Member States, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Albania is also a member of the Eurydice Network, but it did not take part in this project.

The number of education and training systems is higher than the number of countries. This is because Belgium counts as three education and training systems (French Community of Belgium, Flemish Community of Belgium and German-speaking Community of Belgium) and the United Kingdom as four systems (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland).

The United Kingdom officially left the Eurydice Network on 31 March 2021. The National Unit covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland did not endorse the pre-final version of this report. The National Unit covering Scotland endorsed the pre-final version in July 2021.

([12]) See: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/validation/inventory

([13]) The only exceptions are policy documents and initiatives considered in Chapter 2 (and listed in Annex I). Here, the reference period is extended until the end of 2020 to allow policy documents and initiatives of key importance issued in the second half of 2020 to be identified.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND DATA ON ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Prior to analysing national policies and measures related to upskilling and upgrading of qualifications of the European adult population, it is important to understand the overall context in which adult education and training takes place. Indeed, national contexts, challenges and needs are not the same. Although this chapter does not intend to capture all driving forces behind adult education policies and measures, it sets the context for this report by presenting some key quantitative indicators related to adult education and training.

The chapter starts by looking at the educational attainment levels and the levels of skills and competences of adults in Europe (Sections 1.1 and 1.2). It then explores the participation of adults in education and training, including the differences in participation between different population groups (Section 1.3). Section 1.4 concludes with an analysis based on a combination of selected indicators.

The analysis relies on Eurostat data from the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), the Adult Education Survey (AES) and the Community survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals. It also includes data from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC).

1.1. Educational attainment levels of the European adult population

The highest level of formal education achieved by the adult population is commonly used as a proxy for the knowledge and skills available in a country. At present, European policy considers upper secondary education as the basic level of education for the knowledge society. Hence, young adults (aged 18-24) who have not completed upper secondary education and who are not involved in education and training are categorised as 'early leavers from education and training'. One of the objectives of European cooperation in education and training up until 2020 ([14]) was to reduce the proportion of early leavers from education and training among young adults to less than 10 % (the EU-27 average was 10.2 % in 2019 and 9.9 % in 2020 ([15])). The renewed strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training for 2021-2030 ([16]) stipulates a new EU-level target of less than 9 % of early leavers from education and training among young adults by 2030. The access of adults in other age categories to an upper secondary qualification is covered and promoted by the 2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways ([17]). This policy framework invites EU Member States to provide adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences – for example those who have left initial education or training without completing upper secondary education or equivalent – with opportunities for upskilling. Through upskilling pathways, adults should be able to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence, and/or progress towards a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4, i.e. the level commonly corresponding to upper secondary education (ISCED level 3).

([14]) Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009.

([15]) Eurostat EU LFS [edat_lfse_14] (data extracted 6 July 2021). The indicator measures the share of young people aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education (ISCED level 2) who were not involved in any education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey.

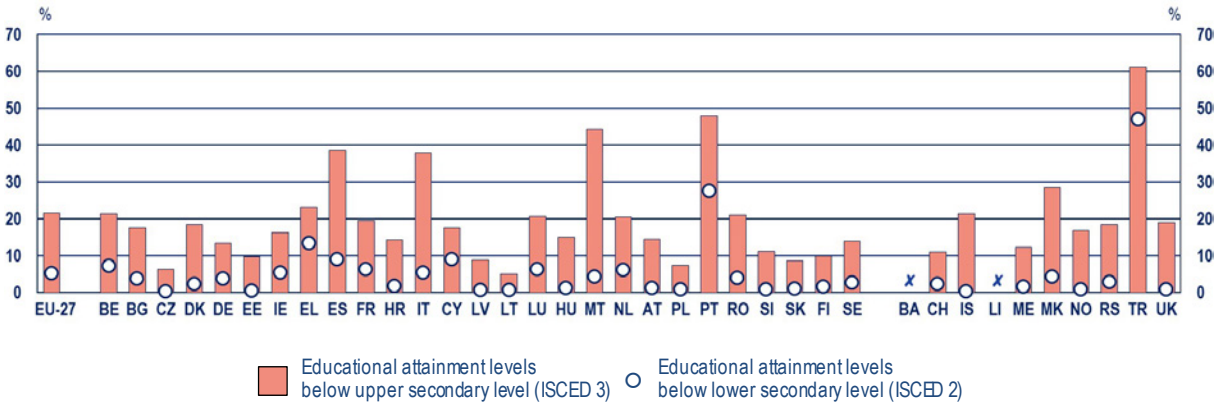
([16]) Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), OJ C 66, 26.2.2021.

([17]) Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484, 24.12.2016.

According to 2019 EU LFS data, adults (aged 25-64) with educational attainment levels below upper secondary education (ISCED 3) represent 21.6 % of the EU-27 adult population (Figure 1.1). This corresponds to 51.5 million people ([18]).

The proportion of adults who have not completed upper secondary education varies widely across European countries (EU Member States and non-EU countries ([19])). Turkey is the most affected country, with around 60 % of the adult population having not completed upper secondary education. Among the EU Member States, Portugal registers the highest figure: around half of all adults do not hold an upper secondary qualification. Other European countries (EU Member States and non-EU countries) registering relatively high proportions of adults who have not completed upper secondary education – above the EU average – are Malta (44.2 %), Spain (38.7 %), Italy (37.8 %), North Macedonia (28.4 %) and Greece (23.2 %). At the other end of the spectrum are, in ascending order, Lithuania, Czechia, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, where only up to 10 % of adults do not hold an upper secondary qualification.

Figure 1.1: Adults (aged 25-64) with educational attainment levels below upper and lower secondary levels (%), 2019



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
Below ISCED 3	21.6	21.3	17.5	6.2	18.5	13.4	9.8	16.3	23.2	38.7	19.6	14.2	37.8	17.5	8.8	5.0	20.7	15.0	44.2
Below ISCED 2	5.3	7.1	3.8	0.2	2.2	3.7	0.5	5.3	13.4	9.0	6.3	1.8	5.3	9.0	0.7	0.6	6.3	1.1	4.3
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
Below ISCED 3	20.4	14.4	7.4	47.8	21.0	11.2	8.6	9.9	13.9	✗	11.0	21.4	✗	12.2	28.4	16.8	18.5	61.1	18.9
Below ISCED 2	6.2	1.1	0.9	27.5	3.8	0.8	1.0	1.5	2.6	✗	2.3	0.3	✗	1.5	4.2	0.8	2.8	46.9	0.9

Source: Eurostat EU LFS. Data on the adult population with educational attainment levels below ISCED level 2 were extracted and calculated by Eurostat. Data on the adult population with educational attainment levels below ISCED level 3 were taken from [edat_lfse_03] (data extracted 7 April 2021).

Among adults who have not completed upper secondary education, some left the education system without completing lower secondary education (ISCED 2). This very low level of educational attainment concerns 5.3 % of adults (aged 25-64) in the EU-27 (Figure 1.1), which corresponds to 12.5 million people.

Turkey, where almost half of all adults (46.9 %) have not completed lower secondary education, registers the highest proportion among the countries covered by this report. Portugal is another country with a high proportion of adults who have not completed lower secondary education: around one quarter of all adults (27.5 %) are in this situation. Further countries registering rates above the

([18]) Eurostat EU LFS [lfsa_pgaed] (data extracted 7 April 2021).

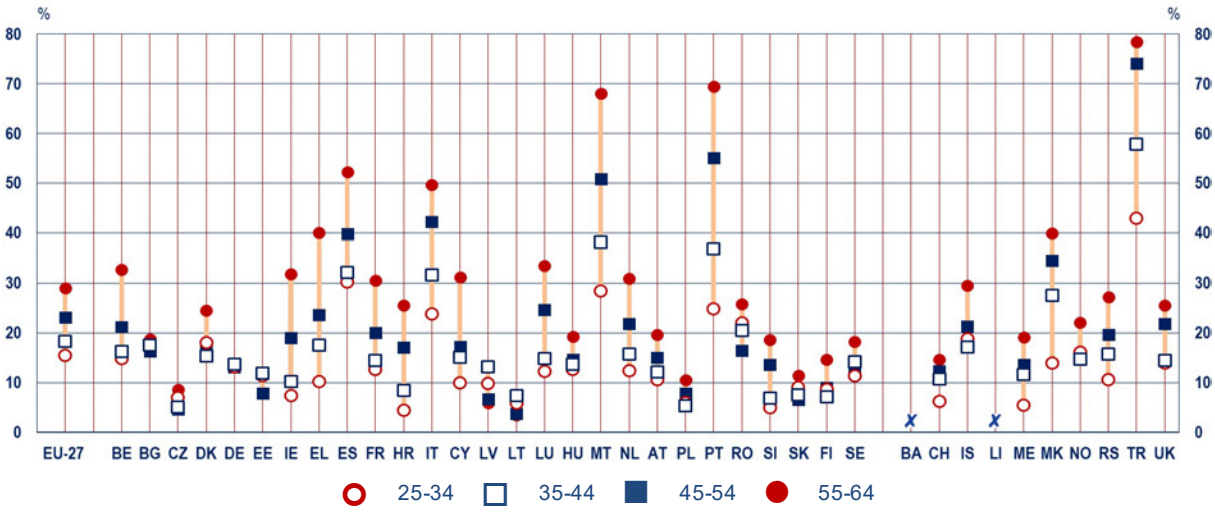
([19]) Country analyses refer to all countries covered by this report (see 'Introduction') for which data are available. Thus, coverage goes beyond the EU Member States.

EU-27 average are Greece (13.4 %), Spain and Cyprus (both 9.0 %), Belgium (7.1 %), France and Luxembourg (both 6.3 %) and the Netherlands (6.2 %). In contrast, in around half of all European countries, the proportion of adults who have not completed lower secondary education does not exceed 2 %.

The educational attainment levels of the European adult population have been progressively rising. For example, between 2014 and 2019, the EU-27 average proportion of adults (aged 25-64) who had not completed upper secondary education decreased from 24.5 % to 21.6 % ([20]). The proportion of those who had not completed lower secondary education was 6.9 % in 2014 and 5.3 % in 2019 ([21]).

The above positive trend goes hand in hand with the fact that younger adults are less affected by low levels of educational attainment than the older population (Figure 1.2). More specifically, in the EU-27 on average, only 15.5 % of adults in the age group 25-34 years have educational attainment levels below upper secondary education, whereas the proportion is 18.3 % for those aged 34-44 years, 23.1 % for those aged 45-54, and 29.0 % for those aged 55-64 years.

Figure 1.2: Adults (aged 25-64) with educational attainment levels below upper secondary level (%), by age group, 2019



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
25-34	15.5	14.8	17.6	7.0	18.0	13.2	11.4	7.4	10.2	30.2	12.6	4.4	23.8	10.0	9.8	5.9	12.3	12.7	28.4
35-44	18.3	16.3	17.6	5.1	15.4	13.7	11.9	10.2	17.6	32.2	14.4	8.4	31.7	15.1	13.2	7.4	14.9	13.7	38.2
45-54	23.1	21.2	16.3	4.7	16.4	13.1	7.9	19.0	23.7	39.8	20.0	17.1	42.3	17.2	6.7	3.8	24.7	14.7	50.9
55-64	29.0	32.8	18.8	8.6	24.5	13.4	7.9	31.9	40.1	52.3	30.6	25.5	49.7	31.2	5.9	3.5	33.5	19.3	68.1
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
25-34	12.4	10.6	6.0	24.8	22.0	4.9	9.1	8.7	11.4	✗	6.3	18.8	✗	5.5	13.9	16.1	10.6	43.0	13.9
35-44	15.7	12.2	5.4	36.9	20.5	6.9	7.5	7.1	14.2	✗	10.7	17.2	✗	11.6	27.6	14.7	15.8	57.8	14.5
45-54	21.8	15.1	7.9	55.1	16.5	13.6	6.6	9.0	12.4	✗	12.4	21.3	✗	13.6	34.5	15.1	19.7	74.1	21.9
55-64	30.9	19.6	10.6	69.5	25.8	18.6	11.5	14.6	18.3	✗	14.6	29.6	✗	19.1	39.9	22.1	27.2	78.4	25.6

Source: Eurostat EU LFS [edat_lfse_03] (data extracted 7 April 2021).

Eleven countries – Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, North Macedonia and Turkey – experienced a particularly substantial rise in the educational attainment levels of their populations (a difference of more than 20 percentage points between the 25-34 years and the 55-64 years age groups). Although some of these countries – in particular several southern

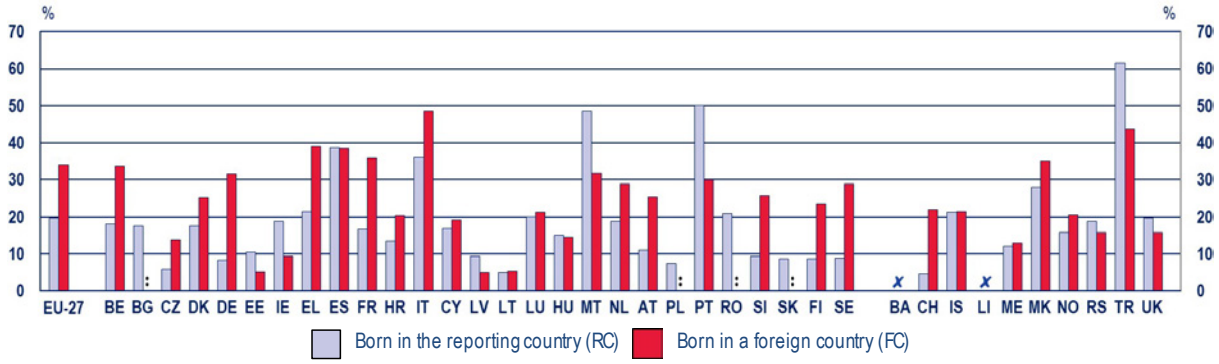
([20]) Eurostat EU LFS [edat_lfse_03] (data extracted 23 April 2021).

([21]) Eurostat EU LFS. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

European countries – still have a high proportion of adults who have not completed upper secondary education (see Figure 1.1), educational attainment levels across generations have substantially increased.

The educational profile of the migrant population is another important aspect to consider. The EU LFS data show that, on average, across the EU Member States, the proportion of adults (aged 25-64) who have not completed upper secondary education is higher among adults born outside the country of residence (foreign born) than among adults born in the country (34.1 % compared with 19.6 % in 2019) (Figure 1.3). This pattern is particularly notable (a difference of more than 15 percentage points) in Belgium, Germany, Greece, France, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. Three additional countries – Malta, Portugal and Turkey – also register a substantial difference in educational attainment levels between the foreign-born population and the native population; however, contrary to the above countries, low levels of educational attainment affect more adults born in the country of residence.

Figure 1.3: Adults (aged 25-64) with educational attainment levels below upper secondary level (%), by country of birth, 2019



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
Born in the RC	19.6	18.0	17.6	5.9	17.6	8.3	10.5	18.8	21.5	38.7	16.7	13.4	36.0	16.9	9.3	5.0	20.1	15.0	48.7
Born in a FC	34.1	33.7	:	13.8	25.2	31.6	5.1	9.4	39.1	38.5	35.9	20.4	48.6	19.2	4.9	5.3	21.2	14.5	31.7
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
Born in the RC	18.8	11.0	7.4	50.0	21.0	9.3	8.6	8.7	8.9	✗	4.6	21.3	✗	12.1	28.1	15.8	18.8	61.6	19.7
Born in a FC	29.0	25.3	:	30.0	:	25.7	:	23.4	29.0	✗	21.9	21.5	✗	12.9	35.2	20.5	15.8	43.7	15.7

Source: Eurostat EU LFS [edat_lfs_9912] (data extracted 7 April 2021).

Country-specific notes

Denmark: Data on 'born in a foreign country' have a low level of reliability because of the small sample size.
Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and **Slovakia**: Data on 'born in a foreign country' are not available because of the very small sample size.

To supplement Figure 1.3, it is useful to quantify the proportion of adults (aged 25-64) born in a foreign country among all adults (aged 25-64) who have not completed upper secondary education. In 2019, in the EU-27, 22.3 % of all adults with low levels of educational attainment were born outside their country of residence ([22]). Beyond this average, country situations vary widely. In some European countries (EU Member States and non-EU countries), more than 50 % of all adults with low levels of educational attainment were born in a foreign country. This is the case in Switzerland (73.3 %), Luxembourg (60.1 %), Sweden (51.9 %) and Germany (51.5 %). In contrast, there are countries where the proportion of foreign-born adults among adults with low levels of educational attainment

([22]) Based on Eurostat EU LFS online data. The calculation takes into account data on the adult population (aged 25-64) by country of birth ([lfsa_pgacws]; data extracted 18 February 2021) and data on the adult population (aged 25-64) by educational attainment and country of birth ([edat_lfs_9912]; data extracted 18 February 2021). Data for BG, PL, RO and SK are not available for this indicator (see the country-specific notes related to Figure 1.3).

does not exceed 10 % (Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey) ([23]).

1.2. Skills and competences of adults

Although educational attainment is an important indicator of the human capital in a society, it is not always a valid proxy for measuring skills. In particular, basic skills acquired in the education system may become obsolete if not maintained, or, on the contrary, adults may gain a range of skills through varied life and work experiences that are not reflected in their formal qualifications. Moreover, the same educational attainment level may be linked to different skill levels across countries ([24]).

1.2.1. Literacy and numeracy

The OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) has provided, to date, a unique data set on differences between the levels of basic skills of adult populations across countries. The survey assesses the skill levels of adults (aged 16-65) in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments. The first PIAAC cycle, which included three rounds, was conducted between 2011 and 2018 ([25]).

Figure 1.4 displays the proportions of adults who are low performers in literacy and/or numeracy, i.e. those scoring at or below level 1 (see the explanatory notes related to Figure 1.4), in the countries covered by this report that took part in the PIAAC survey.

As the figure shows, across countries (EU Member States and non-EU countries), between around 8 % and 39 % of adults are low performers in both literacy and numeracy (the average for the 20 participating EU Member States is 16.0 %). Turkey registers the highest figure (39.0 %), followed by Spain, Italy, Greece, Slovenia and France (in descending order), where between 18.1 % and 22.5 % of adults have low levels of skills in both literacy and numeracy. At the other end of the spectrum are Czechia, Finland, Cyprus, Slovakia, Estonia, the Netherlands and Norway (in ascending order), where no more than 10 % of adults are low performers in literacy and numeracy.

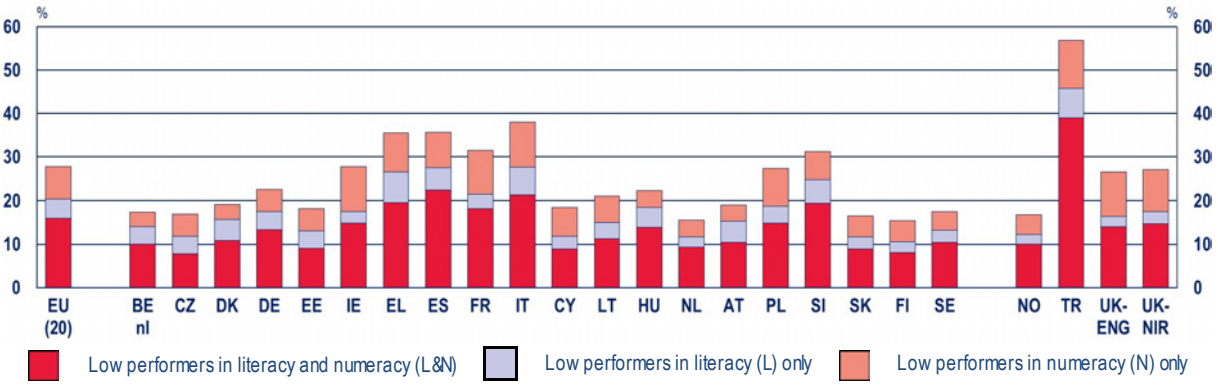
Alongside adults with low levels of achievement in both literacy and numeracy, there are also those with low scores in only one area (i.e. literacy or numeracy). When adding these adults to the aforementioned group, the proportion is 57 % in Turkey, and between 30 % and 40 % in a number of EU Member States (Italy, Spain, Greece, France and Slovenia, in descending order). The average for the 20 EU Member States is around 28 %. None of the countries covered by this report register fewer than 15 % of adults who are low performers in literacy and/or numeracy.

([23]) For the data source, see the previous footnote.

([24]) In this context, research conducted by Cedefop (2020a) suggests that the number of adults in Europe who might need upskilling and reskilling is much higher than the number of adults with low levels of qualifications. It is estimated that 128 million adults in Europe have potential in terms of upskilling and reskilling, which corresponds to around 46 % of the European adult population (data refer to the EU-28, prior to the United Kingdom's withdrawal, and Iceland and Norway). This figure includes adults with low levels of educational attainment, as well as those with medium to high levels of educational attainment but who have low levels of digital skills or cognitive skills, or who are at risk of skill loss and obsolescence because they work in elementary occupations. Regarding individual countries, high proportions of adults with potential in terms of upskilling and reskilling (around 70 %) are observed in Malta and Portugal. Estimates are also high for Greece, Spain, Italy and Romania, all of which register values over 50 %.

([25]) For more details on the first PIAAC cycle, see the OECD's website (https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/about/piaac1stcycle/). The second cycle of the survey has begun; its results should be released in 2024.

Figure 1.4: Adults (aged 16-65) who are low performers in literacy and/or numeracy (%), 2011-2017



EU (20): See 'explanatory notes'.

%	EU (20)	BE nl	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LT
Low performers in L&N	16.0	10.1	7.7	10.8	13.3	9.1	14.9	19.5	22.5	18.1	21.3	8.9	11.3
Low performers in L only	4.4	4.0	4.1	4.9	4.2	3.9	2.6	7.0	5.0	3.4	6.3	3.0	3.7
Low performers in N only	7.3	3.3	5.1	3.4	5.1	5.2	10.3	9.0	8.2	9.9	10.3	6.6	6.1

	HU	NL	AT	PL	SI	SK	FI	SE	NO	TR	UK-ENG	UK-NIR
Low performers in L&N	13.9	9.3	10.5	14.9	19.5	8.9	8.1	10.4	10.0	39.0	14.0	14.7
Low performers in L only	4.6	2.4	4.8	3.9	5.4	2.7	2.6	2.8	2.3	6.7	2.4	2.7
Low performers in N only	3.8	3.9	3.8	8.6	6.3	4.8	4.8	4.3	4.6	11.2	10.2	9.6

Source: Country data: OECD, 2019a. The population-weighted average of the 20 EU Member States is based on 2012 Eurostat data [demo_pjanbroad] and was calculated by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission.

Explanatory notes

Within the PIAAC survey, adult skills were evaluated on a five-level scale. Data in the figure refer to adults who achieved level 1 at most (i.e. level 1 and below).

Only countries covered by this report that participated in the PIAAC survey are included in the figure. 'EU (20)' refers to the population-weighted average of the 20 EU Member States that took part in the PIAAC survey.

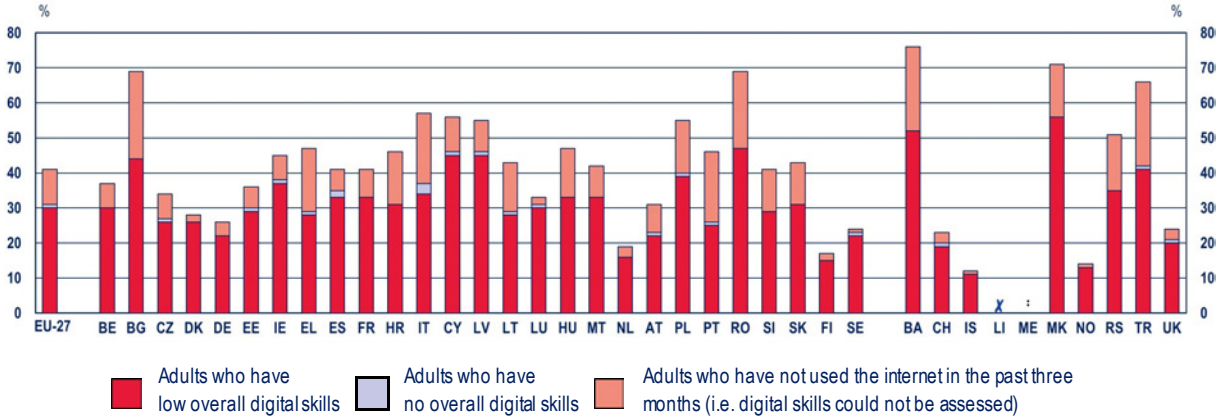
Depending on the country, the reference year varies. Most countries covered by this report participated in the first survey round (2011-2012), some participated in the second round (2014-2015) and one participated in the third round (2017). Thus, the figure refers to 2011-2017.

1.2.2. Digital skills

The Community survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals provides an indicator expressing the self-reported level of digital skills of survey participants. According to the 2019 survey round (Figure 1.5), in the EU-27 on average, 30 % of adults (aged 25-64) have low levels of digital skills and around 1 % have no digital skills. The skills of a further 10 % of adults could not be assessed because they had not used the internet in the three months prior to the survey. Considering that this last group is likely to include individuals with limited digital skills, around 40 % of adults in the EU may be seen as a group at risk of digital exclusion.

As far as individual European countries (EU Member States and non-EU countries) are concerned, the highest proportions of adults with low levels of digital skills and no digital skills – between 40 % and 56 % – are observed in North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Cyprus, Latvia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Poland (in descending order). Most of these countries also register high proportions of adults whose skills could not be evaluated because they had not used the internet in the three months prior to the survey (10 % or more in all the aforementioned countries except Latvia). When considering all the three categories – i.e. adults with low levels of digital skills, those with no digital skills and those whose skills could not be assessed – Bosnia and Herzegovina registers the highest figure (76 %), followed by North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania, where the proportion is around 70 %, and Turkey, with a proportion of 66 %.

Figure 1.5: Adults (aged 25-64) who have low or no digital skills, or who have not used the internet in the past three months (%), 2019



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
Low overall digital skills	30	30	44	26	26	22	29	37	28	33	33	31	34	45	45	28	30	33	33
No overall digital skills	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	0
No internet use (three months)	10	7	25	7	2	4	6	7	18	6	8	15	20	10	9	14	2	14	9
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
Low overall digital skills	16	22	39	25	47	29	31	15	22	52	19	11	✗	:	56	13	35	41	20
No overall digital skills	0	1	1	1	:	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	✗	:	0	0	0	1	1
No internet use (three months)	3	8	15	20	22	12	12	2	1	24	3	1	✗	:	15	1	16	24	3

Source: Eurostat Community survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals [isoc_sk_dskl_i] (data extracted 25 November 2020).

Explanatory note

Data displayed in the figure refer to a composite indicator, which is based on selected activities related to internet or software use that are performed by individuals in four specific areas, namely information, communication, problem-solving, and software skills. It is assumed that individuals who have performed certain activities have the corresponding skills. According to the variety or complexity of activities performed, two levels of skills ('basic' and 'above basic') are computed for each of the four dimensions. Finally, based on the component indicators, an overall digital skills indicator is calculated as a proxy of the digital competences and skills of individuals. Four skills levels are distinguished: 'no skills', 'low', 'basic' or 'above basic'. The figure displays adults who have 'low' or 'no' overall digital skills, as well as those whose overall digital skills could not be assessed because they had not used the internet in the three months prior to the survey.

Country-specific notes

Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, France, Croatia, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, North Macedonia, Norway and **Serbia**: For these countries, the proportion of adults who have no overall digital skills is not significant.
Sweden: Data have a low level of reliability because of the small sample size.
Montenegro: Data are not available because of the very small sample size.

At the other end of the spectrum are four Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway), Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, where the proportions of individuals with low levels of digital skills and no digital skills are between 11 % and 23 % – i.e. less than one quarter of the adult population. All these countries also register a relatively low proportion of adults whose skills could not be assessed because they had not used the internet in the three months prior to the survey (up to 4 % in all except Austria, where the proportion is 8 %).

1.3. Adult participation in education and training

After having examined the educational attainment and skills levels of the European adult population, this section concentrates on the participation of adults in education and training. The section starts by outlining European policy objectives in this area. It then presents general participation figures as well as differences in the levels of participation between different socio-economic groups. The final subsection explores data referring to the acquisition of medium-level qualifications during adulthood.

1.3.1. European policy objectives

European policy recognises the value of learning throughout life, including during adulthood. To monitor and steer adults' participation in education and training, the Council adopted a benchmark in 2009, according to which, by 2020, at least 15 % of adults (aged 25-64) in the EU should have participated in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey ([26]).

In February 2021, the Council introduced a new EU target for adult participation in education and training that studies participation in the 12 months prior to the survey and refers to a participation rate of at least 47 % to be reached by 2025 ([27]). This substantially higher objective than the previous one goes hand in hand with a new monitoring system that, as of 2022, will consist of regular data collection on the participation of adults in education and training within a 12-month reference period.

Further policy support for adult education and training has been expressed in the European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020b), which stipulates four quantitative objectives to be reached by 2025. These refer to adult participation in education and training (total participation, participation of low-qualified adults and participation of unemployed people) as well as to the digital skills of Europeans ([28]).

Finally, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (European Commission, 2021) expresses so far the most ambitious EU target concerning adult participation in education and training: at least 60 % of adults should be participating every year by 2030.

1.3.2. Participation rates over a four-week period and over one year

At present, two data sources provide an insight into the participation of adults in education and training: the EU LFS and the AES. The EU LFS, which was the data source for the EU 2020 benchmark for adult participation in learning (set at 15 %; see Section 1.3.1), captures participation during a four-week period preceding the survey ([29]). The AES, in turn, establishes the proportion of adults who have participated in education and training within a 12-month period ([30]).

([26]) Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009. The benchmark stipulated in this framework is a follow-up to the 2003 target of 12.5 %.

([27]) Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), OJ C 66, 26.2.2021.

([28]) The objectives stipulated in the European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020b) are:

- 50 % participation of adults (aged 25-64) in learning in the previous 12 months,
- 30 % participation of low-qualified adults (aged 25-64) in learning in the previous 12 months,
- 20 % share of unemployed adults (aged 25-64) with a recent learning experience (during the last four weeks),
- 70 % share of adults (aged 16-74) having at least basic digital skills.

Progress towards these objectives will be monitored using a new approach (see the information provided in the section).

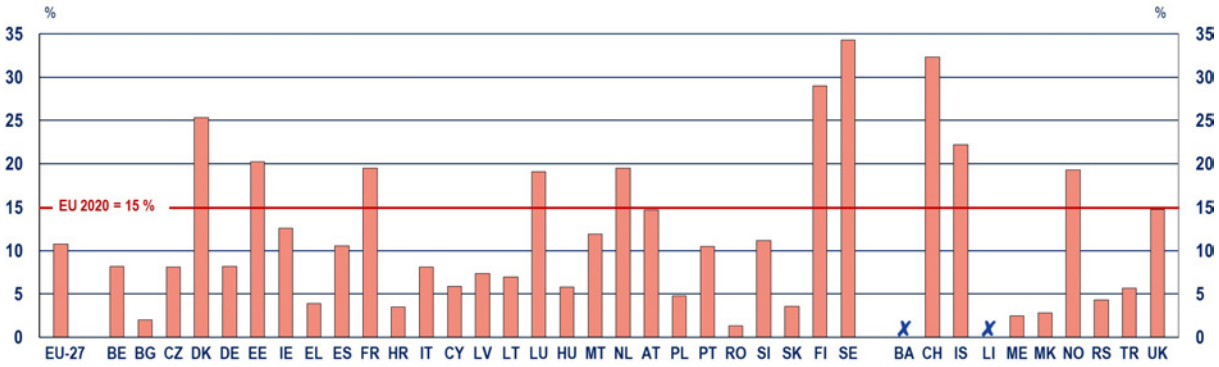
([29]) As of 2022, following a new monitoring system (see Section 1.3.1), the EU LFS will allow adult participation in education and training in the 12 months preceding the survey to be captured.

([30]) Although the AES covers participation in learning in a 12-month period, the scope of the AES indicators presented in this section does not overlap with the scope of the new EU quantitative objectives outlined in Section 1.3.1. This is because the new EU objectives do not consider participation in guided on-the-job training, whereas the AES data presented here include this type of learning activity. Guided on-the-job training refers to training that is planned in advance with a designated teacher/instructor (i.e. it differs from informal learning from colleagues) (Eurostat, 2017).

According to the EU LFS, in 2019, 10.8 % of adults (aged 25-64) in the EU-27 participated in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey (Figure 1.6).

The EU LFS shows that adult participation in education and training is uneven across European countries (EU Member States and non-EU countries). In 2019, adults in Sweden and Switzerland were most likely to participate in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey (34.3 % and 32.3 %, respectively). These two countries, together with Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Estonia, France, the Netherlands, Norway and Luxembourg (in descending order), have reached the EU 2020 participation benchmark. In addition, in 2019, the United Kingdom and Austria were very close to the benchmark (14.8 % and 14.7 %, respectively). At the other end of the spectrum are Romania, Bulgaria, Montenegro and North Macedonia (in ascending order), where participation rates in 2019 did not exceed 3 %, as well as Croatia, Slovakia, Greece, Serbia and Poland, where participation rates were between 3 % and 5 %.

Figure 1.6: Adults (aged 25-64) who participated in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey (%), 2019



EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
10.8	8.2	2.0	8.1	25.3	8.2	20.2	12.6	3.9	10.6	19.5	3.5	8.1	5.9	7.4	7.0	19.1	5.8	11.9
NL	**AT**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SI**	**SK**	**FI**	**SE**	**BA**	**CH**	**IS**	**LI**	**ME**	**MK**	**NO**	**RS**	**TR**	**UK**
19.5	14.7	4.8	10.5	1.3	11.2	3.6	29.0	34.3	✗	32.3	22.2	✗	2.5	2.8	19.3	4.3	5.7	14.8

Source: Eurostat EU LFS [trng_lfse_01] (data extracted 22 April 2021).

The EU LFS points to an overall increase in the participation of adults (aged 25-64) in education and training between 2009 and 2019. More specifically, the EU-27 average rose from 7.9 % in 2009 to 10.1 % in 2014 and 10.8 % in 2019 ([31]). However, the year 2020, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, interrupted this trend, with the EU-27 average dropping to 9.2 % ([32]). Virtually all the countries covered by this report registered a decrease in participation in 2020 compared with the previous year (Greece, Spain, Lithuania, Montenegro and Turkey are the only exceptions).

Figure 1.7 considers AES data. According to the AES, in 2016 ([33]), 43.7 % of adults (aged 25-64) in the EU-27 took part, at least once, in education and training in the 12 months prior to the survey ([34]). Twelve countries covered by this report registered at least 50 % participation, namely Switzerland (almost 70 %), the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Hungary, Finland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Denmark (in descending order). In contrast, Romania and Bosnia and

([31]) Eurostat EU LFS [trng_lfse_01] (data extracted 6 July 2021).

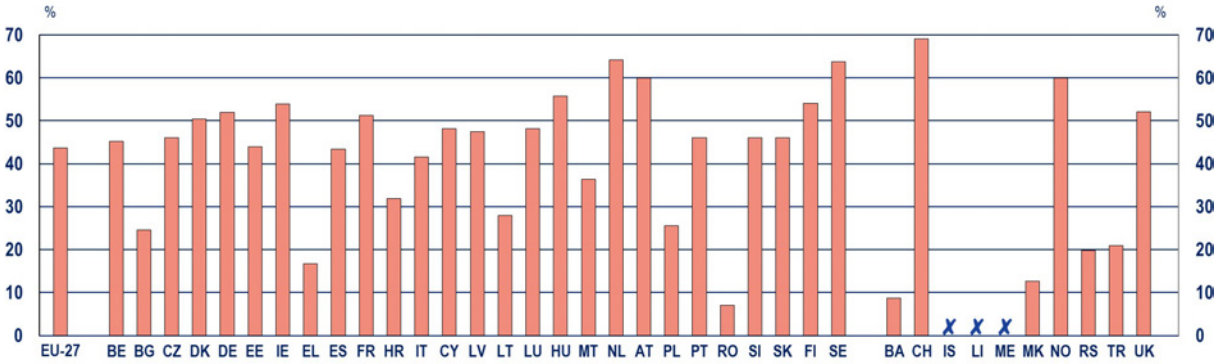
([32]) Eurostat EU LFS [trng_lfse_01] (data extracted 6 July 2021).

([33]) Owing to its specific focus on adult education and training, the AES is conducted less frequently than the EU LFS: every five years up to 2016 and every six years from 2016. The last round was conducted in 2016 and the next round is expected to take place in 2022.

([34]) As explained above, the new EU targets referring to adult participation in education and training do not consider the participation in guided on-the-job training. When excluding guided on-the-job training from the 2016 AES data, the participation was 38 % (European Commission, 2020b).

Herzegovina recorded the lowest rates of participation – 7.0 % and 8.7 %, respectively. Other countries registering relatively low overall participation rates – at least 10 percentage points below the EU-27 average – were North Macedonia, Greece, Serbia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania and Croatia (in ascending order).

Figure 1.7: Adults (aged 25-64) who participated in education and training in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), 2016



EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
43.7	45.2	24.6	46.1	50.4	52.0	44.0	53.9	16.7	43.4	51.3	31.8	41.5	48.1	47.5	27.9	48.1	55.7	36.3
NL	**AT**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SI**	**SK**	**FI**	**SE**	**BA**	**CH**	**IS**	**LI**	**ME**	**MK**	**NO**	**RS**	**TR**	**UK**
64.1	59.9	25.5	46.1	7.0	46.1	46.1	54.1	63.8	8.7	69.1	✗	✗	✗	12.7	60.0	19.8	20.9	52.1

Source: Eurostat AES [trng_aes_100] (data extracted 22 April 2021).

Available data also allow differentiation between participation in formal education and training and participation in non-formal education and training. Formal education and training refers to institutionalised, intentional and planned education that constitutes the formal education system of a country. It typically includes a substantial workload ([35]) and leads to a formal qualification. Non-formal education, in turn, typically takes the form of shorter courses and it mostly leads to qualifications (or certificates) that are not recognised as formal by the relevant national authorities, or to no qualifications at all. These characteristics imply that formal education and non-formal education will register very different participation rates. Indeed, as the 2016 AES shows (Figure 1.8), in the EU-27 on average, the take-up of non-formal education is around eight times higher than that of formal education (41.4 % compared with 5.0 %) ([36]).

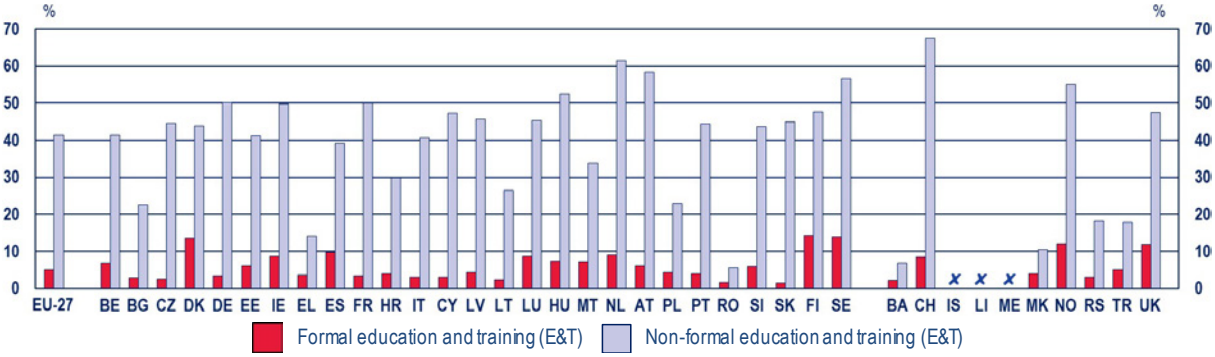
As far as formal education and training is concerned, only five countries – four Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway) and the United Kingdom – register participation rates above 10 %. Other countries registering relatively high rates of participation in formal education and training – between 8 % and 10 % – are Ireland, Spain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Most of these countries (all except Spain) also register high overall participation rates (above the EU-27 average). However, among the countries with the highest overall participation rates (above 50 %), Germany and France register participation rates in formal education and training that are below the EU average (3.5 % and 3.4 %, respectively). The lowest participation rate in formal education and training is observed in Slovakia (1.5 %), followed by Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lithuania, Czechia and Bulgaria (all below 3 %).

([35]) In the AES, formal education or training programmes must include a workload equivalent to at least one semester (or one half of a school/academic year) of full-time study. Participation in programmes of shorter duration is counted as participation in non-formal education and training.

([36]) In addition to formal and non-formal education and training, the AES also covers informal learning (see 'Glossary'). Data on this type of learning are not displayed in Figure 1.8.

Regarding non-formal education and training, Switzerland and the Netherlands register the highest participation rates (67.5 % and 61.5 %, respectively), followed by Austria, Sweden, Norway, Hungary, Germany and France (50 % or above). At the other end of the spectrum are, in ascending order, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Greece, with participation rates between 5.6 % and 14.0 %.

Figure 1.8: Adults (aged 25-64) who participated in education and training in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), by type of education and training (formal or non-formal), 2016



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
Formal E&T	5.0	6.8	2.9	2.5	13.5	3.5	6.2	8.6	3.7	9.8	3.4	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.4	2.4	8.6	7.3	7.2
Non-formal E&T	41.4	41.4	22.5	44.6	43.8	50.2	41.2	49.7	14.0	39.1	50.0	29.8	40.6	47.2	45.7	26.5	45.3	52.5	33.8
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
Formal E&T	9.0	6.2	4.4	4.0	1.7	6.0	1.5	14.2	13.8	2.2	8.5	✗	✗	✗	4.0	12.1	3.0	5.0	11.9
Non-formal E&T	61.5	58.4	22.9	44.4	5.6	43.6	45.0	47.7	56.5	6.9	67.5	✗	✗	✗	10.4	54.9	18.2	17.8	47.5

Source: Eurostat AES [trng_aes_100] (data extracted 22 April 2021).

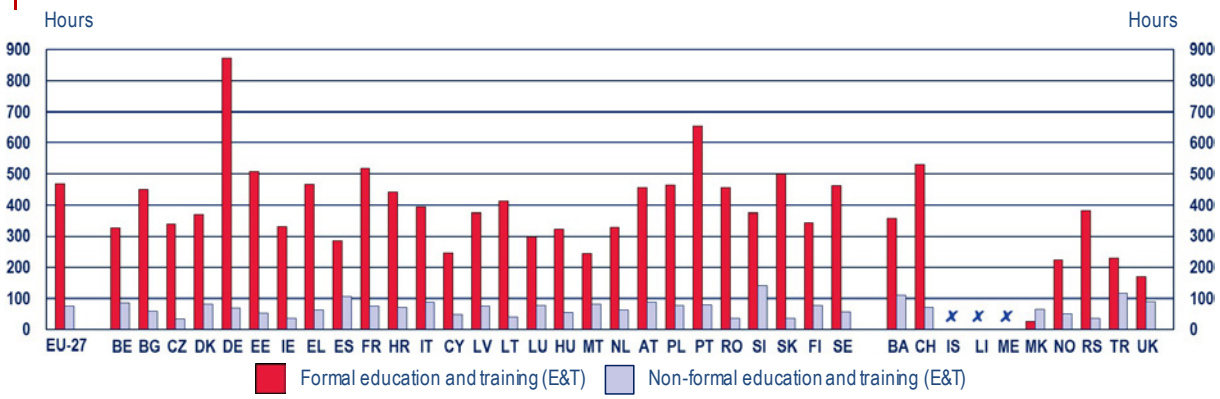
Country-specific note

Slovakia: Data on participation in formal education and training have a low level of reliability because of the small sample size.

Figure 1.9 provides further insight into the differences between formal education activities and non-formal education activities. It shows that, in the EU-27 on average, the mean instruction time in formal education is 469 hours. The mean instruction time in formal education is highest in Germany and Portugal, where the figures reach 872 hours and 653 hours, respectively. In contrast, in the United Kingdom and North Macedonia, the mean instruction time in formal education does not exceed 200 hours. As discussed in previous Eurydice studies (EACEA/Eurydice 2011, p. 21), this may reflect some real differences between education systems (e.g. the extent to which a fully operational modular system is in place).

Non-formal education activities are substantially less demanding in terms of instruction hours than formal education activities. In the EU-27 on average, the mean instruction time in non-formal education is 75 hours. In Czechia, Ireland, Romania, Slovakia and Serbia, the mean instruction time does not exceed 40 hours. Spain, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey register the highest mean instruction hours spent by participants in non-formal education: between 106 and 142 hours.

Figure 1.9: Mean instruction hours spent by participants in formal and non-formal education and training, 2016



Hours	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
Formal E&T	469	325	449	338	370	872	507	329	468	284	519	442	394	247	375	414	298	322	245
Non-formal E&T	75	85	59	35	82	68	52	36	63	106	75	72	89	48	76	42	78	54	82
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
Formal E&T	328	457	464	653	457	375	499	342	462	357	532	✗	✗	✗	25	224	381	229	169
Non-formal E&T	62	87	78	80	37	142	36	78	56	110	71	✗	✗	✗	64	50	36	116	91

Source: Eurostat AES [trng_aes_151] (data extracted 22 April 2021).

Country-specific notes

Lithuania and **Slovakia**: Data on mean instruction hours in formal education and training have a low level of reliability because of the small sample size.

1.3.3. Differences in participation by socio-economic characteristics

Participation in education and training varies according to adults' socio-economic characteristics.

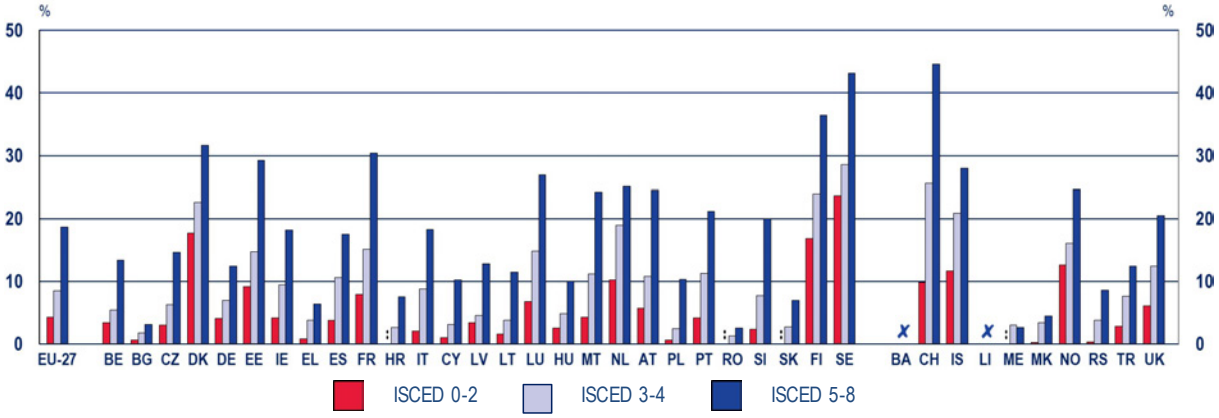
The EU LFS demonstrates that low-qualified adults (i.e. those who have completed lower secondary education at most) are least likely to participate in education and training, whereas those with the highest levels of educational attainment (a tertiary education qualification) are most likely to take part. More specifically, in 2019, in the EU-27 on average, only 4.3 % of adults with the lowest levels of qualifications (ISCED 0-2) participated in education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey, whereas the rate among those with a tertiary education degree (ISCED 5-8) was 18.7 % (Figure 1.10). For those with a medium-level qualification (ISCED 3-4), the EU-27 average rate of participation was 8.5 %.

The lowest rates of participation in education and training for adults with low levels of qualifications – 1 % or less – can be found in North Macedonia, Serbia, Poland, Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus (in ascending order). In contrast, in Sweden, 23.7 % of low-qualified adults participate in education and training. The proportion is also quite high – between 10 % and 20 % – in other Nordic countries and the Netherlands.

In addition to educational attainment, other socio-economic characteristics have an impact on adults' participation in education and training. One important factor is age: younger adults are more likely to participate in education and training than adults in higher age groups. In 2019, in the EU-27 on average, 17.8 % of those in the 25-34 years age group participated in education and training, whereas the proportion was 11.0 % for those aged 35-44 years, 9.0 % for adults aged 45-54 years, and 6.2 % for those aged 55-64 years ([37]). This can be partly explained by reduced labour market activity among older adults, which implies a lack of employer-sponsored further education.

([37]) Eurostat EU LFS [trng_lfse_01] (data extracted 22 April 2021).

Figure 1.10: Adults (aged 25-64) who participated in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey (%), by educational attainment level, 2019



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
ISCED 0-2	4.3	3.4	0.6	3.0	17.7	4.1	9.2	4.2	0.8	3.8	7.9	:	2.1	1.0	3.4	1.6	6.8	2.5	4.3
ISCED 3-4	8.5	5.4	1.8	6.3	22.6	7.0	14.7	9.5	3.8	10.6	15.1	2.6	8.8	3.1	4.6	3.8	14.8	4.8	11.2
ISCED 5-8	18.7	13.4	3.1	14.6	31.6	12.4	29.2	18.2	6.4	17.5	30.4	7.5	18.3	10.2	12.8	11.5	26.9	10.0	24.2

	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
ISCED 0-2	10.2	5.7	0.6	4.2	:	2.3	:	16.8	23.7	✗	9.8	11.7	✗	:	0.2	12.6	0.3	2.8	6.1
ISCED 3-4	19.0	10.8	2.4	11.3	1.3	7.7	2.7	24.0	28.6	✗	25.6	20.9	✗	3.0	3.4	16.1	3.8	7.6	12.4
ISCED 5-8	25.1	24.5	10.3	21.2	2.5	20.0	7.0	36.4	43.2	✗	44.6	28.0	✗	2.6	4.5	24.6	8.6	12.4	20.5

Source: Eurostat EU LFS [trng_lfse_03] (data extracted 22 April 2021).

Country-specific notes

Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, North Macedonia and **Serbia**: Data for ISCED 0-2 are of low reliability because of the small sample size.
Croatia, Romania, Slovakia and **Montenegro**: Data for ISCED 0-2 are not available because of the very small sample size.

Employment status also seems to play a role in the participation of adults in education and training. On average, employed adults are more likely to participate in education and training than unemployed adults or economically inactive people (the 2019 EU-27 average for these three categories was 11.4 %, 10.7 % and 8.8 %, respectively ([38])).

As far as migration background is concerned, non-EU migrants (i.e. adults born outside the EU-27) register higher average participation rates (11.2 % in 2019) than native-born adults (10.9 %) and EU migrants (8.8 %) ([39]).

1.3.4. Achievement of a medium-level qualification during adulthood

After having examined the participation of adults in education and training, a question may be raised about the extent to which adult education and training contributes to raising the qualification attainment levels of the population in Europe. Figure 1.11 examines this question by displaying the proportions of adults (aged 25-64) in the total adult (25-64) population who gained a medium-level qualification – i.e. an upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) qualification – during adulthood.

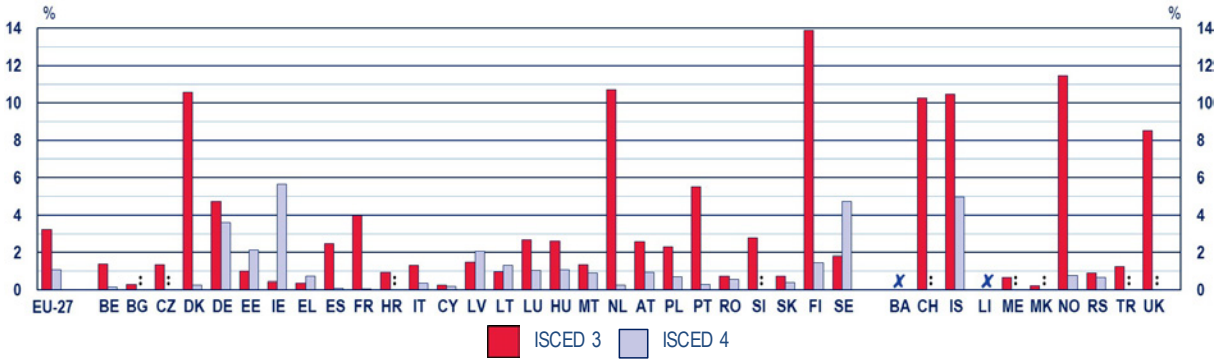
As Figure 1.11 shows, on average across the EU-27, 3.2 % of adults achieved an upper secondary qualification – which is currently their highest level of educational attainment (see the explanatory note

([38]) Eurostat EU LFS [trng_lfse_02] (data extracted 22 April 2021).
([39]) Eurostat EU LFS [trng_lfs_13] (data extracted 22 April 2021).

related to Figure 1.11) – during adulthood, i.e. at age 25 or above. Across the countries included in the analysis, the situation varies greatly.

In almost half of all the countries, fewer than 2 % of adults gained an upper secondary qualification during adulthood. In contrast, the proportion exceeds 10 % in Finland (13.9 %), Norway (11.5 %), the Netherlands (10.7 %), Denmark (10.6 %), Iceland (10.5 %) and Switzerland (10.3 %). Other countries registering a relatively high proportion of adults who achieved an upper secondary qualification during adulthood (above the EU-27 average) are the United Kingdom (8.5 %), Portugal (5.5 %), Germany (4.7 %) and France (4.0 %).

Figure 1.11: Adults (aged 25-64) who acquired a medium-level qualification during adulthood (aged 25 or above) as a percentage of all adults (aged 25-64), 2019



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
ISCED 3	3.2	1.4	0.3	1.4	10.6	4.7	1.0	0.4	0.4	2.5	4.0	1.0	1.3	0.3	1.5	1.0	2.7	2.6	1.3
ISCED 4	1.1	0.2	:	:	0.3	3.6	2.1	5.7	0.7	0.1	0.1	:	0.4	0.2	2.1	1.3	1.0	1.1	0.9
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
ISCED 3	10.7	2.6	2.3	5.5	0.7	2.8	0.7	13.9	1.8	✗	10.3	10.5	✗	0.7	0.2	11.5	0.9	1.2	8.5
ISCED 4	0.3	0.9	0.7	0.3	0.5	:	0.4	1.5	4.7	✗	:	5.0	✗	:	:	0.8	0.7	:	:

Source: Eurostat EU LFS. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory note

This figure refers to adults who gained their upper secondary qualification (ISCED 3) or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification (ISCED 4) during adulthood and currently hold it as their highest level of qualification. The figure does not capture situations in which people gained more than one qualification during adulthood, in particular cases in which adults moved from an upper secondary qualification to a higher education qualification (e.g. finishing upper secondary education at the age of 27 and higher education at the age of 32). This is because the EU LFS enquires only about the highest level of qualification and the age at which it was awarded.

Country-specific notes

Bulgaria: Data for ISCED 3 have a low level of reliability because of the small sample size.
Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Turkey and **United Kingdom**: Data for ISCED 4 are not available because of the very small sample size.
France: Data for ISCED 4 have a low level of reliability because of the small sample size.
Cyprus: Data for ISCED 3 and 4 have a low level of reliability because of the small sample size.
Netherlands: Data for ISCED 3 and 4 have a low level of reliability because of a high level of non-response.
Switzerland and **United Kingdom**: Data for ISCED 3 have a low level of reliability because of a high level of non-response.

Regarding post-secondary non-tertiary education, only 1.1 % of adults in the EU-27 achieved this type of qualification during adulthood. This low percentage can be partly explained by the fact that, in most European countries, post-secondary non-tertiary qualifications are not very common ([40]). Therefore, it is generally rare for adults to hold these qualifications. Only four countries have rates that are substantially above the EU-27 average, namely Germany, Ireland, Sweden and Iceland. In these countries, between 3.6 % and 5.7 % of adults gained a post-secondary non-tertiary qualification during adulthood.

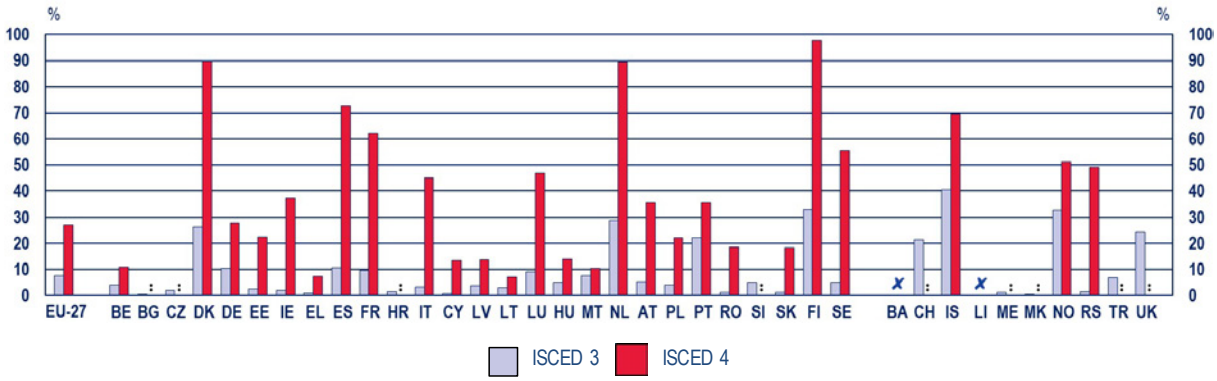
([40]) In some European countries, there are no programme/qualifications classified at ISCED level 4.

Figure 1.12 complements Figure 1.11 by presenting the proportions of adults (aged 25-64) who gained an upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) qualification during adulthood as a percentage of adults (aged 25-64) who hold these qualifications (rather than all adults). This helps to assess the extent to which adult education and training contributes to the stock of ISCED level 3 and ISCED level 4 qualifications in different countries.

As displayed in Figure 1.12, in some countries, between 20 % and around 40 % of adults who hold an upper secondary qualification achieved it during adulthood (Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom). Thus, in these countries, adult education and training makes a substantial contribution to the stock of upper secondary qualifications. In contrast, there are countries where, at most, 2 % of adults who hold an upper secondary qualification gained it during adulthood (Bulgaria, Czechia, Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania, Slovakia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

Data on post-secondary non-tertiary education indicate that, in a number of countries, more than half of those who hold an ISCED level 4 qualification achieved it during adulthood (more than 80 % in Denmark, the Netherlands and Finland; between 50 % and 73 % in Spain, France, Sweden, Iceland and Norway). This suggests that post-secondary non-tertiary qualifications are sometimes provided mainly in the framework of adult education and training ([41]).

Figure 1.12: Adults (aged 25-64) who acquired a medium-level qualification during adulthood (aged 25 or above) as a percentage of those who hold medium-level qualifications (aged 25-64), 2019



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
ISCED 3	7.5	3.9	0.6	2.0	26.3	10.4	2.6	2.0	1.0	10.6	9.5	1.6	3.2	0.8	3.8	3.0	9.2	5.1	7.6
ISCED 4	27.0	10.9	:	:	89.9	27.7	22.4	37.4	7.4	72.7	62.1	:	45.0	13.4	13.7	7.2	46.8	13.9	10.3
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
ISCED 3	28.7	5.3	4.0	22.1	1.2	5.0	1.2	32.9	5.1	✗	21.3	40.6	✗	1.1	0.5	32.6	1.6	6.7	24.3
ISCED 4	89.6	35.7	22.0	35.7	18.6	:	18.3	97.8	55.5	✗	:	69.5	✗	:	:	51.1	49.2	:	:

Source: Eurostat EU LFS. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory notes

See Figure 1.11.

Country-specific notes

See Figure 1.11.

([41]) This, however, does not indicate how common or widespread ISCED level 4 qualifications are in a country.

1.4. Country profiles

After having examined a number of data sets relating to adult education and training, this section combines some previously analysed indicators. The aim is to get a better view of country profiles and challenges. Taking into account the focus of this report, two main dimensions are considered:

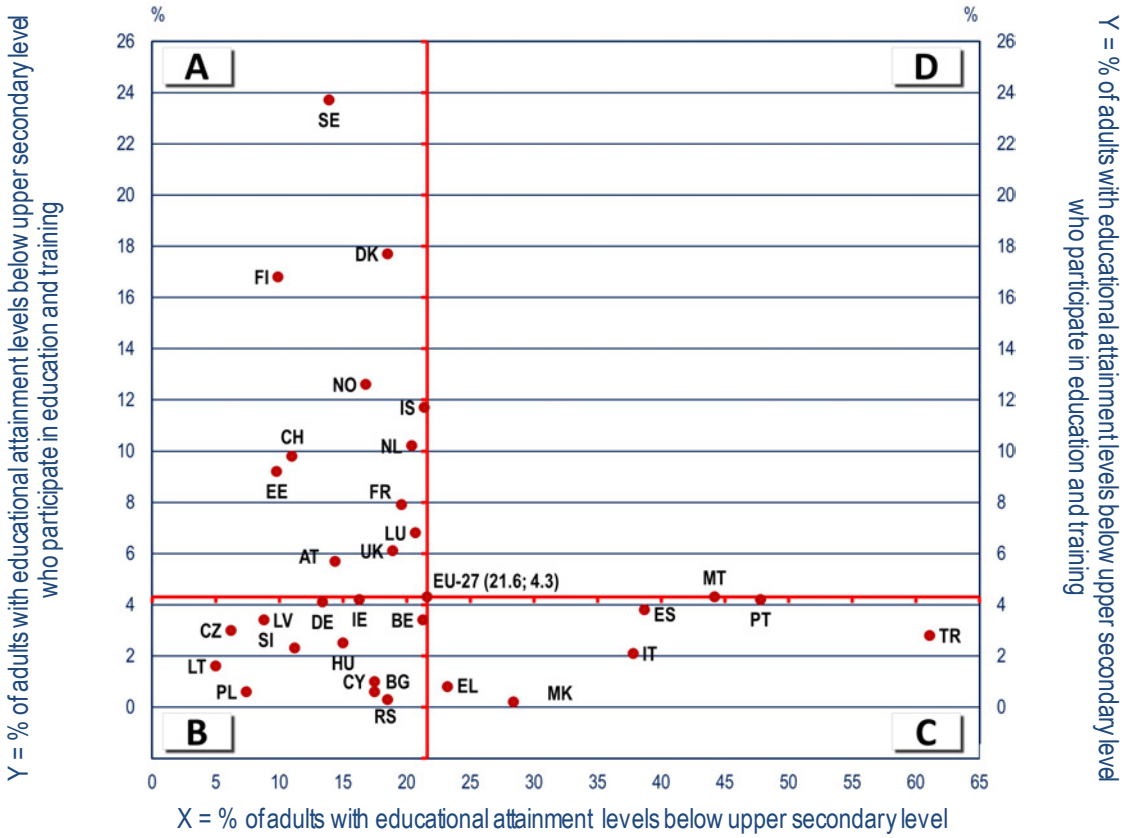
1. the educational attainment of the adult population in different European countries,
2. the extent to which adults with low levels of educational attainment participate in education and training.

The following indicators cover the above aspects:

- the percentage of adults with educational attainment levels below upper secondary level (see Figure 1.1),
- the percentage of adults with educational attainment levels below upper secondary level who participate in education and training (see Figure 1.10).

For each of these two indicators, the analysis considers the EU-27 average and examines country positions in relation to the EU average. Countries with relatively comparable positions are found in the same area – A, B, C or D – in Figure 1.13. In relation to each area, the discussion considers further aspects that have been outlined in the chapter, in particular data on the proportion of adults who gained a medium-level qualification during adulthood in the total adult population (Figure 1.11).

Figure 1.13: Adults (aged 25-64) with educational attainment levels below upper secondary level (%) AND adults (aged 25-64) with educational attainment levels below upper secondary level who participate in education and training (%), 2019



Source: Eurostat EU LFS [edat_lfse_03] (data extracted 7 April 2021) and [trng_lfse_03] (data extracted 22 April 2021). See also Figures 1.1 and 1.10.

Country-specific notes

See Figures 1.1 and 1.10.

Country profile A includes Denmark, Estonia, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. In all of these countries, the proportion of adults who have not completed upper secondary education (i.e. low-qualified adults) in the adult population is relatively low (below the EU-27 average) and, at the same time, the participation rate of low-qualified adults in education and training is relatively high (above the EU-27 average). Beyond these two aspects, most of these countries also register high proportions of adults (above the EU-27 average) who achieved an upper secondary qualification during adulthood (all except Estonia, Luxembourg, Austria and Sweden; however, Sweden, together with Iceland, registers a relatively high proportion of adults who achieved a post-secondary non-tertiary qualification during adulthood; see Figure 1.11).

Country profile B includes Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Serbia. All these countries have relatively low proportions of adults who have not completed upper secondary education (below the EU-27 average) in their populations and, at the same time, low rates of participation of low-qualified adults in education and training (below the EU-27 average). Regarding other dimensions discussed in this chapter, almost all countries in this group register relatively low proportions (below the EU-27 average) of adults who achieved an upper secondary qualification during adulthood (all except Germany; moreover, Germany, together with Ireland, registers a relatively high proportion of adults who achieved a post-secondary non-tertiary qualification during adulthood; see Figure 1.11).

Although Croatia, Romania, Slovakia and Montenegro are not included in Figure 1.13 because data on the participation of low-qualified adults in education and training are not available, they can still be seen as a part of this group. They all register relatively low proportions of adults who have not completed upper secondary education (below the EU-27 average) and very low overall participation rates of adults in education and training (see Figure 1.6).

Country profile C includes Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal, North Macedonia and Turkey. These countries have high proportions of low-qualified adults in their adult populations and, at the same time, the participation rates of low-qualified adults in education and training are relatively low. Malta can also be seen as a part of this group, as it registers a high proportion of adults who have not completed upper secondary education and the participation rate of low-qualified adults in education does not exceed the EU-27 average (it corresponds to the EU-27 average). Regarding other dimensions discussed in the chapter, almost all countries in this group register relatively low proportions of adults who achieved an upper secondary qualification during adulthood (below the EU-27 average; see Figure 1.11). Portugal is an exception in this regard.

Country profile D refers to countries with high proportions of low-qualified adults in the population that, at the same time, register high participation rates of low-qualified adults in education and training. As Figure 1.13 shows, no country covered by this report occupies a clear position in this group.

Summary

This chapter explored quantitative data related to the educational attainment levels and skills of the European adult population, as well as data on the participation of adults in education and training.

Starting with educational attainment levels, the chapter showed that 21.6 % of adults in the EU-27 have not completed upper secondary education (ISCED 3), the level currently regarded as the basic requirement for the knowledge society (see Figure 1.1). Furthermore, 5.3 % of adults in the EU-27 have not completed lower secondary education (ISCED 2). Among all countries covered by this report, southern European countries are most affected by low levels of educational attainment among adults. Data also indicate that young adults have, on average, higher educational attainment levels than the older population (see Figure 1.2). At the same time, the foreign-born population registers, on average, a higher proportion of adults who have not completed upper secondary education than the native-born population (see Figure 1.3).

With regard to the skills of the adult population, the chapter showed that all the countries participating in this report that took part in the PIAAC survey register at least 15 % of adults who are low performers in literacy and/or numeracy (see Figure 1.4). In several countries, which are mainly situated in the southern part of Europe, the proportion of adults with low levels of skills in literacy and/or numeracy exceeds 30 % (with the maximum reaching 57 %). As far as digital skills are concerned, the Community survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals shows that around one third of adults in the EU-27 have low levels of digital skills and a further 10 % do not generally use the internet (i.e. they had not used it in the three months preceding the survey) (see Figure 1.5). Thus, around 40 % of adults in the EU may be seen as being at risk of digital exclusion.

As regards the participation of adults in education and training, there are large disparities between countries. In both surveys considered (i.e. the EU LFS and the AES), the Nordic countries and some western European countries (e.g. France, the Netherlands and Switzerland) generally register high participation rates (see Figures 1.6 and 1.7). In contrast, several countries, situated mainly in south-eastern Europe, register low participation rates in both surveys (e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey).

When considering the period from 2009 to 2019, on average across the EU, an increase can be noted in the participation rates of adults in education and training, from 7.9 % in 2009 to 10.1 % in 2014 and 10.8 % in 2019 (EU LFS). However, in 2020, the year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU average dropped to 9.2 % and the participation rate decreased in virtually all European countries.

When it comes to type of education and training, data show that adults participate more frequently in non-formal learning activities than in formal education programmes (see Figure 1.8). This goes hand in hand with the fact that formal education, which commonly leads to recognised qualifications, requires a substantial investment in terms of time, whereas non-formal education generally consists of shorter courses (see Figure 1.9).

The participation of adults in education and training varies according to their socio-economic characteristics. The EU LFS demonstrates that low-qualified adults (i.e. those who have completed lower secondary education at most) are less likely to participate in education and training than adults with higher educational attainment levels (see Figure 1.10). Moreover, increasing age is associated with decreasing rates of participation in education and training.

When discussing the participation of adults in education and training, the chapter also examined the proportions of adults who gained a medium-level qualification (i.e. ISCED 3 or 4) during adulthood. Using data from the EU LFS, the analysis showed that 3.2 % of adults in the EU-27 achieved an upper

secondary qualification (ISCED 3) later in life, i.e. at age 25 or above. A few countries have rates that are substantially above the EU-27 average, namely Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. As regards post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4), only around 1 % of adults in Europe acquired this type of qualification during adulthood (see Figure 1.11). The EU LFS data also demonstrate that the contribution of adult education and training to the stock of ISCED level 3 or 4 qualifications varies across countries (see Figure 1.12).

In Section 1.4, the chapter presented an analysis based on a combination of selected indicators, examining, in particular, the proportion of low-qualified adults in the population and the participation of low-qualified adults in education and training (Figure 1.13). The analysis identified a dozen countries that are characterised by relatively low proportions of adults who have not completed upper secondary education and relatively high participation rates of low-qualified adults in education and training. Countries with this profile are mainly situated in northern and western Europe. The same number of countries is characterised by low proportions of low-qualified adults in their populations and, at the same time, low participation rates of low-qualified adults in education and training. Most countries with this profile are situated in eastern Europe, although some western European countries also belong to this group. Finally, several countries situated in southern Europe are characterised by high proportions of low-qualified adults in their populations and relatively low participation rates of low-qualified adults in education and training.

CHAPTER 2: GOVERNANCE AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Adult learning encompasses different types of provision designed to address various education and training objectives. As a result, the responsibility for adult learning is usually shared between multiple stakeholders, including top-level authorities (ministries responsible for education, employment, social affairs, home affairs, etc., and various national agencies), authorities at lower decision-making levels (e.g. regions, municipalities) and a variety of other actors (e.g. social partners, education and training providers, non-governmental organisations).

Governance and policy frameworks can help ensure that the different stakeholders involved in adult learning coordinate their initiatives and approaches. The first section of this chapter investigates the existence of one particular governance mechanism, namely intersectoral coordinating bodies, which can facilitate both horizontal and vertical coordination in the design and implementation of adult learning policies and measures.

The second section then looks at policy commitments, such as those indicated in national strategies and other key policies or expressed in the form of national targets that aim to promote adult learning and, in particular, the participation of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

2.1. Governance mechanisms

In the area of adult learning, 'governance' refers to the way in which responsibility for policies and measures is distributed between public authorities, agencies or organisations within a country. Evidence from across Europe shows that adult learning is a complex policy field. In fact, responsibility is often shared not only horizontally, i.e. across different national policy areas (e.g. education, employment, social affairs), but also vertically, i.e. between different decision-making levels (national and subnational) and stakeholders (Andriescu et al., 2019).

However, the different actors involved in adult learning also have other goals and undertake other activities and do not necessarily perceive themselves as being part of a joint adult learning system. Establishing coordination mechanisms is therefore essential to ensure that policies are developed in a coherent and complementary way (OECD, 2019c).

The 2016 Upskilling Pathways Recommendation ([42]) recognises the importance of coordination in adult learning and emphasises the need for Member States to ensure effective coordination and, where appropriate, partnerships with relevant public and private actors in education and training, employment, social, cultural and other relevant policy areas. A report of the European Commission's ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning reiterates this point and recommends establishing an operational partnership between all relevant adult learning stakeholders, in which roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and monitored (European Commission, 2020c).

One way to ensure effective coordination is through intersectoral coordinating bodies that operate at the level of top-level authorities. Such bodies are usually tasked with ensuring that policies designed by different ministries do not overlap, address gaps in provision, and are mutually reinforcing. As well as representatives of (at least two) top-level authorities, other decision-making levels (e.g. regions) or other stakeholders (e.g. social partners) may also be involved.

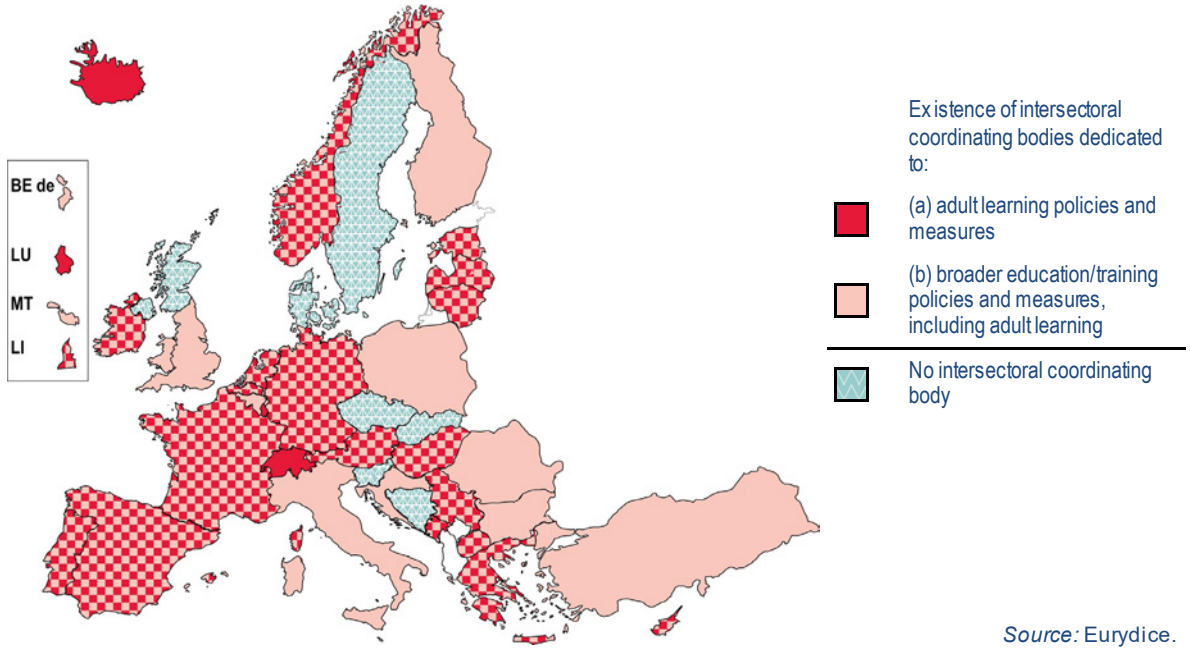
It should be noted, however, that countries are likely to organise the governance of their adult education and training policies and measures in accordance with broader governance arrangements

([42]) Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484/1, 24.12.2016.

in place at national level. In other words, depending on the level of (de-)centralisation, top-level authorities may hold more or less responsibility for the regulation of adult learning (Andriescu et al., 2019), which may in turn affect the need for an intersectoral coordinating body.

The analysis of the current situation in Europe shows that the majority of countries have one or more intersectoral body responsible for coordinating adult learning policies and measures across top-level authorities (see Figure 2.1). Only eight European countries or regions indicate that they currently do not have such a coordinating body in place – Czechia, Denmark, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland and Scotland).

Figure 2.1: Intersectoral coordinating bodies for adult learning policies and measures, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

An intersectoral coordinating body is a top-level body/authority responsible for horizontal (intersectoral, interministerial) coordination. Such a body is usually expected to ensure that policies designed by different ministries do not overlap, address gaps in provision and are mutually reinforcing. As well as representatives of (at least two) top-level authorities, other decision-making levels (e.g. regions) or stakeholders (e.g. social partners) may also be involved.

There are two types of intersectoral coordinating bodies: (a) bodies that focus specifically on coordinating the design and implementation of adult learning policies and measures; and (b) bodies responsible for the design and implementation of broader education and training policies and measures (e.g. lifelong learning, national qualifications systems), including adult learning. In a bit less than half of the countries or regions with intersectoral coordinating bodies, both types of body can be found. In the remaining countries or regions with intersectoral coordinating bodies, only one type can be found, which in most cases is that focusing on broader education and training policies and measures, including adult education.

(a) Countries with intersectoral coordinating bodies focusing on the design and implementation of adult learning policies and measures

Around half of all European countries or regions have an intersectoral coordinating body (or bodies) that focuses specifically on the design and implementation of adult learning policies and measures. These bodies either oversee the whole spectrum of policies and measures in this area or they focus on a subset of policies and measures related to adult learning, such as basic skills, second-chance education or professional guidance and/or training.

Intersectoral coordinating bodies that fall into the latter category, i.e. bodies that focus on a subset of policies and measures related to adult learning (such as basic skills, second-chance education or professional guidance and/or training) are the most widespread across Europe. Examples of these bodies can be found in France, Luxembourg and Iceland.

In **France**, *France Compétences* ([43]) is a state agency that was created in 2019 under the 'Act on the freedom to choose one's professional future' (*Loi pour la liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel*), which is in charge of vocational training and apprenticeships. Placed under the supervision of the ministry responsible for professional training, its governance involves others ministries, such as those responsible for education, higher education and agriculture, as well as social partners and regional councils. The role of *France Compétences* is to ensure the adequacy of qualifications, produce professional development advice, evaluate, inform and act as a mediator. *France Compétences* not only provides funding, but also registers degrees and qualifications that are funded by public sources.

In **Luxembourg**, the Department of Adult Education (*Service de la formation des adultes*) ([44]) is a department of the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth. The department is responsible for coordinating and providing general adult education, including general non-formal adult education, citizenship education, basic skills and second-chance education. Other stakeholders involved are the civil society and the municipalities.

In **Iceland**, the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC; *Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins*) ([45]) is the designated focal point for providing support for the development of adult education, basic skills and second-chance education. The centre serves as a forum for cooperation between the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Icelandic Confederation of Labour, the SA Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise, the Confederation of State and Municipal Employees of Iceland and the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities. The aim of the forum is to increase the provision of educational opportunities for people in the labour market who have limited formal basic education, immigrants and others, as well as address other educational issues of general concern for the community. The ETSC is the main centre for pedagogical advice and development in this field.

Examples of intersectoral coordinating bodies that focus on the whole spectrum of adult learning policies and measures, can be found, in Estonia, Latvia and Norway.

In **Estonia**, the Adult Education Council, which was established and whose responsibilities are regulated by the Adult Education Act ([46]), is an advisory body comprising representatives of several ministries, continuing education institutions, formal education institutions and employer and employee organisations, and other people and authorities engaged in the area of adult education. It has different responsibilities, including advising the Ministry of Education and Research and other parties in matters relating to the strategic planning, financing and organisation of adult education; participating in the preparation of development plans relating to adult education; and providing evaluations and mediating the opinions of the organisations represented in the Adult Education Council on adult education.

In **Latvia**, the Adult Education Governance Council ([47]) is composed of different ministries, social partners, municipalities and organisations involved in adult education, such as the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia and the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments. The aims of the Adult Education Governance Council are to establish quality criteria for adult education, evaluate and analyse the quality of educational programmes and decide on priority target groups and priority areas. The council uses labour market situation information and information from sectoral expert councils to provide reviews of and approve priorities for education, as well as to ensure regular assessments of the performance of adult education.

The Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (*Direktoratet for høyere utdanning og kompetanse*) ([48]) is an executive agency of the Ministry of Education and Research in **Norway**. It has the national responsibility for the provision of adult basic skills and lifelong guidance, the validation of prior learning, immigrant integration (Norwegian and social studies), analysis and research, including analysis of future skills needs, and the provision of training programmes for businesses. The body has the secretariat

([43]) See: https://www.francecompetences.fr/
([44]) See: http://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2009/05/22/n1/jo
([45]) See: https://frae.is/um-fa/about-us/
([46]) See: https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/523052019003/consolide
([47]) See: https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/pieauguso-izglitibas-parvaldibas-padome
([48]) Prior to July 2021, the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills was referred to as Skills Norway. See: https://www.kompetansenorge.no and www.hkdir.no (website still in development at the time of publication)

function of the national skills strategy, in which social partners and the Norwegian Committee on Skills Needs are involved. The Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills also has responsibility for establishing international cooperation in adult learning matters, including with regard to the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, the Nordic Network for Adult Learning, Eurydice and the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

While the majority of intersectoral coordinating bodies focusing on the design and implementation of adult learning policies and measures are permanent, some countries report having a coordinating body with a temporary mandate. Examples include the German Coordination Point for the National decade for literacy and basic education 2016-2026 (*Koordinierungsstelle Dekade für Alphabetisierung 2016-2026*) ([49]); the Dutch interministerial working group overseeing the implementation of the adult learning action programme (2017-2021); and the North Macedonian coordinating body for monitoring the establishment of a system for validating non-formal and informal learning (as part of the 'Education Strategy' for 2018-2025).

(b) Countries with intersectoral coordinating bodies responsible for the design and implementation of broader education and training policies and measures, including adult learning

Two thirds of all European countries or regions report having an intersectoral body (or bodies) that focuses on broader education and training policies and measures, including adult learning. These broader education and training topics include lifelong learning policies and measures.

In **Poland**, the objective of the Interministerial Team for Lifelong Learning and the Integrated Qualification System (*Międzyresortowy Zespół do spraw uczenia się przez całe życie i Zintegrowanego Systemu Kwalifikacji*) ([50]) is to support a shift in the focus of education towards learning outcomes, while ensuring wide access to high-quality education; the provision of education in different settings and for different ages that is guided by the interests of those who are learning; and equal treatment, recognition and promotion of learning in various forms and at different stages of life. More than 10 ministers are involved in the interministerial team.

In **Turkey**, the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning (GDLL) ([51]), working under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education, is the main top-level authority that orchestrates the provisions of lifelong learning in both compulsory education and beyond, including adult education. The GDLL has a permanent status and is responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring the services that are designed for adult education. The GDLL cooperates with various state and civic institutions, including universities, certain civic associations and international partners (e.g. EU institutions).

Other broader education and training topics that intersectoral coordinating bodies in this category focus on include the recognition and validation of skills, competences and qualifications and the anticipation of competence and skills needs.

In **Finland**, the National Forum for Skills Anticipation (*Osaamisen ennakointifoorumi*) ([52]) serves as a joint expert body for skills anticipation for the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education. The forum consists of a steering group, anticipation groups and a network of experts. Its task is to use the skills anticipation data to analyse changing competence and skills needs and their impact on the development of education, and to promote the interaction of education and training with working life in cooperation with the ministry and the agency. Members of the forum include employer representatives, employees and self-employed entrepreneurs, VET providers, representatives of higher education institutions, teaching staff, researchers and educational administration staff.

In **North Macedonia**, the National Board for the North Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF) ([53]), which was formed by the government, consists of representatives from all relevant ministries and agencies and from the chambers of commerce, trade unions for education and higher education institutions. The board evaluates policies on education, sustainable employment and regional development; recommends actions for better linking the education system with labour market needs; decides on the allocation of existing and new qualifications in the MQF; proposes the development of new or the improvement of existing qualifications to

([49]) See: https://www.alphadekade.de/

([50]) See: https://bip.kprm.gov.pl/kpr/bip-rady-ministrow/organy-pomocnicze/organy-pomocnicze-preze/3658,Miedzyresortowy-Zespol-do-spraw-uczenia-sie-przez-cale-zycie-i-Zintegrowanego-Sy.html

([51]) See: https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2018_04/11093946_MEB_HBO_KURUMLARI_YYNETMELYYY.pdf2

([52]) See: https://www.oph.fi/fi/palvelut/osaamisen-ennakointifoorumi-oef

([53]) See: https://www.pravdiko.mk/zakon-za-natsionalnata-ramka-na-kvalifikatsii/

competent institutions; monitors the development of the MQF as a whole; develops and adopts methodological documents for classifying qualifications; establishes sectoral qualifications councils; and determines criteria for their operation; decides on subsectors, areas and subareas within the sectoral qualifications; and adopts the reports of the sectoral qualifications councils, including recommendations on their functioning.

Finally, in addition to the abovementioned types of intersectoral coordinating bodies, 10 European countries ([54]) report taking other approaches to coordinating adult learning policies and measures. These include general coordination arrangements, such as in the case of the Italian 'National network of regional research, experimentation and development centers' (*Centro regionale di ricerca, sperimentazione e sviluppo*) ([55]), which develops research and supports actions in different fields, including adult education. In Austria, coordination occurs more specifically in the field of adult learning, i.e. different ministries cooperate closely on the implementation of the European Social Fund (Priority axis 3 'Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning') ([56]). Finally, in Switzerland, coordination occurs around very specific initiatives, such as the 'VET 2030' (*Berufsbildung 2030*) project ([57]), which is a common undertaking of the Swiss Confederation, the cantons and the organisations of the world of work (employers, industry, trade unions, etc.).

In Slovenia, Sweden, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, none of the abovementioned coordination approaches exist, however, intersectoral coordination of adult learning policies and measures is ensured as follows:

In **Slovenia**, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has the main responsibility for coordinating and overseeing the development of policies and measures in the area of adult education. The Council of Experts for Adult Education, appointed by the government, oversees the process of developing a master plan and education programmes, etc. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) ([58]) is the central national institute for development and research in adult education and an important partner in the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy. The SIAE also has responsibility for developing reports on the implementation of the annual plan for adult education and, to this end, coordinates its activities with policy-makers at national and international levels, other adult education stakeholders and practitioners in pedagogy, coordinators of and participants in various projects, adult education institutions and learners in Slovenia and beyond.

In **Sweden**, the administrative system is structured so that all policy areas are coordinated continuously. The government (not a ministry or a minister) makes decisions based on joint planning between the ministries concerned, and thus horizontal coordination is ensured. Vertically, responsibility is regulated by laws and regulations and through the control of public authorities, which must cooperate with other authorities within their area of activity.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the laws on adult education at the level of educational authorities require cooperation between competent educational bodies and employers when drafting adult education plans, determining the need for the adoption of programmes and implementing programmes.

2.2. Policy frameworks

In order to promote adult learning, and in particular the participation of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, countries may develop nationally agreed strategies, policies and quantitative targets in addition to intersectoral governing mechanisms. This can help forge a shared vision and promote high levels of stakeholder engagement at both national and local levels, creating a solid basis for the development of upskilling pathways (Cedefop, 2020b). It can also contribute to policy coherence and impact the extent to which adult learning is prioritised and delivered within specific national contexts.

([54]) DE, FR, IT, NL, AT, PL, FI, CH, ME and MK.
([55]) See for example: https://www.crsslazio.it/
([56]) See: https://erwachsenenbildung.at/service/foerderungen/eu_foerderungen/europaeischer_sozialfonds.php
([57]) See: https://berufsbildung2030.ch
([58]) See: https://www.SIAE.si/en/about-us/

The following section presents the main strategic policy documents issued by top-level authorities across Europe between 2015 and 2020 that explicitly refer to adults with low levels of qualifications or low levels of basic skills. This is followed by an overview of other key policy initiatives and national quantitative targets supporting the education and training of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

2.2.1. Strategic policy documents

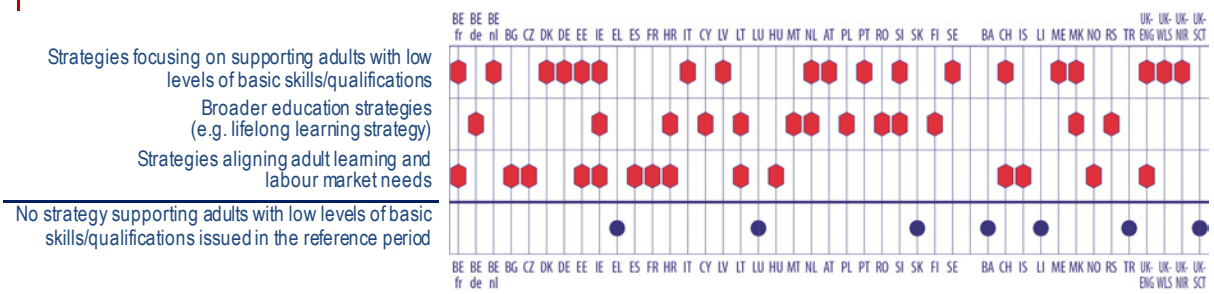
For many years, the European Commission has encouraged the establishment of lifelong learning or similar strategies aiming to reach adults and promoting their learning and skills development. Many European countries have started to put such strategies in place (Andriescu et al., 2019).

The 2019 Council conclusions on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways ([59]) underline Member States' commitments to put in place a broader strategic approach to lifelong skills development. This should include a coherent strategic approach to basic skills provision for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications that is built on coordination and partnerships between all relevant actors. Similarly, the new European Skills Agenda actions re-emphasise EU support for Member States' efforts to establish 'holistic, whole-of-government national skills strategies' (European Commission, 2020b).

This report defines strategic policy documents as official policy documents on an important policy area that are usually issued by top-level authorities and set out specific objectives to be met and/or detailed steps or actions to be taken within a given time frame, in order to reach a desired goal(s) or target(s). The data collection shows that, in most European countries, top-level authorities issued at least one strategic policy document between 2015 and 2020 that explicitly refers to access by adults with low levels of qualifications or those with low levels of basic skills to skills development or qualifications (see Annex I). The remaining countries may have other relevant strategic policy documents that are still applicable; however, if they were issued before 2015, they were not considered in this report ([60]).

The strategic policy documents that were issued between 2015 and 2020 generally fall into three categories (see Figure 2.2): those mainly focusing on promoting adults' basic skills and competences; those with a broader main focus, e.g. the provision of high quality education and training and/or the promotion of lifelong learning, including enhancing the skills and competences of adults with low levels of basic skills or low qualifications; and those focusing mainly on aligning adult learning systems and adults' skills and competence levels with current labour market needs.

Figure 2.2: Thematic focus of the main strategic policy documents issued in 2015-2020 that explicitly refer to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications



Source: Eurydice.

([59]) Council conclusions on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 189, 5.6.2019.

([60]) An overview of policy documents issued between 2009 and 2014 can be found in the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

Explanatory notes

A strategic policy document is an official policy document on an important policy area that is usually issued by top-level authorities and sets out specific objectives to be met and/or detailed steps or actions to be taken within a given timeframe, in order to reach a desired goal(s) or target(s).

The reported strategic policy documents (issued between 2015 and 2020; up to three per country/region) have been categorised according to their main focus in order to provide an overview of existing strategies. The strategies may, however, also have other objectives and goals. Countries may also have more than one strategic policy document with the same thematic focus. For a full list of the strategic policy documents identified in the context of this report, see Annex I.

Strategic policy documents aimed specifically at promoting adults' basic skills and competences include adult education strategies, action plans and initiatives. Examples of this type of strategic policy document are found in Germany and the Netherlands.

Two strategic policy documents issued by top-level authorities in **Germany** have the goal of promoting adult literacy and basic skills. The 'General agreement on the national decade for literacy and basic education 2016-2026' aims to reduce functional illiteracy and to raise the level of basic skills in Germany. The 'National skills strategy', which was launched in 2019, is a joint initiative of the German Federal Government and the *Länder* in cooperation with economic partners, trade unions and the Federal Employment Agency. The strategy focuses exclusively on continuing education and skills development. It strives to make continuing education and training more transparent and accessible to the workforce, thereby contributing to a new vocational training culture in an increasingly digitalised working context.

In the **Netherlands**, the policy letter 'Joining forces for a higher skill level in the Netherlands' (2020-2024) aims to promote basic skills. The policy letter details the 'Count on skills' programme (*Tel mee met Taal*; 2020-2024), a joint initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. This programme intends to provide people with the necessary basic skills (reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills) to participate in society, both online and offline. The aim is to reach adults through agreements with regional and local governments, training language buddies, an expertise centre for basic skills, and sharing knowledge and presenting good examples regarding the promotion of basic skills, among other things (see also Section 2.2.2).

In some other countries with strategic policy documents that fall into this category, such as Estonia, a specific focus is on adults who are early leavers from education and training, i.e. those who have completed, at most, lower secondary education.

In **Estonia**, the objectives of the 'Adult education programme' (2018-2021 and 2020-2023) include bringing back adult early leavers to formal education and supporting them to graduate; slowing down the decline in numbers of students in adult upper secondary schools; and increasing the proportion of adult learners in VET.

The second type of strategic policy documents are broader education strategies that generally aim to promote the provision of high-quality education and training and/or lifelong learning, including for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. Examples of this type of strategic policy document are found in Ireland and Croatia.

In **Ireland**, the 'Action plan for education' (2016-2019) outlines a plan for the education system as a whole, including further education and training (FET), with the aim of making the Irish education and training service the best in Europe by 2026. It aims to ensure that FET meets the specific needs of unemployed people and other groups impacted by disadvantage, and to support adults with basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs and workers in employment with low and basic levels of skills.

In **Croatia**, the 'Strategic plan of the Ministry of Science and Education' (2019-2021) has the overall objective of promoting a high-quality education system, including improved vocational and adult education and a higher percentage of adults involved in adult learning.

The final type of strategic policy documents are those focusing on aligning adult education and training, including for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, with current labour market needs. Examples of this type of strategic policy document can be found in Lithuania and Switzerland.

In **Lithuania**, the 'Strategic action plan of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour' (2018-2020) aims to increase job seekers' skills and employment opportunities; support the employment of target groups in social enterprises; organise information and consultations

for job seekers, including older people; implement the 'Youth guarantee' initiative and other youth employment programmes; and coordinate demand and supply to support the integration of unemployed people in the labour market.

In accordance with the 'Declaration 2019 on the common educational policy objectives for the Swiss education area', the **Swiss** Confederation and the cantons support adults to enter and re-enter the labour market by using structures that are as flexible as possible and by providing vocational, educational and career counselling. Adults have access to basic vocational education and further training. Existing skills and competences are taken into account. This includes formally acquired competences as well as those acquired non-formally and informally.

In some other countries with strategic policy documents falling into this category, such as Czechia, France and Hungary, the specific focus is on promoting adults' digital literacy so they can participate more effectively in the labour market and society.

In **Czechia**, the objective of the 'Digital literacy strategy' (2015-2020) is to develop citizens' digital literacy so that they can use digital technologies for their personal development, employability and adaptability in the labour market, to increase their quality of life and social inclusion. Making digital technologies more accessible or supporting retraining programmes for unemployed people or those at risk of social exclusion are also highlighted in the strategy.

In **Hungary**, the aim of the 'Digital education strategy' adopted in 2016 is to develop an education and training system that can provide education, instruction and training according to the needs of the digital society and economy in terms of infrastructure, technology, content, work organisation and human resources. All Hungarian citizens should be members of the digital community. The aim is thus to reduce the digital divide and the number of those who have no digital competences or who do not or rarely use them (digital inclusion).

In order to ensure that strategic commitments and goals are effectively realised, public authorities may allocate specific funding for their implementation (OECD, 2019c). The great majority of the countries with a strategic policy document issued between 2015 and 2020 that refers to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications report that their strategies are funded by a national budget, and around half of the countries report that their strategies are also supported by European funding (see Annex I). Only Czechia and the United Kingdom (England and Northern Ireland) report having no specific budget dedicated to any of their strategic policy documents.

Putting monitoring mechanisms in place can also help to ensure that the strategic measures achieve the desired impacts (OECD, 2019c). Across Europe, around two thirds of the countries with strategic policy documents that refer to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications confirm that they have conducted or anticipate conducting a monitoring and evaluation exercise (see Annex I).

2.2.2. Other key policy initiatives

As well as the strategic policy documents described in the previous section, more than half of all European countries or regions ([61]) report that their top-level authorities have developed one or more other key policy initiatives between 2015 and 2020 that aim to promote access to skills development or qualifications for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. These policy initiatives may not set out specific objectives to be met or detailed steps or actions to be taken within a given time frame, as is the case for the strategic policy documents; nevertheless, they constitute important legal frameworks supporting the education and training of these target groups.

Among the key policy initiatives are those that aim to provide general educational support to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, such as the 2019 'Decision on funding the implementation of basic adult education and training' in Croatia ([62]); the 2020-2024 'Count on skills'

([61]) BE fr, BE de, BE nl, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, CH, ME, NO, UK-ENG and UK-SCT.

([62]) See: https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/Obrazovanje/ObrazovanjeOdraslih//Odluka%20o%20financiranju%20provedbe%20osnovnog%20obrazovanja%20odraslih%20i%20osposobljavanja%20za%20jednostavne%20poslove%20u%20zanimanjima%20u%202019.pdf

programme in the Netherlands ([63]), which among other things supports municipalities to tackle low levels of literacy; and the 2018 'Adult education act' in Slovenia ([64]) underpinning the public services and the support given to adult learners and, in particular, those with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

Other recent policy initiatives that have been implemented, for example in Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Hungary, promote access to particular forms of adult learning, such as second-chance schools. Similarly, in Sweden, 'vocational packages' have been introduced as a recent feature of adult education.

In **Sweden**, the Swedish National Agency for Education has produced 'vocational packages' (or continuous vocational training) ([65]) on behalf of the government. A vocational package consists of a combination of upper secondary courses that will match the skills requirements that the labour market places on employability within a particular profession. There are currently more than 50 different professional packages and this number may increase, as more industries demand them. In order to ensure that the national vocational packages correspond to current industry requirements for employment, the Swedish National Agency for Education has consulted with experts with extensive industry knowledge through the national programme councils for upper secondary vocational education.

Several countries or regions report having introduced individualised support measures between 2015 and 2020. For example, in the German-speaking and Flemish Communities of Belgium, France and Austria, opportunities have been created to link individual training guarantees with financial support or incentives.

In **France**, the 2018 'Act on the freedom to choose one's professional future' (*Loi pour la liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel*) ([66]) confirmed the individualisation of training rights, initiated in 2014 through the personal training accounts (*Compte personnel de formation* (CPF)). Within the CPF, the least qualified individuals receive a higher amount of financial support (see Chapter 4 and Annex IV for details).

In **Austria**, a national-level education and training guarantee for young adults up to the age of 25 (*Ausbildungsgarantie bis 25*) ([67]) entered into force in 2017. It aims to ensure that young unemployed people aged between 19 and 24 years who have not completed education above lower secondary level (ISCED 2) have access to adequate education and training. This includes state-funded apprenticeship positions (*Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung*), apprenticeship-intensive courses (*FacharbeiterInnen-Intensivausbildung*) and job-related skills training (*Arbeitsplatznahe Qualifizierung*).

Some countries or regions, such as the French Community of Belgium, Portugal and Romania have introduced key policy initiatives in recent years affecting qualifications frameworks.

In **Romania**, the National Qualifications Authority and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection and Elderly have introduced qualification level 1 in the National Qualifications Framework. The ministry subsequently developed a list of basic occupations for which level 1 qualification programmes can be organised for unskilled adults ([68]).

Slovakia and Norway report having established key expert networks in order to promote access to skills development and/or qualifications for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. These are the Slovakian National Network for Implementing the Upskilling Pathways Initiative, which is an advisory body ([69]), and the Norwegian Committee on Skill Needs (*Kompetansebehovsutvalget*) ([70]).

([63]) See: https://www.telmeemettaal.nl/

([64]) See: https://www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/2018-01-0222/zakon-o-izobrazevanju-odraslih-zio-1

([65]) See: https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/vuxenutbildningen/komvux-gymnasial/laroplan-for-vux-och-amnesplaner-for-komvux-gymnasial/nationella-yrkespaket-for-komvux#h-Nationellayrkespaket

([66]) See: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichLoiPubliee.do?idDocument=JORFDOLE000036847202&type=general&legislature=15

([67]) See: https://www.bmafj.gv.at/Themen/Arbeitsmarkt/Arbeitsmarktfoerderungen/Jugendliche-und-junge-Erwachsene.html#Arbeitsmarktpolitik%20f%C3%BCr%20junge%20Erwachsene:%20%E2%80%9EAusbildungsgarantie%20bis%2025%E2%80%9C

([68]) See: http://www.anc.edu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Lista-ocupatii-elementare-nivel-1-cf-Ordin-2495-2018-1.pdf

([69]) See: https://siov.sk/siov-sa-stal-sekretariatom-narodnej-siete-pre-implementaciu-iniciativy-cesty-zvysovania-zrucnosti/

2.2.3. National quantitative targets

In the context of their national policy frameworks, countries may set measurable quantitative targets related to adult learning, including for the education and training of adults with low levels of basic skills and/or qualifications (see Figure 2.3). National targets set out the specific objectives to be achieved across a country within a particular time frame. This can establish yet another way to help different actors work together towards a common goal and to monitor progress (OECD, 2019c).

The 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) showed that measurable targets related to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications were rarely set by countries in strategic policy documents issued between 2009 and 2014. Data collected for this report shows a more favourable situation. Across Europe, out of 35 countries or regions with strategic policy documents issued between 2015 and 2020 that refer to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, 20 report that their strategies stipulate quantitative targets related to this group ([71]) (see Annex I). Moreover, in Luxembourg and North Macedonia, national quantitative targets focusing on adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications were set between 2015 and 2020 as part of other key policy initiatives.

An example of national targets that aim to increase the overall number of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications taking part in education and training programmes can be found in Croatia.

> In **Croatia**, the 'Strategic plan of the Ministry of Science and Education' (2019-2021) aims, among other things, to increase the number of adults in adult basic skills programmes and the number of adults who receive grants for participation in basic skills or first qualification educational programmes from 10 531 to 13 350.

Examples of quantitative targets for raising the number/proportion of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications who complete training programmes can be found in Lithuania and Portugal.

> In **Lithuania**, the 'Action plan for the development of lifelong learning' for 2017-2020 aims, among other things, to increase the number of adults with recognised qualifications from 3 per 10 000 inhabitants in 2016 to 14 per 10 000 inhabitants in 2020.

> In **Portugal**, the 'Qualifica programme' aims to increase the qualification levels of 600 000 adults from 2017 to 2020.

In some countries, such as Estonia, national targets that aim to reduce the proportion of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications focus on early leavers from education and training; in other countries, such as Hungary, the focus is on adults with low levels of digital competences.

> In the context of its 'Digital education strategy', **Hungary** set a quantitative target of decreasing the percentage of 25- to 64-year-old working-age adults with no or only low levels of digital competences from 60 % (3.4 million working-age adults) to 30 % by 2020.

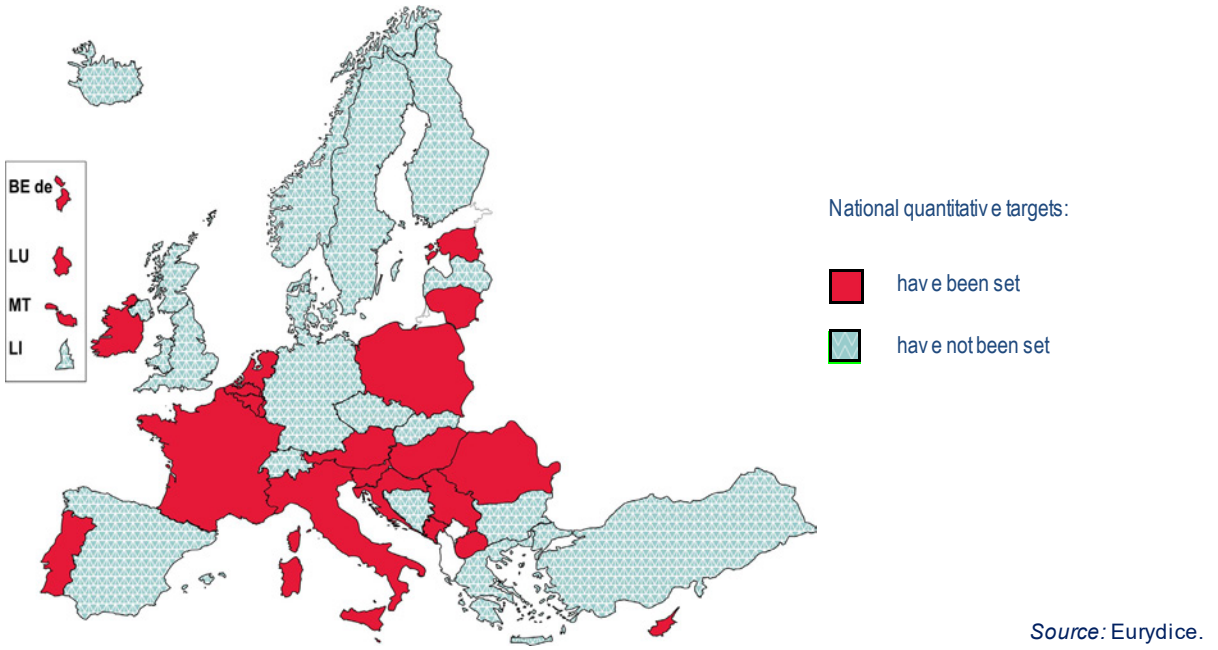
Lastly, examples of quantitative targets focusing on promoting the participation of adults in education and training programmes to improve their employment-related skills/qualifications and employment opportunities can be found in Luxembourg and Slovenia.

> In **Slovenia**, the 'Resolution on the master plan for adult education in the Republic of Slovenia for 2013–2020' sets out under one of its priority areas the target of having half of all unemployed adults participating in education and training programmes to improve their employment opportunities.

([70]) See: https://kompetansebehovsutvalget.no/

([71]) BE fr, BE de, BE nl, EE, IE, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, ME and RS.

Figure 2.3: National quantitative targets for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications set in 2015-2020



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

National quantitative targets refer here to numerical objectives set by top-level authorities between 2015 and 2020 regarding the education and training of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. These targets may appear within the context of countries' strategic policy documents (see Figure 2.2 and Annex I) or in other relevant policy initiatives.

Summary

This chapter showed that the great majority of countries have a number of governance mechanisms and/or policy frameworks in place to promote the education and training of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications and to ensure that the different stakeholders involved in adult learning coordinate their initiatives and approaches.

Most European countries have one or more intersectoral coordinating body related to adult learning, i.e. a governance mechanism that can facilitate both horizontal and vertical coordination in the design and implementation of adult learning policies and measures (see Figure 2.1). More specifically, around half of the countries report having an intersectoral coordinating body that focuses specifically on the design and implementation of adult learning policies and measures, whereas two thirds of the countries report having an intersectoral body dealing with broader education and training policies and measures, including adult learning.

The chapter also investigated the existence of policy frameworks established between 2015 and 2020, such as strategic policy documents, other key policy initiatives and national quantitative targets. Strategic policy documents on adult learning represent an important policy instrument for supporting people with low levels of basic skills or qualifications as they can help forge a shared vision and establish high levels of stakeholder engagement at both national and local levels. They exist in all but seven countries or regions and many focus specifically on supporting adults with low levels of qualifications or basic skills (see Figure 2.2). The great majority of countries with strategic policy documents report that their strategies are funded through a national budget, and around half of them report also relying on a European budget. Around two thirds of the countries with a strategic policy document confirm that it has been subjected to or will be subject to monitoring and evaluation.

More than half of all European countries also report that their top-level authorities have developed other key policy initiatives between 2015 and 2020 that aim to support adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. These initiatives have various objectives, including the promotion of adult education and training in general; increasing access to particular forms of adult learning, such as second-chance schools; the provision of individualised training support, financial support or incentives; and the setting up of qualification frameworks and expert networks in this area.

Although the number of national quantitative targets regarding the education and training of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications appears to have increased across Europe since the publication of the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015), only around half of all countries or regions report having set national targets between 2015 and 2020 – in the context of either their strategic policy document(s) or other key policy initiatives (see Figure 2.3). The targets focus on increasing the number/proportion of adults taking part in education and training programmes or raising the number/proportion of adults having completed education and training programmes.

When considering all the aspects analysed, the overall picture that emerges is that most European countries currently have in place both a governance mechanism in the form of an intersectoral coordinating body and relevant policy frameworks, i.e. one or more strategic policy documents, other recent key policy initiatives or national quantitative targets (see Figure 2.4).

In a number of countries, only some of the aspects analysed can be found. More specifically, Liechtenstein and Turkey report having an intersectoral coordinating body for adult learning policies; however, no strategic policy documents, key policy initiatives or national targets concerning adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications have been developed between 2015 and 2020. In Czechia, Denmark, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland and Scotland), on the other hand, there are no intersectoral bodies for coordinating adult learning policies; however, these countries or regions report having strategic policy documents and/or other key policy initiatives or national targets in place that help to promote the coherence of policies supporting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. Moreover, in Slovenia and Sweden, the intersectoral coordination of adult learning policies and measures is ensured through other elements of the administrative system.

Finally, none of the governance and policy frameworks investigated here are found in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The coordination of adult learning policies and measures is nevertheless ensured through top-level legislation that sets out the requirement for cooperation between competent educational bodies and employers during the development and implementation of relevant initiatives and actions.

Figure 2.4: Summary of existing top-level governance and policy frameworks promoting the education and training of adults (with low levels of basic skills or qualifications), 2019/20

	Intersectoral coordinating bodies for adult learning policies and measures	Strategic policy documents referring to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, 2015-2020	Other key adult learning policy initiatives supporting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, 2015-2020	National quantitative targets regarding adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, 2015-2020
BE fr	●	●	●	●
BE de	●	●	●	●
BE nl	●	●	●	●
BG	●	●		
CZ		●		
DK		●		
DE	●	●		
EE	●	●		●
IE	●	●		●
EL	●		●	
ES	●	●	●	
FR	●	●	●	●
HR	●	●	●	●
IT	●	●	●	●
CY	●	●	●	●
LV	●	●		
LT	●	●		●
LU	●		●	●
HU	●	●	●	●
MT	●	●	●	●
NL	●	●	●	●
AT	●	●	●	●
PL	●	●	●	●
PT	●	●	●	●
RO	●	●	●	●
SI		●	●	●
SK			●	
FI	●	●	●	
SE		●	●	
BA				
CH	●	●	●	
IS	●	●		
LI	●			
ME	●	●	●	●
MK	●	●		●
NO	●	●	●	
RS	●	●		●
TR	●			
UK-ENG	●	●	●	
UK-WLS	●	●		
UK-NIR		●		
UK-SCT			●	

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This figure presents a summary of the data displayed in Figures 2.1-2.3 and the information presented in Section 2.2.2. For further details and explanations, see the reference figures and reference section.

CHAPTER 3: LEARNING PROVISION

As discussed in Chapter 1, almost 22 % of adults (aged 25-64) in the EU-27 – 51.5 million people – had not completed upper secondary education (ISCED level 3; EQF level 3 or 4; see 'Glossary'). Of these adults, around 12.5 million left the education system with less than lower secondary education (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.1). Beyond the level of formal education, the skills levels of adults – including literacy, numeracy and digital skills – are also a matter of concern (see Chapter 1, Figures 1.4 and 1.5).

Chapter 2 showed that most European countries have in place (national) policy frameworks that provide support for adults with low (or no) qualifications or low levels of basic skills. These frameworks forge a shared vision and increase stakeholder engagement around upskilling and upgrading of qualifications of adults at national level.

Building on the first two chapters, and considering European policy objectives related to adult education and training (see the introduction to this report), this chapter discusses learning provision across European countries that may contribute to upskilling and upgrading of qualifications of the adult population. The focus is on large-scale publicly subsidised learning provision, i.e. programmes that are established and systematic.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section 3.1 provides some theoretical background for the cross-country analysis of adult learning systems. Section 3.2 outlines some key characteristics of programmes in place across Europe that may benefit adults with no or low qualifications and those lacking basic skills. Section 3.3 addresses learning provision from the perspective of programme providers.

Two annexes complement the analysis presented in this chapter. Annex II provides an overview of major upskilling and qualifications upgrading programmes open to adults that are in place across European countries. Annex III presents details of programme providers.

The chapters that follow further develop the content of this overview chapter. They discuss questions relating to the funding of adult education and training programmes (Chapter 4), the way that learning provision is adapted to the constraints of adults (Chapter 5) and the extent to which adults' prior learning achievements are considered (Chapter 6). The last two chapters discuss the awareness-raising and outreach actions (Chapter 7) and guidance services (Chapter 8) that accompany adult learning provision.

3.1. Adult learning provision across Europe: theoretical considerations

Although comparing systems of initial education and training across countries is already a complex task, comparing adult education and training systems – including learning provision for adults with low levels of formal educational attainment or low levels of basic skills – is far more challenging. This is because structures and programmes referring to adult education and training differ widely across countries. This section outlines some of the challenges related to analysing adult learning systems in a comparative perspective.

3.1.1. Structuring the area of adult education and training

When analysing adult learning systems in a comparative perspective, Desjardins (2017, pp. 19-20) refers to four main types (forms) of structured adult learning provision:

1. adult basic and general education,
2. adult higher education,
3. adult vocational education,
4. adult liberal education.

The first type of provision – adult basic and general education – refers to second-chance and basic skills programmes. According to the author, this type of provision is sometimes integrated in the formal education system (generally at ISCED levels 1-3; see 'Glossary'), but it may also be provided as part of non-formal education. The second type – adult higher education – is not always distinguishable from the system of initial education, i.e. this type of provision does not always target adults specifically. The third type – adult vocational education – may use various labels, including continuing education, vocational education and training (VET), technical education or work-based learning. Again, the extent to which this type of provision is formalised varies across countries. Finally, adult liberal education (or popular education) typically includes sports, hobby and various leisure-oriented programmes.

When considering upskilling and qualification upgrading opportunities for adults with low levels of skills or qualifications, it is clear that this area is closely associated with the first type of adult learning. Adult higher education is least relevant to this area. Adult vocational education and adult liberal education, however, are both likely to include learning provision that is relevant for adults with low levels of basic skills or low (or no) qualifications. Desjardins (ibid., p. 20) in this context notes that 'the different forms of provision are not necessarily mutually exclusive from one another'. For example, 'liberal oriented non-formal provision can be used for remedial ends such as literacy training, and feature a vocational orientation to promote the development of income-generating activities'.

The above points to the need to consider different forms of provision when analysing opportunities for upskilling and upgrading of qualifications of adults across countries. To complicate things even further, different types of adult learning can be formalised to different degrees. The typology of learning activities is outlined in the following section.

3.1.2. Typology of learning activities

A typology of the different degrees of formalisation of learning activities has been widely used in education and training policy since the 2000 Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2000). This policy document recognised three different types of learning – formal, non-formal and informal – and emphasised their complementarity. During the last 20 years, these three terms have been defined in a number of ways, which are comparable to a certain extent. One authoritative source of definitions for these concepts is the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS, 2012).

The ISCED classification defines formal education as institutionalised, intentional and planned education, which constitutes the formal education system of a country. Formal education is commonly associated with a pathway structure known as 'initial education'. However, adult education may also be recognised as part of the formal education system.

Non-formal education is also institutionalised, intentional and planned, but it is not necessarily associated with a continuous pathway. Rather, it appears as an addition or alternative to formal education, and it typically takes the form of shorter courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal

education mostly leads to qualifications (or certificates) that are not recognised as formal by the relevant national authorities or to no qualifications at all.

Contrary to formal and non-formal education, informal learning is not institutionalised, but it is still intentional and deliberate. Consequently, it is less organised and structured than either formal or non-formal education. It may include learning activities that occur in the family, workplace or local community or as part of daily life, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially directed basis.

In addition to the above three concepts, the ISCED classification refers to the concept of 'incidental' or 'random' learning. This (non-intentional) learning may occur as a by-product of day-to-day activities, events or communications that are not designed as deliberate educational or learning activities.

The above definitions suggest that formal adult education is the most accessible object of study for cross-country comparative analyses. Indeed, formal education encompasses most organised types of provision coordinated by national authorities. A cross-country exploration of non-formal education is possible to some extent, depending on its degree of institutionalisation. In contrast, informal learning and incidental (or random) learning cannot be studied in terms of 'learning provision', as they are not institutionalised. Thus, the following section discusses only formal and non-formal education.

3.1.3. Connectedness between formal and non-formal education

As outlined in the previous section, both formal and non-formal education are institutionalised, intentional and planned, but they differ in terms of the final output: non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognised as formal by national authorities or to no qualifications at all. When considering the (degree of) recognition of qualifications by national authorities, it is necessary to outline both the role of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and their state of development.

Between 2008 and 2016, developments related to the implementation of NQFs were guided by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning ([72]). During this period, all European countries ([73]) started relating their national qualifications systems to the EQF levels and began to develop or continued developing their NQFs. In 2017, a new Council recommendation ([74]), which repeals the 2008 recommendation, enhanced European cooperation in this area. Both the 2008 and the 2017 recommendations define an NQF as 'an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society'.

Cedefop has been mapping developments related to NQFs and studying, among other questions, how comprehensive they are, i.e. what types of qualifications are included. As Figure 3.1 shows, almost all European countries are working towards a comprehensive NQF (Cedefop, 2020c). This means that 'besides formal education and training qualifications at all levels, which are now included in most countries' NQFs, fully comprehensive frameworks will increasingly include qualifications awarded outside formal education and training by private providers, sectors, companies and international bodies' (ibid., p. 2). A limited number of countries have almost achieved this objective, i.e. they have

([72]) Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, OJ C 111, 6.5.2008.

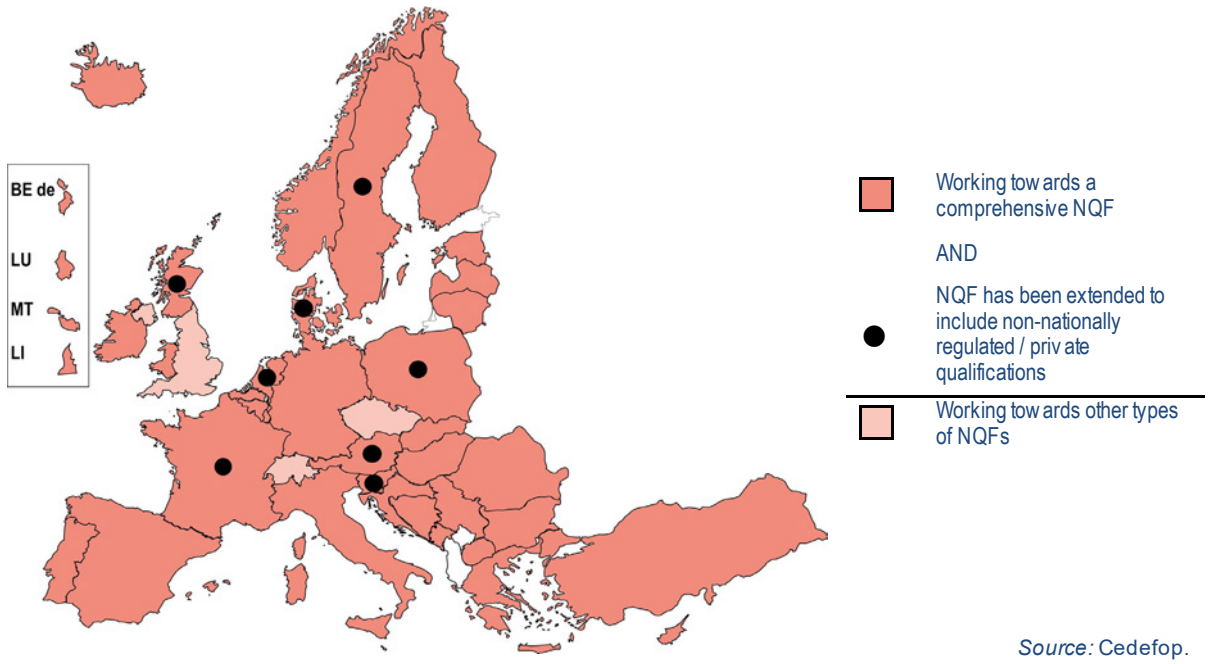
([73]) Cedefop (2020c, p. 1) refers to 39 countries participating in the EQF process. As well as the countries covered in this report, Albania and Kosovo also take part in the EQF process.

([74]) Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, OJ C 189, 15.6.2017.

opened their NQFs to non-nationally regulated and/or private qualifications (Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Scotland); see Figure 3.1). Other countries have included in their NQFs regulated qualifications awarded outside the (mainstream) formal education and training system, for example those awarded by other ministries or national agencies. Examples include vocational and/or occupational qualifications in Estonia, Cyprus, Slovenia, Slovakia, Montenegro and Turkey (ibid., p. 2).

The above suggests that the implementation of NQFs adds a further level of complexity to the relationship between formal and non-formal education. Indeed, depending on the degree of development of their NQF, countries may differ to some extent in the way that they recognise educational and training activities (formal or non-formal). In countries with the most comprehensive NQFs, a wide range of educational and training activities – including those relating to adult education – benefit from formal national recognition. In contrast, countries with less comprehensive NQFs may limit nationally recognised qualifications to those awarded in the mainstream education system. As Figure 3.1 suggests, this area is subject to continuous development, as almost all European countries are working towards a comprehensive NQF, i.e. a framework including different qualification subsystems.

Figure 3.1: Comprehensiveness of NQFs, 2019



Source: Cedefop.

Explanatory notes

This figure is based on data published in a Cedefop briefing note on NQF developments (Cedefop, 2020c).

A comprehensive NQF is understood as a framework including qualifications awarded outside formal education and training, for example by private providers, sectors, companies and international bodies (based on Cedefop 2020c, p. 2).

Country-specific notes

Czechia and **Switzerland**: Operate separate frameworks for vocational/professional and higher education qualifications.
United Kingdom (ENG/NIR): The new framework is broader in scope than the previous framework, covering all regulated academic and vocational qualifications.

3.1.4. Analysing adult learning provision across European countries

The previous sections have outlined different aspects that need to be considered when analysing adult education and training systems in a comparative perspective. They have underlined the complexity of the field, highlighting that there are no strong boundaries between different forms of structured adult learning or between different types of learning. Taking this into consideration, the analysis that follows investigates learning provision in relation to two (potentially permeable) categories. First, it concentrates on programmes that have a formal character and lead to recognised qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 or EQF level 4. Second, it examines basic skills programmes, in particular those that do not lead to recognised qualifications.

With regard to the first category, the programmes considered may be associated with the initial education system (e.g. 'compensatory' basic education) or they may be specific to the adult education sector. They may be general or vocational. Regarding the second category (basic skills programmes), the focus is on programmes targeting a functional level of ability in different areas, in particular literacy, numeracy, digital skills and local language skills for speakers of other languages (with or without reference to other skills).

Within both categories, the focus is on large-scale publicly subsidised learning provision, i.e. learning provision that is established and systematic (as opposed to short-term project-based initiatives). The emphasis is on programmes allowing substantial progression towards upskilling and/or qualifications upgrading. These programmes are expected to include a workload of at least 100 hours (or comprise building blocks allowing the accumulation of this workload).

The following sections consider the education and training provision open to adults that is available across European countries by examining programmes (Section 3.2) and their providers (Section 3.3). The information used in this analysis is presented in more detail in Annexes II and III.

3.2. Publicly subsidised learning provision open to adults

3.2.1. Programmes leading to recognised qualifications

In all European countries, adults with low or no qualifications have at least some publicly subsidised opportunities to achieve a recognised qualification later in life. However, this learning provision is organised in different ways and described using different terms.

Programmes aiming to raise the lowest educational attainment levels

In most European education systems, there are 'compensatory' or 'remedial' education and training programmes that are linked to the lowest educational attainment levels, namely to lower secondary education (ISCED 2) and sometimes even to primary education (ISCED 1). These programmes generally target people beyond the age of compulsory schooling – i.e. both young people and adults – who, for various reasons, have not completed comparable provision in the system of initial education. The programmes target a functional level of ability in a range of areas, including reading, writing, numeracy and ICT. They usually lead to certificates or qualifications, which are required for further progression within the formal education and training system. This type of provision is found almost everywhere in Europe, both in countries with a higher proportion of adults who have not completed lower secondary education and in those that are less impacted by this issue (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.1).

In **Greece**, dedicated second-chance schools (*Scholia Defteris Efkerias*) provide two-year programmes for adults who have not obtained a compulsory education diploma (ISCED 2). The same certification can also be achieved through three-year evening programmes at (evening) lower secondary schools (*Esperino Gymnasio*). The latter are intended for both adults and minors in employment.

In **Portugal**, adult education and training courses (*Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos*) aim to raise the education and qualification levels of the Portuguese adult population. There are different types of courses available corresponding to four, six, nine and twelve years of schooling and the qualification level achieved depends on the course.

In **Turkey**, it is possible to complete lower secondary education within the system of open lower secondary education (*Açık Öğretim Ortaokulu*).

What characterises many compensatory programmes associated with ISCED level 1 or 2 is their connection to VET. Indeed, although in the system of initial education these levels commonly include only general education foundations, second-chance programmes often include vocational elements and lead to recognised vocational qualifications. Thus, further learning progression is targeted, but also the improvement of employment prospects.

In **Estonia**, second-level VET (*2. taseme kutseõpe*) refers to a lower secondary education programme intended for learners aged 17+ who have not completed basic education (ISCED 2). This programme leads to a vocational qualification and it may be combined with generally oriented 'basic education for adults' (*põhiharidus täiskasvanutele mittestatsionaarses õppevormis*).

In **Croatia**, basic education for adults (*osnovna škola za odrasle*) refers to an ISCED level 2 programme. The curriculum is divided into six educational periods of 18 weeks each. At the end of the programme, participants can also enrol in a training programme for elementary occupations lasting 150 hours.

In **Romania**, the second-chance programme (*programul 'A doua sansă'*) aims to support young people and adults who have not completed compulsory education. Graduates have the right to continue their studies at a higher level. It is also possible to undertake 720 hours of practical training; successful participants receive a vocational qualification certificate at level 3.

In **Slovakia**, adults who have not completed lower secondary education can attend two-year vocational study programmes with a strong practical component. While the completion of these programmes does not provide direct access to upper secondary education, successful participants receive a certificate of final examination and a vocational certificate. On completion of an additional (optional) course to formally conclude lower secondary education, participants can undertake vocational upper secondary studies.

In **Serbia**, functional elementary education for adults (*funkcionalno osnovno obrazovanje odraslih*) refers to a formal education programme organised into three cycles that lasts from three to five years. The content covers eight grades of regular single-structure primary education (i.e. ISCED 1 and 2). The first two cycles concentrate on general education, while the third cycle combines general education with vocational training.

As some of the above examples show, 'compensatory' basic education often comprises a substantial workload and commonly lasts for more than one year. Some countries, however, organise this type of provision on a subject basis. In this case, learners either follow separate subjects as shorter standalone courses or combine subjects in a predefined way, which leads to the completion of basic education (ISCED level 2). In other words, the provision can be either non-formal or formal, depending on learners' needs and preferences. This approach is common in the Nordic countries.

In **Denmark**, the system of general adult education (*almen voksenuddannelsen*) is aimed at people aged 25 and above. The content is equivalent (but not identical) to the curriculum in primary and lower secondary school (*folkeskole*). Single-subject courses can be taken separately or pieced together, leading to a general adult preparatory examination. This examination opens access to higher preparatory examination courses (upper secondary education).

In **Finland**, basic education for adults (*aikuisten perusopetus*) is intended for learners completing their basic education after compulsory school age. This type of provision is course based. Learners can study individual subjects (e.g. languages) as 'subject students' or prepare for examinations in several subjects, qualifying for progression to general upper secondary education.

In **Sweden**, in municipal basic adult education (*komvux grundläggande nivå*), the courses correspond to those in compulsory school education (years 1-9), but the content and study programme are adapted for adults. Participants who achieve at least a pass grade in

the four core subjects – Swedish or Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics and social science – are awarded a leaving certificate.

In **Norway**, the compulsory education diploma for adults (*grunnskoleopplæring for voksne*) refers to primary and lower secondary education for adults. It leads to examinations in different subjects.

Overall, formal compensatory basic education at ISCED level 1 or 2 operates (at least to some extent) in most European countries. The absence of this type of provision is generally linked with the organisation of the initial education system, i.e. this type of provision may be absent in countries where the certificate associated with completion of lower secondary education is not needed to access upper secondary programmes (e.g. the *diplôme national du brevet* in France). Thus, programmes covering fundamental knowledge and abilities generally take the form of non-formal courses. However, even in this case, learning provision can have a systematic and institutionalised character. For example, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, the system of basic adult education (*basiseducatie*) provides courses in different areas/subjects, including Dutch, mathematics, languages and ICT. Successful participants receive a certificate of completion.

Progression towards medium-level qualifications

As highlighted in Chapter 1, European policy recognises upper secondary education as the basic level of education for the knowledge society. In 2019, 51.5 million adults (aged 25-64) in the EU-27 had not attained this level of education (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.1). While obtaining an upper secondary qualification later in life is possible in all European countries, the way that related provision is organised and the extent to which it is publicly subsidised vary.

Some countries have in place publicly subsidised systems of adult upper secondary education. These consist of dedicated upper secondary education programmes with content and modes of delivery that are tailored to the needs of learners who are older than typical upper secondary students, as in the following examples.

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, secondary adult education (*secundair volwassenenonderwijs*) consists of vocational and general programmes designed to enable adults to attain a diploma in secondary education. This type of provision is delivered in 48 adult education centres that cater exclusively for adult learners.

In **Austria**, schools for employed people (*Schulen für Berufstätige*) provide upper secondary education (general and vocational) tailored specifically to the needs of employed people / adults aged 17+.

In **Sweden**, the system of municipal adult education provides general upper secondary courses for adults (*komvux gymnasial nivå – studieförberedande*) and vocational upper secondary courses for adults (*komvux gymnasial nivå – yrkeskurser*). The courses correspond to the education provided at upper secondary level, but the content is adapted for adults.

In **Norway**, those aged 23 years or above with professional experience of at least five years can participate in a general programme of adult upper secondary education (*videregående opplæring, studieforberedende utdanningsprogram*) that lasts for one year (rather than three years as in the initial education system). The programme consists of six subjects that are common to general education (Norwegian, English, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences and history).

Upper secondary programmes for adult learners can also be provided within wider second-chance frameworks that include several educational levels. For example, in the French Community of Belgium, the framework known as social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) includes basic adult education, upper secondary programmes and higher education programmes. The Netherlands has established a system known as VAVO (*voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs*), which comprises programmes for adult learners corresponding to different lower and upper secondary education pathways.

Some countries do not have upper secondary education programmes explicitly dedicated to adult learners (e.g. Bulgaria, Czechia, Romania, Slovakia, Iceland and the United Kingdom). However, in these countries, upper secondary education (general or vocational) is delivered under various flexible arrangements, including part-time or evening courses. These are open to all learners who are no longer subject to compulsory full-time education.

While it is difficult to establish which model of provision of upper secondary education is the most optimal for adult learners, data presented in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1.11) provide some indication of the extent to which different education systems facilitate the access of adults to medium-level qualifications, including qualifications at ISCED level 3 (i.e. upper secondary education).

Formal educational attainment versus qualification achievement

On completion of the main formal education programmes, such as upper secondary education, learners usually achieve a higher level of educational attainment and a recognised qualification. As outlined in Section 3.1.3, most European countries are working towards comprehensive NQFs. This implies that, besides the main national qualifications, which commonly reflect initial education and training pathways, NQFs increasingly include other types of qualifications.

More specifically, several countries have in place a system of nationally recognised vocational qualifications that are generally smaller in scope than the main formal qualifications. The aim is usually to provide and/or certify skills and competences in a specific vocational area and, consequently, improve learners' labour market prospects, as in the following examples.

> In **Denmark**, adult vocational training (*arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser* (AMU)) consists of short-term VET courses (from one to six weeks) designed to accommodate workers' needs. The courses cover specific job-related skills, general skills and labour management skills. Each AMU module is associated with a qualification level (corresponding to EQF 2-5). Success in a number of AMU modules can in some cases lead to a full secondary VET qualification.
>
> In **Estonia**, third-level VET (*3. taseme kutseõpe*) refers to a vocational programme intended for those aged 17+ who have completed basic education (ISCED 2). The programme leads to a vocational qualification that provides access to certain jobs. It corresponds to Estonian Qualifications Framework level 3.

NQFs can also formally recognise basic skills. This is the case in the United Kingdom, where several suites of basic skills qualifications are in place, namely Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Wales (Wales), Essential Skills (Northern Ireland) and Core Skills (Scotland). While there are slight differences between these qualifications, they have the same aim: to equip learners with the basic skills required in everyday life, education and the workplace. Comparable provision exists in Ireland, where adult literacy programmes lead to learning outcomes recognised at level 1 or 2 of the NQF (EQF 1).

The above examples show that NQFs can act as a tool to provide formal recognition for smaller learning achievements than those traditionally associated with formal education. These smaller achievements can then potentially act as stepping stones to further learning and qualifications.

Role of work-based learning in achieving recognised qualifications

Another important aspect of adult education and training provision that allows access to recognised qualifications is its close link to work-based learning. Indeed, several European countries (e.g. Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway and the United Kingdom) have in place publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that use work-based learning or apprenticeships as a mode of delivery. Some of these programmes specifically target adult learners and incorporate flexible learning options, including opportunities for accelerated learning.

In **Austria**, apprenticeship-intensive courses (*FacharbeiterInnen-Intensivausbildung*) are available in a variety of different apprenticeship areas. These enable adults with low levels of qualifications and work experience to complete a recognised vocational qualification (*Lehrabschluss*) within a shorter period than that required for regular apprenticeship programmes.

In **Sweden**, apprenticeships for adults (*lärlingsutbildning för vuxna*) can be arranged within the system of municipal adult education (*komvux*). The knowledge requirements are the same as for the equivalent education conducted in a school environment or in upper secondary schools. Students can attend courses (at least 70 %), or parts of courses, in one or more workplaces.

In **Norway**, within the on-the-job trade certificate programme (*fagbrev på jobb*), employees without a formal education relevant to their work can obtain a trade certificate while in paid employment. Participants are exempted from the common core subjects of the national (upper secondary) curriculum. The competence requirements in the apprenticeship subject are, however, the same as for other apprenticeships. The training is individually adapted and includes the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In **Switzerland**, shortened apprenticeship training (*apprentissage raccourci / Verkürzte berufliche Grundbildung*) is available for adults who already have a first degree or previous knowledge in a specific profession.

As shown later in this report, public authorities in several countries provide financial incentives to employers for training apprentices. This sometimes includes enhanced support for employers for training adult apprentices (see Chapter 4 for details).

Other types of provision leading to recognised qualifications

In several European countries, public authorities provide subsidies for the liberal (or popular) adult education sector. Although the name of this sector varies between countries, this type of provision generally includes non-formal courses that contribute to the development of a range of skills. Thus, access to qualifications is not the prime focus of this sector. However, in some cases, it provides alternative pathways for learners, including adults, to achieve a recognised qualification. For example, in Sweden, general courses at folk high schools (*folkhögskola allmänna kurser*) provide an alternative to formal programmes delivered within the system of municipal adult education (*komvux*). These courses are comparable to and enable adults to access further education opportunities in the same way as secondary school education does.

The above shows that boundaries between formal and non-formal education are sometimes blurred and different progression routes may be available for learners. Desjardins (2017, p. 20) in this context notes that 'the degree of connectedness of non-formal provisions in leading to recognised qualifications can be taken as an indication of the *advancedness* ([75]) of an adult learning system'.

3.2.2. Basic skills programmes

All programmes discussed in the previous section contribute to the development of basic skills. In particular, basic skills are embedded in all curricula of compensatory or remedial basic education programmes. Moreover, as discussed previously, some countries associate basic skills with entry-level qualifications in their NQFs. This section complements the previous section by highlighting some patterns of non-formal basic skills provision.

Institutionalised provision of non-formal basic skills programmes

Across Europe, a wide range of publicly subsidised non-formal adult education programmes target a functional level of ability in areas such as reading, writing, numeracy and ICT. However, these programmes are not always framed in a way that allows their systematic description. Rather, they correspond to a range of (often short) courses delivered by different providers (see also Section 3.3.2). Nonetheless, some countries do have in place programme frameworks that structure

([75]) Italics as in the original.

and institutionalise this type of provision. Such frameworks commonly specify the aims, scope and content of basic skills courses eligible for public funding. The courses can then be delivered in different ways by a range of providers who comply with the established criteria.

In **Austria**, courses for the development of basic skills (*Basisbildungskurse*) are framed by the Initiative for adult education, which specifies different competence areas in basic education: (a) study competences (how to 'learn'), (b) German, (c) basic skills in a second language, (d) mathematics and (e) digital competences. This type of provision therefore consists of a wide range of courses delivered by different organisations. In order to qualify for funding, courses must be accredited. This provision has been in place under several steering documents since 2012.

In **Slovenia**, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education has developed short adult literacy programmes (around 120 hours) related to different day-to-day situations (*pismenost odraslih – več programov 'Usposabljanje za življenjsko uspešnost'*). They aim to enhance basic skills while considering the different needs and life situations of adults (e.g. parents helping children with their schoolwork). A range of providers can deliver these types of programme but they must be registered at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

Norway runs the SkillsPlus programme (*KompetansePluss*) (formerly *Basiskompetanse i arbeidslivet*), which concentrates on reading, writing and numeracy, and digital and oral skills. Created in 2006, the programme was initially targeted at employees; however, subsequently, civil society was added to the programme. Any private or public enterprise in Norway, as well as voluntary organisations, can apply for funding from the programme. The programme falls under the responsibility of the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills.

Basic skills programmes can also be at the boundary between formal and non-formal provision. One example of this is the previously mentioned system of basic adult education (*basiseducatie*) that operates in the Flemish Community of Belgium, consisting of various basic skills courses (see Section 3.2.1). These courses do not lead to formal qualifications, but a certificate is awarded for the successful completion of each learning area / subject.

Programmes for the integration of migrants

Publicly subsidised basic skills provision also includes programmes for the integration of migrants. In several countries, these programmes are an integral part of systematic learning provision that is open to adults. While the language component is usually a central element of these programmes, their content can go beyond language instruction. For example, they sometimes include further support for literacy or other elements facilitating the integration of migrants into a different culture and society.

In **Luxembourg**, intensive basic skills and foreign language integration courses (*parcours d'instruction de base et d'intégration linguistique*) are aimed at those who have never attended school or who are not familiar with the Latin alphabet. Literacy courses are provided in the French language. For those who are literate, French is taught as a language for speakers of other languages. The learning pathway is individualised.

In **Finland**, language training is provided as part of integration training for migrants (*maahanmuuttajien kielikoulutus*). The target group is migrants who have passed the compulsory school age. The training consists of instruction in Finnish or Swedish and, if necessary, reading and writing skills and other instruction that promotes access to the labour market and further education. The training may also include the recognition of prior learning, the recognition of degrees, and vocational planning and career guidance.

It is also noteworthy that programmes targeting the integration of migrants are sometimes included in other types of institutionalised learning provision. For example, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, such programmes are provided within the system of basic adult education (*basiseducatie*).

Moreover, courses for the integration of migrants do not always have a non-formal character. Sweden, for instance, includes this type of provision in the municipal adult education system (*komvux*) and recognises it as a qualifying language education at ISCED level 1 and EQF level 2. Like Sweden, Norway also has a formal education programme (ISCED 2) for the integration of migrants. It includes a language component, a basic literacy module and courses related to social studies.

3.3. Providers of publicly subsidised adult education and training

One way to analyse publicly subsidised learning provision for adults across European countries is to examine adult education and training providers. These can include a range of organisations. For example, public authorities may establish institutions specifically for the provision of adult education and training. Alternatively, or in parallel, they may use the initial education and training infrastructure (e.g. primary and secondary schools) to provide programmes for adults. Alongside public institutions, private for-profit and non-profit organisations can receive public subsidies for the provision of adult education and training. All of these arrangements, potentially with other organisational patterns, may coexist within a single system.

This section outlines some key arrangements that exist for the provision of publicly subsidised education and training programmes open to adults. In line with the structure of this chapter, the analysis first looks at providers of programmes leading to recognised qualifications (up to ISCED 3 / EQF 4) and then examines providers of non-formal basic skills programmes.

3.3.1. Providers of programmes leading to recognised qualifications

In most European countries, publicly subsidised programmes leading to recognised qualifications (at levels up to ISCED 3 / EQF 4) can be undertaken in public education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults. While these institutions are generally not the only providers of qualifying programmes for adults, they are generally among the main actors in this area. Indeed, only around one third of the countries surveyed do not report public education and training institutions focusing on adults among the key providers of such programmes ([76]).

Among countries reporting the presence of public adult education and training institutions, some refer to one key type of institution(s). Schools for employed people in Austria and open education schools in Turkey are examples of these.

> In **Austria**, schools for employed people (*Schulen für Berufstätige*) play a crucial role in the provision of second-chance education for adults at upper secondary level (ISCED 3). These schools exist for both general and vocational education pathways. They include academic secondary schools (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schulen*), colleges of engineering, arts and crafts (*Höhere Technische Lehranstalten*), colleges of business administration (*Handelsakademien*) and schools of intermediate vocational education (*Berufsbildende Mittlere Schulen*).
>
> In **Turkey**, open education schools are the only institutions where adults can achieve formal qualifications up to ISCED level 3. The provision is organised as distance learning. There are three types of open education schools: (1) general secondary open education schools; (2) technical/vocational open secondary schools; and (3) religious open secondary schools.

In other countries, different public adult education institutions provide different types of education and training. In France, for instance, two key public adult education institutions provide formal programmes for adults: the *groupements d'établissements* (GRETA) and the National Agency for Adult Professional Training (AFPA) ([77]). The former falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education, while the latter operates under the Ministry of Labour. Programmes delivered by each of these institutions have slightly different objectives.

([76]) CZ, NL, SK, BA, LI and MK report that public education / training institutions that focus primarily on adults are not involved in the provision of publicly subsidised programmes leading to recognised qualifications (up to ISCED 3 / EQF 4). LV, HU, FI, CH and IS report that these institutions play a minor role in the provision of such programmes. All other countries indicate that public education / training institutions that focus primarily on adults play a key role in this area (see Annex III, Figure A1).

([77]) In addition to GRETA and AFPA, a third institution – the *Conservatoire national des arts et métiers* (CNAM) – also focuses on the provision of education and training programmes for adults. Although CNAM is a higher education institution, it provides programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to ISCED 3 / EQF 4 (see Annex III for details).

In **France**, GRETA is a network of 136 education and training establishments for adults that are connected to public secondary schools. With respect to formal qualifications, GRETA's provision ranges from upper secondary to short tertiary vocational programmes and qualifications. Teachers and trainers are mainly professionals working within the initial education and training system, but each GRETA establishment also has its own staff who are responsible for the planning, organisation and overall coordination of learning activities. Formal vocational qualifications are also delivered by AFPA. Here, the focus is on jobseekers and others who are vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market.

As the above example (GRETA) shows, behind adult education and training institutions in Europe there are sometimes rather complex network structures. Italy and Portugal provide further examples of adult education institutions that are organised through network structures.

In **Italy**, provincial centres for adult education (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*) are structures that are organised in territorial service networks, generally at provincial level (with a headquarters and various providers). These centres (130 in 2020) have their own staff as well as teaching and administrative autonomy.

In **Portugal**, 'Qualifica centres' are structures that focus on providing access to qualifications for adults. They are affiliated to various public and private entities, including mainstream schools, vocational training centres of the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, companies, municipalities, and local and regional development agencies.

Alongside education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults, schools providing education to young people often provide formal programmes for adults. In fact, in most European countries, both public adult education institutions and mainstream schools operate in this area (see Annex III, Figure A1). However, not all programmes are necessarily delivered in both types of settings. For example, in Estonia and Switzerland, there are differences between general education and VET programmes.

In **Estonia**, adult upper secondary schools are publicly funded institutions that provide (part-time) general upper secondary education. There are 14 such institutions in Estonia. In addition, general upper secondary education courses are also provided in special departments in mainstream general education schools and VET schools. Vocational upper secondary education is provided (on a part-time basis) in mainstream vocational schools.

In **Switzerland**, a small number of public institutions focusing on adult education provide general upper secondary education programmes (*Maturitätsschulen für Erwachsene*) or general lower secondary education. Private institutions are the main providers of general education for adults. VET for adults is mainly provided by public institutions delivering education for young people.

Other institutional arrangements for the provision of publicly subsidised qualifying programmes also exist, but, overall, these are less dominant. However, as shown in Annex III (see Figure A1), private (non-profit or for-profit) institutions as well as other organisations play a role in this area in many countries. In Sweden, for instance, organisations other than public institutions are often involved in the provision of qualifying programmes for adults.

In **Sweden**, municipal adult education (*komvux*) is available at basic level, at upper secondary level and as Swedish language programmes for immigrants. A municipality can choose to deliver this type of provision itself or outsource it. Regarding adult education at basic and upper secondary levels, in 2018, half of the participants studied within an external organisation.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the roles that different providers play in the delivery of publicly subsidised programmes leading to recognised qualifications can change over time. In Finland, for instance, there have been changes over the past two decades in the delivery of VET programmes for adults.

In **Finland**, the trend during the last 20 years has been to shift the education provider network in a more age-neutral direction. The adult vocational education centres of the past (around 40 institutions) have been merged into other and larger vocational institutions that offer VET to young learners and adults. Today, only a few adult vocational education centres exist.

3.3.2. Providers of basic skills programmes

Like programmes leading to recognised qualifications, non-formal publicly subsidised basic skills programmes are provided in different settings. In around half of the reporting countries, public education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults are among key actors working in this area ([78]). In some countries, the same types of public adult education institutions deliver both programmes leading to recognised qualifications and non-formal basic skills programmes.

In **Croatia**, public open universities (*pučka otvorena učilišta*) provide various formal education programmes, including primary and secondary education for adults (ISCED 1-3), training, retraining and professional development courses. Around 40 open universities are governed by public authorities (and around another 50 are privately owned). As well as formal education, public open universities provide a wide range of non-formal courses, including foreign languages, art, crafts and ICT.

In **Slovenia**, adult education centres established by municipalities provide various types of programmes, including the programme 'basic school for adults' (ISCED 2; see Annex II), upper secondary education programmes for adults and non-formal education programmes, as well as guidance in adult education.

In other countries, formal and non-formal adult education programmes are provided by different types of adult education institutions. Germany, for instance, has a network of public adult education centres that provide non-formal courses in different areas and, alongside this, a system of schools where adults can obtain formal mainstream qualifications.

In **Germany**, *Volkshochschulen* are adult education centres managed/supported by local governments. They offer programmes in a wide range of (mainly non-vocational) subjects, including languages and general and cultural education. These courses are intended to meet diverse social requirements and individual needs. Alongside these centres, there are (adult education) institutions that target the attainment of formal qualifications (*Abendhauptschulen, Abendrealschulen, Abendgymnasien, Kollegs*).

Alongside public adult education institutions, private education and training providers, especially non-profit institutions, play an important role in the delivery of publicly subsidised (non-formal) basic skills programmes (see Annex III, Figure A2). Moreover, the provision of basic skills programmes often involves (public or private) organisations providing adult education and training alongside their other activities (e.g. libraries, volunteer organisations and enterprises), as in the following examples.

In **Lithuania,** publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly provided by organisations and institutions for which education and training is an ancillary activity, for example public libraries.

In the **Netherlands**, publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills are mainly provided by non-profit private education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults, and organisations and institutions for which education and training are ancillary activities, including public libraries or social welfare organisations. These providers may receive public subsidies, generally through municipalities, which organise the tendering procedures.

Overall, public initial education institutions (or mainstream schools) play a less important role in the delivery of non-formal basic skills programmes than in the delivery of programmes leading to recognised qualifications (see Annex III, Figures A1 and A2). Basic skills programmes mainly involve education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults and organisations for which education and training are ancillary activities. Behind this general pattern, there is a multitude of national arrangements.

([78]) Countries indicating that public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults play a key role in the provision of non-formal basic skills programmes are BE nl, DE, IE, EL, ES, HR, IT, CY, LV, LU, MT, PL, SI, FI, SE, ME, NO, RS, TR, and UK-ENG and UK-WLS. A minor role of public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults was indicated by EE, FR, CH and UK-SCT. No role was indicated by BE fr, BG, CZ, DK, LT, HU, NL, AT, PT, RO, SK, BA, IS, LI, MK and UK-NIR, (see Annex III, Figure A2).

Summary

This chapter examined publicly subsidised learning provision across Europe for adults with low or no qualifications and those with low levels of basic skills. Beginning with a theoretical discussion, the chapter outlined some key forms of adult learning provision and different types of adult learning activities. The conceptual discussion further highlighted developments related to NQFs (see Figure 3.1) and the role that NQFs play in bridging formal and non-formal education.

Considering the above aspects, the chapter analysed publicly subsidised adult learning provision across Europe in two categories. First, it concentrated on programmes that lead to recognised qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 or EQF level 4. Second, it examined non-formal basic skills programmes. Within both categories, the focus was on learning provision that has an established and systematic character, in particular programmes allowing substantial progress towards upskilling and/or upgrading of qualifications.

The review shows that most European countries provide compensatory or remedial basic education, i.e. programmes linked to the initial education system through to the end of lower secondary education (ISCED 2). These programmes often target functional skills in different areas, including reading, writing, numeracy and ICT. Depending on the country, they may also include vocational elements. In terms of their organisation, these programmes often have a substantial workload. Some countries, however, especially the Nordic countries, organise such programmes on a subject basis, allowing adults to take shorter courses in distinct subject areas. In this case, the provision can have a formal or non-formal character, depending on learners' needs.

In the context of medium-level qualifications, the chapter outlined the organisational arrangements under which adults can undertake upper secondary education studies (ISCED 3 or EQF 3-4). It showed that, while some countries have developed dedicated programme frameworks specifically for adult upper secondary education, in other cases provision for adults is delivered within the mainstream upper secondary framework. Some countries have developed frameworks for adult learners that cover several levels of qualifications, ranging from very basic qualifications to higher education degrees.

The chapter also discussed the relationship between educational attainment and qualification achievement, showing that upgrading of qualifications does not necessarily mean completing one of the main educational attainment levels (e.g. upper secondary education). Indeed, several countries have developed qualification systems that complement the mainstream education system. Qualifications falling under these systems commonly involve a lighter workload and, therefore, this can be a more accessible option for adults, including those with limited prior formal learning. When formally recognised by national authorities (e.g. within NQFs), these alternative qualifications can easily become a stepping stone towards further learning achievements, including qualifications linked to the initial education system.

In the context of VET, some countries have in place publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that use work-based learning or apprenticeships as a mode of delivery. Some of these programmes specifically target adult learners and provide flexible learning options, such as opportunities for accelerated learning.

In addition to the above types of provision, pathways to qualifications can sometimes be found in sectors that are traditionally associated with non-formal education. For example, the liberal adult education sector in Sweden provides qualifications that are comparable to those that can be achieved in the formal (adult) education system. This may allow the involvement of learners who are not able or ready to follow programmes within the formal system.

Outside education and training opportunities leading to recognised qualifications, public authorities also subsidise other types of learning provision, including programmes that may help adults improve their basic skills. This type of learning provision usually consists of a range of (rather short) courses delivered by different providers. Thus, it is generally less structured than programmes leading to recognised qualifications. Nevertheless, there are some frameworks across Europe that structure and institutionalise the delivery of non-formal basic skills programmes.

Within learning provision dedicated to basic skills, countries sometimes provide large-scale programmes that target the migrant population. While language skills are at the centre of these programmes, other skills (e.g. literacy in general) or even wider integration aspects may also be included (e.g. the validation of prior learning). Furthermore, when institutionalised programmes for migrants are in place, they are formalised to varying degrees: some countries provide these programmes within their non-formal education systems, whereas in other countries such programmes are an integral part of formal education and training provision.

When it comes to providers of publicly subsidised adult education and training programmes, some differences exist between programmes leading to recognised qualifications and non-formal basic skills programmes. The first type of provision mainly takes place in public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults or in public schools delivering initial education and training to young people. Non-formal publicly subsidised basic skills programmes, in contrast, take place less often in schools delivering initial education and training to young people. This type of provision is usually provided by public or private (especially non-profit) adult education and training institutions. Other organisations (e.g. libraries, volunteer organisations and enterprises) also often deliver basic skills programmes.

Overall, across Europe, a range of publicly subsidised programmes and institutions provides support for adults with low levels of basic skills and those with low or no qualifications. Annexes II and III provide more details on how different countries contribute through their programmes and providers to the overall picture.

CHAPTER 4: FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial constraints are among the obstacles that can prevent adults from participating in education and training. In particular, adults with low levels of basic skills and those with low levels of or no qualifications are most likely to experience precarious situations in the labour market, which commonly goes hand in hand with low incomes. Thus, adult learning policies and measures ought to provide solutions for those who, despite their need for upskilling and/or qualification upgrading, are least likely to be able to afford to participate in education and training.

Supporting individuals in developing more and better skills is a central theme in the recently adopted European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020b), which calls for considerable mobilisation of private and public investment in skills and human capital. The overarching adult learning participation objective stipulated in the agenda, which is set at a 50 % participation rate to be reached by 2025, is expected to require an estimated additional investment of EUR 48 billion annually (ibid.). These additional funds are expected to come from various sources, including the EU budget, public funds of the Member States and private sources.

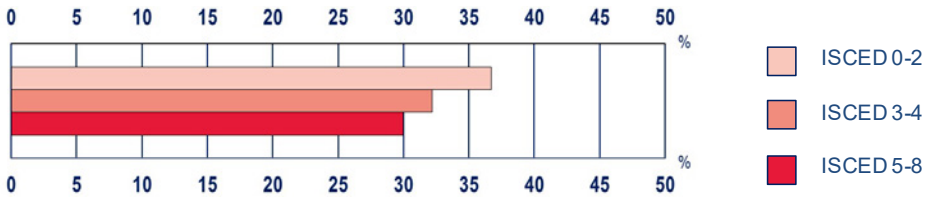
The discussion of the financial accessibility of adult education and training in this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents quantitative data showing the extent to which financial issues constitute a barrier to adult participation in education and training. The second section discusses funding arrangements related to publicly subsidised programmes open to adults, as well as financial support measures that may help in meeting direct or indirect education and training costs. The third section looks at the role of EU funding in creating learning opportunities for adults with low levels of or no qualifications or insufficient basic skills.

4.1. Costs as a barrier to adult participation in education and training

The 2016 Adult Education Survey (AES) allows the significance of funding as a barrier to adult participation in education and training to be evaluated. In the survey, respondents who wanted to participate in education and training (or wanted to participate more) but who encountered difficulties were asked to specify obstacles that hindered their participation. Costs were among the proposed obstacles.

On average, across the EU-27, around one in three adults who wanted to participate (or participate more) in education and training (32.2 % ([79])) reported costs among the obstacles that prevented them from doing so. Data by educational attainment level (Figure 4.1) show that costs are more often an obstacle to participation for adults with the lowest levels of educational attainment (ISCED 0-2) (36.7 %) than for those holding a medium-level qualification (32.2 % for ISCED 3-4) or a tertiary education degree (30.0 % for ISCED 5-8).

Figure 4.1: Adults (aged 25-64) who wanted to participate (or participate more) in education and training in the 12 months prior to the survey and indicated costs among the reasons for not participating (%), by educational attainment level (EU-27 average), 2016



Source: Eurostat AES [trng_aes_178] (data extracted 9 February 2021).

([79]) Eurostat AES [trng_aes_178] (data extracted 9 February 2021).

Explanatory note (Figure 4.1)

Online AES data code [trng_aes_178] refers to the following obstacles: distance, costs, family reasons, other personal reasons, health or age reasons, no suitable offer for education or training, lack of support from employer or public services, schedule, and other (reasons). Figure 4.1 displays only one of the above reasons: costs.

The 2016 AES also allows the extent to which costs are the most important obstacle preventing adults from participating in education and training to be examined. This is covered by a dedicated question allowing respondents to choose one main obstacle. On average, across the EU-27, 18.1 % of adults who wanted to participate (or participate more) in education and training stated that the cost was the main reason for their lack of participation ([80]). The cost, the schedule (23.9 %) and family reasons (19.0 %) were the most cited main obstacles ([81]). As far as level of education is concerned, cost as the main reason was reported more often by adults with low- or medium-level qualifications (18.9 % for ISCED 0-2 and 19.0 % for ISCED 3-4) than by those holding a tertiary education degree (16.5 % for ISCED 5-8) ([82]).

4.2. Funding of adult education and training

Public expenditure on adult education and training comprises two key dimensions: supply-side funding and demand-side funding. Supply-side funding is aimed at supporting education and training providers and thus affects the provision and cost of courses. Demand-side funding, in turn, supports learners themselves, by contributing to individuals' ability to pay (Dohmen and Timmermann, 2010; OECD, 2017). Demand-side funding can also be targeted at employers to encourage them to invest in education and training.

Both supply-side funding and demand-side funding require attention when the financial accessibility of adult education and training is being discussed. This is because, even when public authorities directly subsidise adult education programmes and their providers (supply side), there may still be some costs for learners. Thus, demand-side funding arrangements can complement supply-side funding, for example by providing contributions to various side expenses (e.g. travel) and/or living costs, when gainful work is paused or reduced during participation.

The sections that follow highlight some aspects related to both supply-side funding and demand-side funding. They do not intend to explore details of the relationship between these two types of funding, as this would require a substantial research investment that goes beyond the scope of the present report. Rather, the focus is on a selection of aspects that may play a role in engaging adults, particularly those with low levels of or no qualifications, in education and training.

4.2.1. Supply-side funding

Supply-side funding plays a key role in providing learning opportunities for adults with low levels of qualifications and other groups that may face difficulties in covering the costs of education and training activities. It may mean full funding or co-financing of public or private institutions that provide adult education and training opportunities. Full funding implies covering all expenditures of institutions, whereas co-financing implies the existence of other financiers (Dohmen and Timmermann, 2010).

As discussed in Chapter 3 and shown in Annex II, all European countries subsidise at least some types of provision for adults who wish to upgrade their qualifications or improve their (basic) skills. The same chapter, together with Annex III, also demonstrates that programmes open to adults often take

([80]) Eurostat AES [trng_aes_181] (data extracted 9 February 2021).

([81]) Ibid.

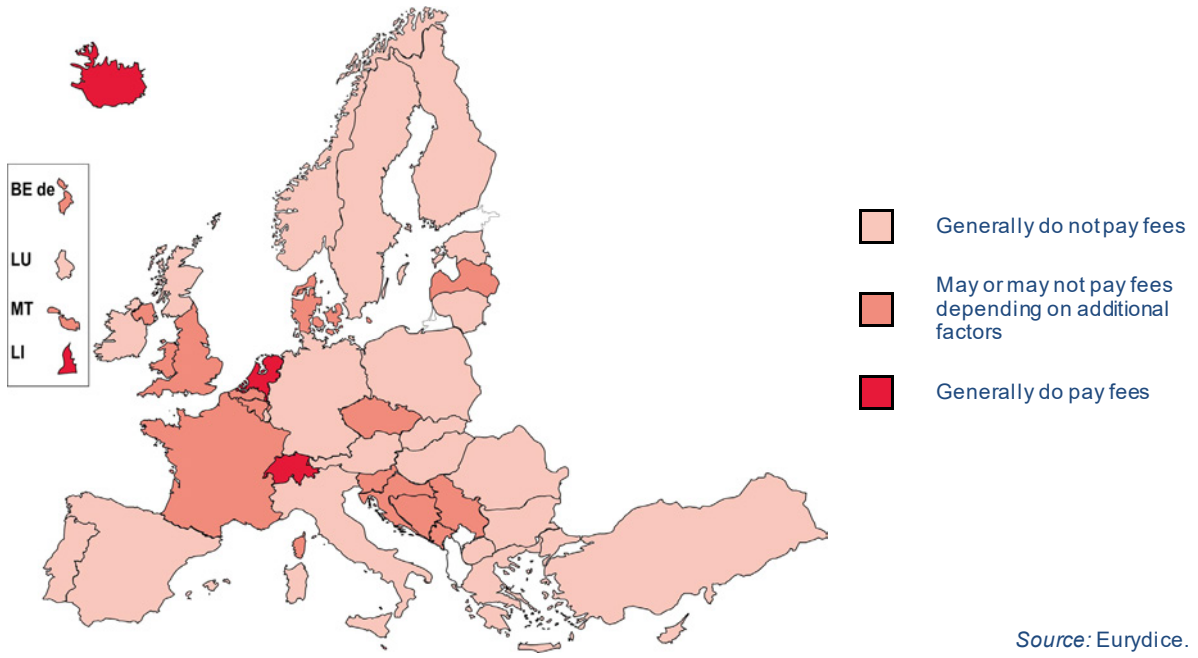
([82]) Ibid.

place in public institutions, i.e. institutions that typically receive regular public subsidies. In other instances, programmes are delivered by approved providers (often non-profit organisations) that may also receive public subsidies in a systematic way. Another approach is to enable private (non-profit or for-profit) organisations to apply for public funding if they provide programmes complying with certain predefined standards and criteria. These different (supply-side) funding mechanisms commonly co-exist in a single system (see Figures A1 and A2 in Annex III).

4.2.2. Fees in publicly subsidised programmes

When considering publicly subsidised programmes open to adults, a question may be raised about whether learners, especially those with low levels of or no qualifications, are required to co-finance their tuition. Figure 4.2 addresses this question by looking at programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 (i.e. completed upper secondary education or equivalent).

Figure 4.2: Extent to which low-qualified adults pay fees in publicly subsidised programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

'Low-qualified adults' are individuals who have completed education or qualifications corresponding to ISCED levels 0-2 at most. This means that they have not completed upper secondary education (or equivalent) (see 'Glossary').

This figure depicts general fee patterns. This means that, in countries where learners generally do not pay fees, small charges (e.g. administrative contributions) and/or programme exceptions may occur.

The figure does not consider the actual 'size' of the publicly subsidised adult education and training sector (e.g. when all publidy subsidised programmes are offered for free but their numbers are only very limited, learners may be obliged to pursue private fee-paying education and training offer).

As Figure 4.2 shows, in more than half of the countries surveyed, low-qualified adults generally do not pay fees when they participate in publicly subsidised programmes leading to qualifications under study. This is often accompanied by statements in key legal documents that may establish a right (for all) to some types of education/training provision. For example, in Lithuania, the constitution stipulates that every citizen is entitled to free lower and upper secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3). In Norway, there is a legal entitlement to education up to (and including) the upper secondary level. The approach is even broader in Sweden, where all main publicly subsidised programmes for adults (see Annex II)

are considered an integral part of the public education system and are covered by the Education Act. This act stipulates that public education is free for everyone and, consequently, programmes for adults are also provided free of charge (only minor regulated fees are permitted).

Even when not referring to regulatory frameworks, a number of other countries specify that participation in different types of publicly subsidised education/training programmes at different levels (up to ISCED 3 / EQF 4) generally does not entail any participation fees.

In **Spain**, adult 'compensatory' programmes corresponding to primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2) are generally free of charge for participants. Regarding upper secondary education (ISCED 3), although this is the responsibility of the Autonomous Communities, it is also usually free.

In **Cyprus**, publicly subsidised education and training programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 are free for participants. They fall within the overall policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, which includes the provision of free education at both primary and (lower and upper) secondary levels. In addition, evening schools for technical and vocational education and the apprenticeship system for vocational education and training (see Annex II) are free. Finally, all training programmes offered by the Cyprus Productivity Centre are also free for participants with low levels of qualifications.

In **Portugal**, the 'Qualifica programme' (see Annex II), which is coordinated by the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training, does not entail any participation fees. Training that falls under the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (i.e. the Portuguese public employment service) is also generally free for participants.

When there are several types of publicly subsidised programmes, the general pattern of 'no fees' may include some exceptions, i.e. moderate fees may be charged for some programmes. Ireland, Austria, Poland and Finland provide examples in this respect.

In **Ireland**, low-qualified adults generally do not pay fees when they participate in publicly subsidised education and training programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4. The exception to this pattern is the Post Leaving Certificate (see Annex II), for which candidates generally pay EUR 200 on commencement of the course. However, there are fee exemptions depending on economic circumstances.

In **Austria**, under the Initiative for adult education, low-qualified adults are entitled to participate in courses that lead to a qualification at ISCED level 2 (lower secondary education) for free. Adults may also attain qualifications at levels up to and including ISCED level 3 (in certain schools up to ISCED level 5) by attending schools for employed people (*Schulen für Berufstätige*) without payment of fees. Finally, there are a number of publicly subsidised programmes facilitating pathways to a recognised vocational education and training qualification (*Lehrabschluss*) that are usually free for individuals. These include the apprenticeship-intensive courses (*FacharbeiterInnen-Intensivausbildung*) and the modular education/training programme 'Competence with a system' (*Kompetenz mit System*; see Annex II). Exceptions apply to preparatory courses for the final examination to complete a recognised vocational education and training degree (*außerordentliche Lehrabschlussprüfung*), which are not always free.

In **Poland**, adult education and training provision leading to recognised qualifications is generally free in public school settings. The exception to this rule are some 'non-school courses', including general competence courses (*kurs kompetencji ogólnych*; see Annex II), for which a fee is charged. However, the fee cannot exceed the cost of the course, and exemptions and reductions are available to learners with low incomes or who are in difficult financial situations.

In **Finland**, education leading to a qualification – for example general or vocational upper secondary education – is free. Moderate fees may be charged for programmes leading to further vocational qualifications.

In around one third of the countries surveyed, low-qualified adults participating in publicly subsidised programmes (up to ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4) may or may not pay fees, depending on additional factors. One determining factor is a learner's employment status. Jobseekers often either are exempt from paying fees or pay reduced fees. Alongside jobseekers, further groups considered 'at risk' may be subject to fee reductions or exemptions.

In the **French Community of Belgium**, under the system of social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*; see Annex II), the enrolment fee starts at EUR 27 and the total fee depends on the duration of the programme (EUR 0.24 per

teaching hour). There is a maximum enrolment fee of EUR 219 per year, regardless of the programme duration and the number of courses followed. Several groups are exempt from paying enrolment fees or benefit from a fee reduction, including unemployed people, people with disabilities and beneficiaries of social integration income.

A comparable system is in place in the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, where the enrolment fee in secondary adult education (*secundair volwassenenonderwijs*; see Annex II) is EUR 1.5 per teaching hour, with a maximum fee of EUR 300 per study course per semester. Various groups are exempt from paying fees or benefit from a reduction, including jobseekers who follow a training course recognised by the Flemish Employment Service as part of a pathway to obtaining work, detainees, newly arrived migrants following language courses as part of their integration programme and learners benefiting from social integration income. Moreover, participants who have not yet obtained an upper secondary education diploma are fully exempt from the enrolment fee for general or complementary general education modules.

Another differentiating factor is the type of publicly subsidised provision: some programmes may be offered for free, whereas others may entail fees. In Denmark, for instance, publicly subsidised learning provision consists of several programmes (see Annex II) that have slightly different fee regimes.

In **Denmark**, user fees depend on the type of programme and additional factors. Vocational education for adults (*erhvervsuddannelser for voksne*) is free for participants. Symbolic fees must be paid for participation in preparatory programmes and non-formal education. Unemployed people can participate in adult vocational training for free for six weeks (*arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser*).

The level at which a final qualification is situated can also be a factor influencing fees. As a rule, education and qualifications at the lowest levels are commonly offered for free, whereas qualifications at higher levels (e.g. ISCED 3 or EQF 4) may be fee-paying.

In **Slovenia**, basic school for adults (ISCED 2; see Annex II) is free. Upper secondary education is free only for adults who have never enrolled in an upper secondary education programme. In this case, however, they have to follow a regular school timetable and study alongside students in the system of initial education. In all other cases, upper secondary education is fee-paying for adults. However, once adults have completed the programme, they may apply for reimbursement of tuition fees.

In **Serbia**, according to the Law on Adult Education, adults do not pay fees for participation in functional elementary education for adults, which also includes basic vocational training (see Annex II). However, they may be required to pay for other adult education programmes.

In the **United Kingdom** (**England** and **Northern Ireland**), adults who do not have a 'full level 2' or 'full level 3' qualification (of the national qualifications framework) are entitled to full funding to achieve these levels, regardless of age. Otherwise, age, employment status, prior qualifications and intended level of study determine how much a programmes is publicly funded. Separately, adult apprentices do not pay fees for their studies, regardless of age or level of study.

Only four countries (the Netherlands, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein) report that low-qualified adults generally pay fees when they participate in publicly subsidised programmes under consideration.

Alongside programmes leading to recognised qualifications, public authorities commonly provide subsidies for programmes targeting the acquisition of basic skills (see Chapter 3). The fee pattern that applies to these programmes is similar to the one depicted in Figure 4.2, with a slightly higher number of countries providing programmes for free. For example, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, fees are commonly charged for secondary adult education (see above), but courses offered by centres for basic education are free for adults with limited or no formal education. In Slovenia, upper secondary education is fee-paying for adults (see above), but programmes aimed at the development of basic skills are free. This pattern goes hand in hand with the fact that programmes targeting functional levels of ability in areas such as reading, writing or numeracy commonly involve (or target) the most vulnerable groups.

4.2.3. Financial support for individuals and employers (demand-side funding)

As shown in Section 4.2.2, adults may need to contribute to education and training costs even when they participate in publicly subsidised programmes. Moreover, even when there are no participation fees, there may still be some costs (e.g. costs for study materials, travel or accommodation, or costs related to the interruption of gainful work for education/training). Another aspect to consider is that publicly subsidised learning provision constitutes only part of the education and training opportunities available on the market. Indeed, adults – including those with low levels of or no qualifications and those lacking basic skills – may be interested in courses and programmes that are not publicly funded. In this case, demand-side financial incentives may play a (key) role in reducing learners' financial burdens.

General overview

Financial support measures targeting individuals can be of various types. Public authorities may subsidise direct education and training costs – such as course fees – by providing direct subsidies (e.g. in the form of direct payments, scholarships, grants, allowances and vouchers) or through tax incentives, such as tax allowances or tax credits (OECD, 2019c). Countries may also provide loans to encourage individuals to participate in adult education and training, which learners then repay once they have completed their training or reached a certain income level (OECD, 2017). There are also more indirect types of financial support, such as paid training leave (ibid.).

As well as individuals, financial support may also target employers and encourage them to invest in training their workforce. Like the financial measures targeted at individuals, incentives for steering the training decisions of employers also come mostly in the form of subsidies and tax incentives (OECD, 2019c). Subsidies for employers may involve, for example, financial support for workplace training of employees but also for the training of unemployed people. Tax incentives include reductions in or exemptions from social security contributions when firms offer training to employees or jobseekers. Both subsidies and tax incentives can also help to cover employers' indirect costs, such as continued wage costs during training periods (OECD, 2017).

A database run by Cedefop ([83]) that gathers information on demand-side co-funding instruments for adult learning demonstrates that a wide range of the aforementioned measures are in place across Europe.

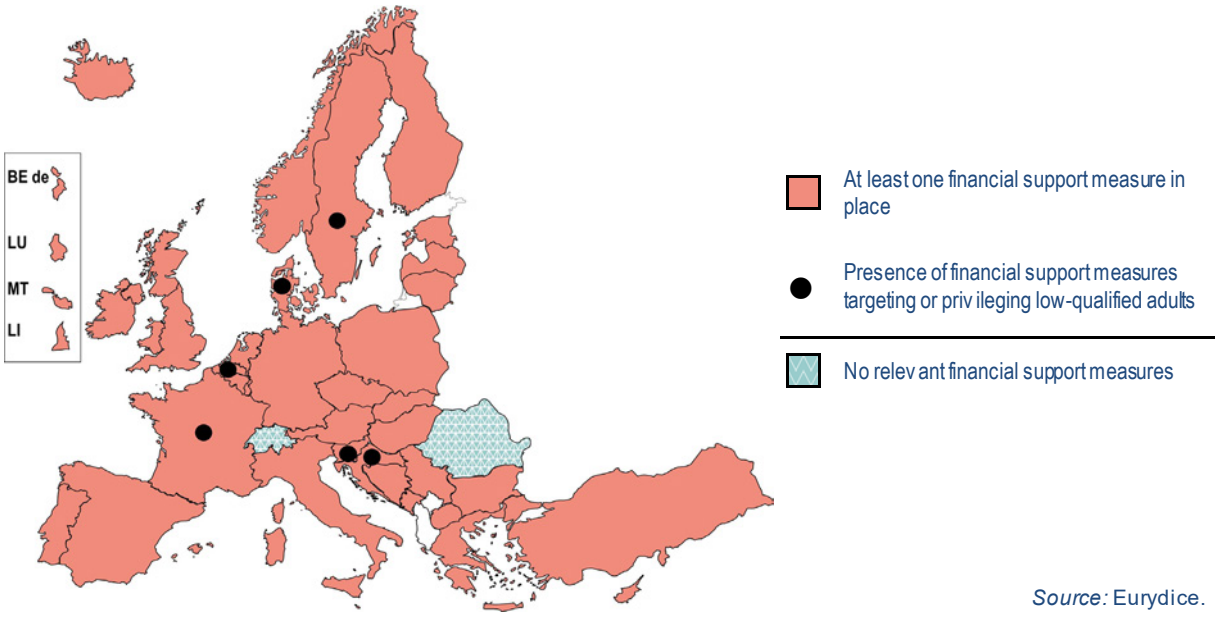
Financial support for individuals

In line with the focus of this report, countries were asked about the existence of demand-side financial support measures from which adults with low levels of qualifications may benefit. The measures in question could either be available to a wider group of beneficiaries, including low-qualified adults, or have an explicit emphasis on those with low levels of or no qualifications.

As Figure 4.3 shows, most European countries report having at least one large-scale financial support measure in place from which low-qualified adults involved in education and training may benefit. However, measures explicitly targeting or privileging low-qualified adults are scarce.

([83]) The Cedefop database on financing adult learning (see: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/tools/financing-adult-learning-db) provides information on funding schemes that aim to promote participation and private investment in adult education and training in EU Member States. The database currently covers schemes in which at least two parties contribute to the costs (governments, including EU funding, companies/employers and individuals/employees). The reference year is 2015. A further update of the database is expected to become available in 2022. The scope will be enlarged to include demand-side instruments in which public sources cover 100 % of the training costs.

Figure 4.3: Presence of large-scale financial support measures that may be used to subsidise the education and training of low-qualified adults and in which the support recipient is the learner, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

'Low-qualified adults' are individuals who have completed education or qualifications corresponding to ISCED levels 0-2 at most. This means that they have not completed upper secondary education (or equivalent) (see 'Glossary').

Countries were asked to indicate whether, in their system, there are large-scale financial support measures for education and training from which low-qualified adults may benefit. Countries could indicate up to three measures to cover direct education/training costs and up to three measures to cover indirect costs (see the terms 'direct education/training costs' and 'indirect education/training costs' in 'Glossary'). If a country reported at least one relevant measure, it is displayed as having 'at least one financial support measure in place'. The figure does not capture the numbers of reported measures and/or whether they include support for meeting direct and/or indirect education/training costs.

Financial support measures 'targeting' low-qualified adults are understood as incentives where low-qualified adults either are the only possible beneficiaries or are explicitly referred to among a limited number of possible beneficiaries. Financial measures 'privileging' low-qualified adults are understood as incentives providing preferential treatment to low-qualified adults (e.g. a higher amount of support than that given to other groups). All the measures targeting or privileging low-qualified adults that are displayed in the figure are described in Annex IV.

When referring to financial support measures targeting or privileging low-qualified adults, the figure does not consider financial support available only to young low-qualified adults (e.g. incentives available only to those not in education, employment or training (NEET)).

Financial support measures falling under the first category, i.e. those without an explicit focus on low-qualified adults, vary greatly in a number of aspects. Although Figure 4.3 does not display the differences, the overview that follows outlines some key distinguishing features.

First, some financial support measures are aimed at helping learners cover direct education and training costs, i.e. immediate expenses related to an education or training activity, such as course or examination fees. Various co-funding instruments are used for this purpose, including grants, vouchers, learning accounts or tax benefits.

In **Czechia**, taxpayers can deduct CZK 10 000 (approximately EUR 400) from their taxes for expenses related to the achievement of vocational qualifications listed in the National Register of Qualifications. The amount is slightly higher for people with a disability.

Germany has been supporting continuing vocational training through the education bonus (*Bildungsprämie*). The education bonus consists mainly of a voucher (*Prämiengutschein*) providing a subsidy of 50 % of the costs – a maximum of EUR 500.

In **Estonia**, the Unemployment Insurance Fund provides unemployed people and/or adults in a precarious labour market situation with the opportunity to participate in labour market training using a training voucher known as a 'training card'. The training card can cover up to EUR 2 500 in fees and may be used to finance one or several (job-oriented) training courses.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, Individual Training Accounts can subsidise up to GBP 200 of the price charged for an approved training course. The scheme is open to learners aged 16 and above and provides support to enable individuals who are unemployed or who earn GBP 22 000 or less to access training in a number of areas. The main aim is to improve learners' employment prospects.

Direct financial support for learners may also include subsidies to help them deal with various 'side expenses' related to education and training, such as costs of travel (to course facilities) or accommodation. This type of support can be either provided separately (as a dedicated scheme) or incorporated into measures helping to cover programme costs.

In **Spain**, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training provides study grants that can be used to enrol in various education and training programmes (e.g. *Bachillerato*, vocational training, preparatory courses for vocational training). These grants may cover the following components: schooling in centres not subsidised by public authorities, commuting, accommodation, study materials and city supplements (i.e. compensation for higher expenses in some localities). In 2019, the amount that a student could receive was between EUR 200 and EUR 1 600, depending on income. For learners who need to change their place of residence, additional support of up to EUR 1 500 is also available.

In **Austria**, the public employment service covers direct education and training costs for adults who attend courses to improve their labour market prospects. This includes grants for course expenses (e.g. programme fees, costs of study materials and examination fees) and associated ancillary expenses (e.g. costs of travel to course facilities, accommodation costs and subsistence costs). Course expenses and/or ancillary expenses are usually covered in full for individuals who are registered as unemployed (with some ceilings imposed). Employed adults may also be eligible for (partial) grants to cover direct education and training costs under particular circumstances, provided that their monthly gross income does not exceed EUR 2 300.

There are also financial support measures addressing the fact that adults – especially those undertaking formal education and training programmes – may need to reduce or interrupt their gainful work. Thus, participation in education and training may entail indirect costs: a reduction in or even loss of income. Paid training leave and grants or loans to cover living costs are among the instruments helping to address this issue.

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, the system of Flemish educational leave (*Vlaams opleidingsverlof*) aims to encourage employees to enrol in training courses in order to reorient themselves professionally and/or to keep their skills up to date. It allows employees to take leave from work to follow recognised training courses without (or with limited) loss of income. The costs of employees taking leave can be refunded to employers once they submit a claim. In addition to this scheme, another measure – 'training credit / learning account' (*Opleidingskrediet*) – provides financial support for employees who want to interrupt their professional career (100 %, 50 % or 20 %) in order to take part in training. The training credit, provided by the Government of Flanders, adds to a federal benefit that compensates for loss of income because of a temporary career break.

In **Ireland**, Student Universal Support Ireland provides a means-tested grant covering students' living costs while studying. It can be used for studies at various levels, including the Post Leaving Certificate (EQF levels 4 and 5).

In **France**, the 11 skills operators (*Opérateurs de compétences*), which are sectoral organisations, offer employees the opportunity to take paid training leave (with the agreement of their employer). This applies to training at various qualification levels, including low levels.

In **Austria**, employees who – with the agreement of their employer – take educational leave (*Bildungskarenz*) or a leave of absence (*Freistellung gegen Entfall der Bezüge*) to participate in education or training programmes may apply for a qualification allowance (*Weiterbildungsgeld*) from the public employment service. Eligibility for the allowance takes into account various factors, and the amount of support provided is typically equal to the theoretical unemployment benefits (55 % of the latest net income). It is at least EUR 14.53 per day.

In **Luxembourg**, employees, self-employed people and liberal professionals may request individual training leave (*congé individuel de formation*), that is, special paid leave that can amount to up to 80 days during their professional careers. Since 2008, employees benefiting from training leave are entitled, for each day of leave, to compensation paid by their employer, equal to the average daily salary as defined in the Labour Code.

In **Sweden**, study grants and loans are available for adults up to the age of 57. The amount of support for full-time studies (at various levels) corresponds to SEK 823 per week for a grant and SEK 1 892 per week for a loan (2020).

As the examples provided up until now show, the measures in place vary significantly in terms of the amount of support they offer. In some cases, only smaller expenses are covered (e.g. course fees and auxiliary costs), whereas in other instances the support replaces (at least partly) learners' income during a longer-term educational/training activity. These different types of measures sometimes co-exist in a single system, which means that public subsidies are available to cover both direct and indirect education and training costs. Finland illustrates such a range of financial support arrangements.

In **Finland**, adults participating in education and training, including low-qualified adults, can potentially benefit from the following public support measures:

- Student financial aid provided by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA), which is available for full-time studies lasting at least two months at an upper secondary school, folk high school, vocational school or institute of higher education.
- Independent study support for unemployed people (provided by KELA), which can be, for instance, used to gain vocational skills.
- A school transport subsidy, which aims to provide compensation for the daily cost of travelling to and from an education institution.
- A study voucher system, which is meant to cover the costs of courses in the system of liberal adult education.
- A scholarship for qualified employees, which is a form of support (EUR 400) for employees with at least five years of employment history. It is available on completion of a vocational upper secondary qualification, a further qualification or a specialist qualification.

The various country examples provided also demonstrate that the support measures differ in terms of eligible groups. Some measures are available to 'everyone', some are available only to employed adults, and some are aimed at supporting unemployed people or jobseekers. This last type of support is particularly prominent when considering all the schemes reported by countries. This means that public authorities often concentrate on co-financing the education and training of those who are most vulnerable in the context of the labour market. Obviously, adults facing difficulties in the labour market are commonly – although not only – those with low levels of or no qualifications.

As Figure 4.3 shows, a limited number of countries have financial support measures in place that emphasise the education and training of low-qualified adults. This means that the support either targets these adults or gives them preferential treatment compared with other groups. When in place, such support takes various forms, including individual training schemes (such as vouchers or individual learning accounts), grants and course fee reimbursements.

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, learners who obtained their first secondary education diploma through adult education are eligible for fee reimbursement. Moreover, employees can pay fees for certain training courses (including basic skills courses, upper secondary general or vocational programmes, and programmes leading to qualifications for bottleneck positions, as identified by public employment services) through a system of training vouchers (*Opleidingscheques*). These vouchers cover 50 % or 100 % of the course fees and the amount of the subsidy depends on the level of education of the adult learners. For learners with low levels of qualifications (who have not completed upper secondary education), 100 % of the training costs are covered.

In **Denmark**, the Danish State Educational Support for Adults (SVU) scheme provides grants or paid training leave. The scheme is directed at adults (as a rule, those aged 25 and over) on leave from their jobs who have little or no formal education (i.e. below ISCED 3).

In **France**, within the personal training account scheme (*Compte personnel de formation* (CPF)), the least qualified individuals (i.e. those with qualifications below ISCED 3) receive funding of EUR 800 per year for their training activities instead of EUR 500 given to other individuals, with a limit of EUR 8 000 instead of EUR 5 000. In addition, the CPF allows for the financing of support for the validation of acquired experience (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*).

Slovenia provides support for reimbursement of the costs of upper secondary education (ISCED 3) to adults who complete this level. The priority groups are adults with only basic school education (ISCED 2) and those aged over 45.

Sometimes, the support explicitly targeting low-qualified adults has further eligibility criteria. For instance, some schemes are available only to unemployed low-qualified adults. Thus, (un)employment status is a further condition that has to be met in order to access support.

In **Sweden**, a support scheme targeting unemployed adults who lack basic education (ISCED 2) or upper secondary education (ISCED 3) was introduced in 2017. The aim is to support people with a limited educational background, thereby increasing their opportunities in the labour market. For full-time studies, support can be granted for 50 weeks (SEK 2 246 per week).

There are also incentives that apply to specific types of publicly subsidised adult education provision, namely programmes targeting low-qualified adults. This means that public authorities subsidise the provision in question (supply-side funding) and, in addition, cover learners' participation expenses (e.g. cost of travel). Croatia provides a relevant example in this regard.

In **Croatia**, there is a measure subsidising the programme of basic education for adults (*osnovna škola za odrasle*; see Annex II). The measure operates as follows: the Ministry of Science and Education bears the costs of the programme in question; it submits a list of people enrolled in the programme to the Croatian Employment Service (CES); and the CES, in turn, bears the transport costs for all registered unemployed participants.

Although Figure 4.3 displays only systematic support measures – i.e. longer-term support schemes – there are also shorter project-based initiatives (often co-financed by EU funds) that provide subsidies for the education and training of low-qualified adults. Hungary, for instance, runs a short-term (2020–2022) financial support scheme promoting the education and training of parents with small children. The priority group is made up of low-skilled and unskilled parents (qualification attainment levels below ISCED 3), who can receive a financial incentive (scholarship) if they take part in secondary-level studies or in vocational education and training programmes.

Financial support for employers

Alongside learners, employers creating education and training opportunities may be eligible for public financial support. Indeed, as Figure 4.4 shows, most European countries report having at least one financial incentive in place for employers that support adult education and training. However, as with the financial support for learners, the measures for employers rarely explicitly promote the education and training of low-qualified adults. Instead, the support can be used to co-finance education and training of wider groups, including adults with low levels of or no qualifications.

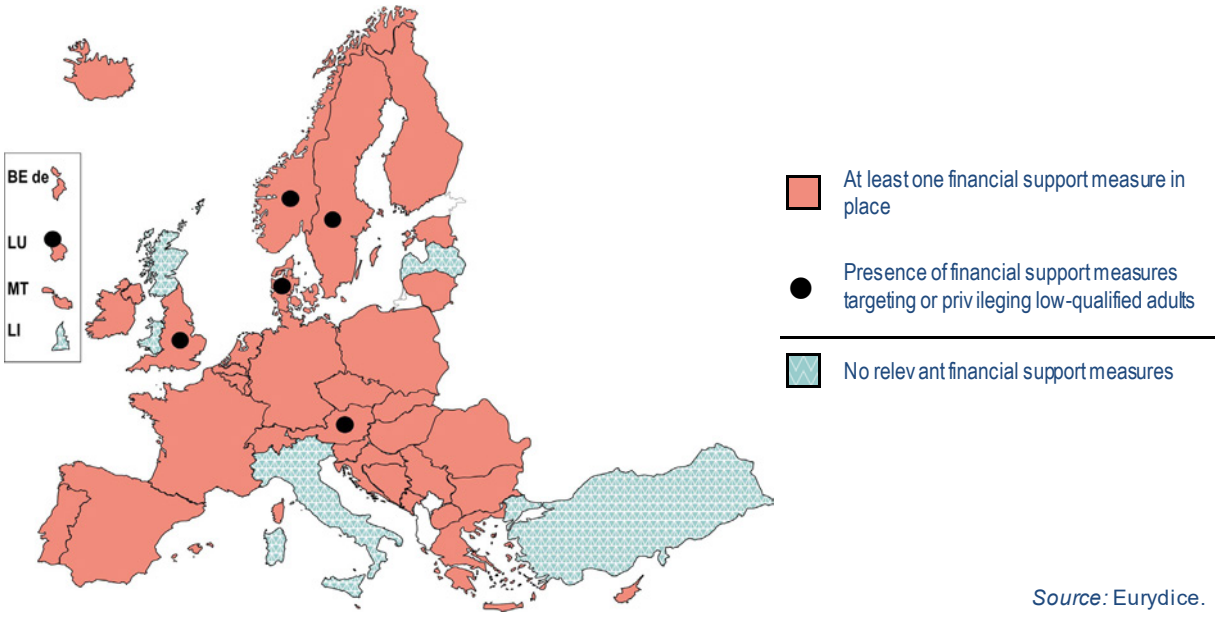
Among all the reported measures, some are aimed at subsidising employers' direct education and training costs, which may comprise programme or trainers' fees, costs of the location of training facilities, costs of study material, employees' travel expenses, etc. Tax benefits as well as other financial incentives (e.g. grants) are used for this purpose.

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, the measure 'Portfolio for small and medium enterprises' (*KMO portefeuille*) aims to improve the knowledge and skills of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises. Eligible costs include training and/or counselling purchased from recognised training providers. A maximum of 30 % of the costs of the service provided can be refunded, and the maximum amount of the subsidy is EUR 7 500 per year.

In **Austria**, education and training costs are tax deductible as business expenses for employers. This applies to costs incurred for employees' education and training, including programme fees and costs of study materials, and costs of travel to course facilities and accommodation. Tax deductibility requires employers/employees to justify that the education or training attended was relevant to their professional development.

In **Poland**, employers (entrepreneurs) can include various types of programmes that increase employees' levels of qualification (e.g. evening, extramural or postgraduate studies, qualification title examinations, and foreign language learning) in tax costs. Other expenses related to employee training, such as accommodation costs, commuting expenses and the purchase of study material (if required), are also tax deductible. Employers must, however, prove the relationship between the cost incurred (i.e. the training) and taxable activities carried out as part of their business.

Figure 4.4: Presence of large-scale financial support measures that may be used to subsidise the education and training of low-qualified adults and in which the support recipient is the employer, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

'Low-qualified adults' are individuals who have completed education or qualifications corresponding to ISCED levels 0-2 at most. This means that they have not completed upper secondary education (or equivalent) (see 'Glossary').

Countries were asked to indicate whether, in their system, there are large-scale financial support measures for education and training from which employers providing education and training to low-qualified adults may benefit. Countries could indicate up to three measures in total (to cover 'direct education/training costs' and/or 'indirect education/training costs'; see 'Glossary'). If a country reported at least one relevant measure, it is displayed as having financial support in place. The figure does not capture the numbers of reported measures and/or whether they include support for meeting direct and/or indirect education/training costs.

Financial support measures 'targeting' low-qualified adults are understood as incentives where low-qualified adults either are the only possible beneficiaries or are explicitly referred to among a limited number of possible beneficiaries. Financial measures 'privileging' low-qualified adults are understood as incentives providing preferential treatment to low-qualified adults (e.g. a higher amount of support than that given to other groups). All the measures targeting or privileging low-qualified adults that are displayed in the figure are described in Annex IV.

When referring to financial support measures targeting or privileging low-qualified adults, the figure does not consider financial support available only for the training of young low-qualified adults (e.g. incentives available only to employers training NEETs).

In addition to subsidising direct education and training costs, the support provided may include wage-replacement benefits, i.e. compensation for wages paid to employees who are absent because of their participation in education or training.

In **Germany**, in the majority of the *Länder*, legislation allows employees to attend continuing education courses for several working days per year (usually five days) with no loss of earnings (paid educational leave – *Bildungsurlaub, Bildungsfreistellung* or *Bildungszeit*), provided that certain conditions are fulfilled. In order to limit or absorb the costs for employers, some *Länder* provide for a lump sum reimbursement of wage costs for small and medium-sized enterprises.

In **Estonia**, employers can apply for training support from the Unemployment Insurance Fund for training employees. The support applies to training for various categories of employees, including employees in areas with a growing demand for labour, employees in a situation of change or employees who need to improve their Estonian language skills or ICT skills. The total amount of training planned for an employee must be at least 50 hours (provided within one year). The training allowance reimburses employers' training costs, travel expenses related to the participation in training and salary costs (the minimum hourly wage) for the time when employees are participating in training. As a rule, up to 80 % of the total costs are reimbursed, but no more than EUR 2 500 per employee.

There are also financial support measures for employers for training apprentices. Around one quarter of the countries surveyed (French Community of Belgium, Greece, France, Lithuania, Hungary,

Austria, Romania, Finland, Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom) included this type of support among the financial support schemes reported. Some of the reported schemes – see France and Austria – place the emphasis on adult apprentices.

In **France**, since 2019, enterprises with fewer than 250 employees taking on apprentices benefit from public financial support. The support is as follows: up to EUR 4 125 for the first year of the contract, up to EUR 2 000 for the second year and up to EUR 1 200 for the third year. Between July 2020 and February 2021, the subsidy increased to up to EUR 5 000 for the first year of the contract for apprentices aged 18 or below, and up to EUR 8 000 for those aged over 18. The subsidy applies to all apprenticeship contracts for qualifications between *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* level (i.e. short vocational ISCED level 3 programmes) and 'professional licence' level (ISCED 6).

In **Lithuania**, employers providing apprenticeship training can receive a subsidy covering 70 % of the salary specified in the apprenticeship contract (with some ceilings referring to the national minimum wage).

In **Austria**, there is a financial scheme promoting the dual vocational education and training of adults (*Lehrstellenförderung Lehre für Erwachsene*). Through this scheme, employers receive additional financial support if they hire apprentices who are at least 18 years old when they start their training. Eligible employers receive a monthly lump sum of up to EUR 900 for the full duration of the apprenticeship programme to cover education, training and payroll costs. Beneficiaries are then required to pay apprentices in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement, i.e. provide a significantly higher salary than the usual apprenticeship salary.

In **Romania**, employers receive a subsidy for apprentices for six months if the training leads to a level 1 qualification (see Annex II) and for 12 months if it leads to a level 2 qualification. The apprenticeship contracts are financed from the unemployment insurance budget and are co-financed by EU funds.

As Figure 4.4 shows, only a few countries have financial incentives in place for employers targeting or privileging the education and training of low-qualified adults. When in place, such financial support once again takes different forms, including subsidies for programme fees and salary costs.

In **Denmark**, the SVU scheme (see Figure 4.3 and the related analysis) supports not only adults with low levels of qualifications but also their employers. More specifically, if an employee is paid his or her full salary, their employer can receive the SVU as salary compensation.

In **Luxembourg**, private sector companies can obtain training support worth 15 % (taxable) of the annual training investment. The co-financing amount is increased by 20 % for the wage costs of participants who meet one of the following criteria: (1) no qualifications recognised by public authorities and less than 10 years' service or (2) age over 45 years.

In **Austria**, the scheme 'Qualification support for employees' (*Qualifizierungsförderung für Beschäftigte*) supports the education and training of three target groups: (1) employees with low levels of qualifications, i.e. individuals who have not completed a level of education above lower secondary level (ISCED 2); (2) female employees who have completed apprenticeship training or a three-year school of intermediate vocational education (*Berufsbildende Mittlere Schule*); and (3) employees with higher levels of qualifications if they are at least 45 years old. The scheme provides financial support to employers, covering 50 % of the participants' programme fees and 50 % of the personnel absence costs up to a maximum of EUR 10 000 per person and application.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, the Adult Education Budget, which is a government-funded programme, can be used to subsidise employers as well as other adult education and training providers. The programme funds the education and training of various vulnerable groups, including adults with low levels of qualifications. The focus is on the following groups: adults aged 19-23 preparing for their first level 2 or 3 qualification; adults with low wages aged over 24 preparing for their first level 2 or 3 qualification; unemployed adults taking any course or studying for a qualification up to level 2; and individuals with low wages whose first language is not English (who want to improve their language skills up to level 2).

Although Figure 4.4 indicates that there are only a limited number of support measures focusing on low-qualified adults, further aspects need to be considered. In particular, some support measures do not refer explicitly to low-qualified adults but still subsidise learning actions that can affect this group. For example, some countries have financial stimuli in place for employers who encourage their employees' participation in basic skills programmes. Plausibly, among learners participating in these programmes, there are adults with low levels of or no qualifications. The Netherlands and Switzerland provide examples of such support schemes.

In the **Netherlands**, the annual 'Count on skills' subsidy programme (*Tel mee met Taal subsidieregeling*) offers financial support to employers for employee training. Activities provided through this scheme should improve employees' basic skills, namely reading, writing, numeracy or digital skills.

In **Switzerland**, since 2018, the Confederation has provided subsidies for training courses aimed at the acquisition of work-related basic skills (*Förderschwerpunkt Grundkompetenzen am Arbeitsplatz*). The courses must be closely related to everyday working life and its challenges. The topics that are covered are reading and writing, everyday mathematics, digital skills and oral skills (expression in the national language).

Given the above, the limited targeted support shown in Figure 4.4 (and also Figure 4.3) has to be interpreted with some caution. Indeed, there are financial support measures that do not refer to raising qualification attainment levels but still provide incentives for access to fundamental skills (this second aspect is not displayed in Figures 4.3 and 4.4). Nonetheless, the overall picture is that countries rarely have financial incentives in place targeting or privileging the education and training of low-qualified adults.

4.3. The role of EU funding

Public financial support directed at institutions, learners or employers (see Section 4.2) may draw funding from national budgets as well as other sources, in particular EU funds.

A recent evaluation of the use of one of the EU funds – the European Social Fund (ESF) – for education and training (Donlevy et al., 2020) recognises adult learning as an area that particularly benefits from ESF investment. The evaluation observes that 'many Member States and regions have used ESF funding to invest in lifelong/adult learning, often with a particular focus on low-skilled adults or adults with obsolescent skills. For these countries, investment in lifelong learning could not have been carried out on this scale using national funds alone, so ESF investment has delivered significant added value' (ibid., p. 205). In other words, in many European countries adult education and training provision would be considerably less developed without ESF investment.

In line with the above finding, the Eurydice data collection used for this report suggests that EU funding is widely utilised to support adult education and training, including learning opportunities for adults with low levels of basic skills or those with low levels of or no qualifications. Indeed, in the Eurydice questionnaire, only five EU Member States (Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Finland) indicated that no or almost no publicly subsidised programmes available to adults that lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 or EQF level 4 use European funding. All other EU Member States reported a more substantial contribution of EU funding to this type of provision (i.e. either that 'some programmes in question use EU funding' or that 'all / almost all programmes in question use EU funding'). A comparable picture emerges in relation to basic skills programmes ([84]).

Annex II confirms the above pattern by presenting information on funding sources for major publicly subsidised education and training programmes from which adults with low levels of basic skills and those with low levels of or no qualifications may benefit (see the 'Funding sources' column in Annex II). Although this annex covers only the most institutionalised types of provision available to adults (i.e. it does not refer to all publicly subsidised programmes that exist across Europe), it still

([84]) Among the EU countries reporting the presence of publicly subsidised basic skills programmes, only Belgium (the Flemish Community), Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands indicated that the contribution of EU funding to this type of provision is limited (i.e. 'no / almost no programmes in question use EU funding'). All other EU Member States reported that EU funding makes a more substantial contribution to the provision of basic skills programmes (i.e. either that 'some programmes in question use EU funding' or that 'all / almost all programmes in question use EU funding').

contributes to understanding the role of EU funding. Data suggest, once again, that EU funding plays an important role in creating adult learning opportunities in a number of European countries.

The role of EU funding can also be assessed by looking at the extent to which it contributes to accomplishing policy objectives related to adult learning. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 2, almost all European countries issued strategic policy documents between 2015 and 2020 that refer to upskilling and/or qualification upgrading of adults. The great majority of countries with such frameworks report that their strategies provide for dedicated funding. In around half of the countries, this also includes European funding (see the 'Funding source' column in Annex I).

Overall, Eurydice data confirm that EU funds help to ensure the financing of adult education and training across Europe. The question that arises is whether and how national funding sources can be strengthened to ensure the financial sustainability of policies and measures initiated using EU funding support.

Summary

This chapter has examined public financial interventions to support access to and participation in education and training, especially of adults with low levels of or no qualifications or with insufficient basic skills. The chapter started with an analysis of data from the 2016 AES, showing that, for around one third of adults who would like to participate (or participate more) in education and training, financial issues constitute one of the obstacles preventing them from doing so (see Figure 4.1). For around one in five adults, funding is the main obstacle to participation. The AES also shows that adults with lower levels of qualifications are more affected by the costs of learning activities than those with higher qualification levels.

The chapter then considered two dimensions of public expenditure on adult education and training: supply-side funding (i.e. funding supporting education and training providers) and demand-side funding (i.e. funding directly supporting individuals or employers). The discussion highlighted that both supply-side funding and demand-side funding should be examined when considering the financial accessibility of adult education and training.

In relation to supply-side funding, the analysis recalled data presented in other parts of the report, which show that all European countries subsidise at least some types of learning provision for adults who wish to upgrade their qualifications or improve their (basic) skills. Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults are provided under various institutional arrangements, by both public institutions and private organisations, with the latter receiving public subsidies either in a systematic way or on a project-by-project basis.

Regarding publicly subsidised programmes at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 or EQF level 4, the chapter investigated whether adults, especially those with low levels of qualifications, are required to contribute towards tuition costs. In most European countries, the provision in question generally does not entail any systematic fees (see Figure 4.2). In around one third of the countries analysed, adults may or may not pay fees, depending on additional factors (e.g. their employment status, type of programme or programme level). Only a few countries report charging fees systematically (the Netherlands, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein). A comparable pattern applies to basic skills programmes, with a slightly higher number of countries providing this type of provision for free.

Considering that adults may be interested in taking part in programmes that are not publicly funded (or not fully publicly funded), the chapter looked at financial incentives that may reduce learners' financial

burden (demand-side funding). The analysis shows that most European countries have in place at least one financial support measure from which low-qualified adults who are involved in education and training may benefit (see Figure 4.3). The existing measures, however, vary greatly in a number of aspects. Some are aimed at subsidising immediate expenses related to learning activities, such as course or examination fees or various other expenses (e.g. travel or accommodation costs), while others allow for compensation for a loss or reduction of income as a result of undertaking the education and training. Moreover, the support measures vary in terms of the eligible beneficiaries: some are open to all adults, some specifically target employees, and others aim to support various vulnerable groups, in particular adults facing difficulties in the context of the labour market. With regard to adults with low levels of or no qualifications, this group is rarely explicitly targeted by public financial support measures. This means that low-qualified adults can benefit from a range of financial support schemes, but there are rarely measures that explicitly focus on them.

Alongside learners, employers providing education and training opportunities can often benefit from public financial support measures (see Figure 4.4). Again, these vary greatly in terms of eligible expenses and/or beneficiaries. As with the support for individuals, financial incentives for employers are rarely focused on the education and training of low-qualified adults. More commonly, the support is devised for either wider categories of learners (e.g. all employees) or other target groups (e.g. those in a precarious labour market situation, low-skilled employees).

The summary presented in Figure 4.5 considers the aforementioned dimensions. It shows that, in more than half of the countries surveyed, low-qualified adults participating in publicly subsidised programmes leading to recognised qualifications generally do not pay fees and, in these same countries, there are financial incentives – for learners and/or employers – that are aimed at the co-financing of education and training. Some of the countries in this group provide financial support that targets or privileges the education and training of low-qualified adults (see Luxembourg, Austria, Sweden and Norway). Figure 4.5 also indicates that, in all countries where systematic fees are applicable for (at least some) publicly subsidised programmes, at least some financial incentives are in place – for learners and/or employers – that may subsidise the education and training of low-qualified adults. Some of these countries provide financial support that targets or privileges low-qualified adults (see the Flemish Community of Belgium, Demark, France, Croatia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom (England)).

The above overview, however, should be interpreted with caution and further aspects need to be considered. One additional aspect is the actual 'size' of the publicly subsidised adult education and training sector. For example, when all publicly subsidised programmes are provided for free but their number is very limited, learners may be forced to pursue private fee-paying education and training. Another aspect to consider is the amount of (demand-side) financial support available. Indeed, as shown in this chapter, some measures provide relatively minor support (e.g. small contributions towards course fees or various additional expenses), whereas other measures allow major costs to be subsidised, including living expenses during long-term education or training activities. How easy it is for learners to access financial support is another important aspect to consider. Thus, this summary provides only a partial picture of the efforts made by public authorities to subsidise learning opportunities for the target groups in this report. Dedicated research would be required to consider all the relevant dimensions.

Finally, the chapter discussed the extent to which EU funding contributes to creating education and training opportunities for adults, in particular those with low levels of or no qualifications. The analysis shows that, in most EU Member States, EU funding contributes to this cause, meaning that at least some publicly subsidised programmes that may enable low-qualified adults to upgrade their

qualifications use EU funding. Only a few EU Member States indicate that no or virtually no programmes open to adults with low levels of qualifications use EU funding.

Figure 4.5: Summary of public financial support for the education and training of low-qualified adults, 2019/20

	Generally no fees for publicly subsidised programmes leading to qualifications up to ISCED 3 / EQF 4	Financial incentives for learners		Financial incentives for employers	
		At least one financial support measure covering low-qualified adults	Financial support measures targeting or privileging low-qualified adults	At least one financial support measure covering low-qualified adults	Financial support measures targeting or privileging low-qualified adults
BE fr		●		●	
BE de		●		●	
BE nl		●	●	●	
BG	●	●		●	
CZ		●		●	
DK		●	●	●	●
DE	●	●		●	
EE	●	●		●	
IE	●	●		●	
EL	●	●		●	
ES	●	●		●	
FR		●	●	●	
HR		●	●	●	
IT	●	●			
CY	●	●		●	
LV		●			
LT	●	●		●	
LU	●	●		●	●
HU	●	●		●	
MT		●		●	
NL		●		●	
AT	●	●		●	●
PL	●	●		●	
PT	●	●		●	
RO	●			●	
SI		●	●	●	
SK	●	●		●	
FI	●	●		●	
SE	●	●	●	●	●
BA		●		●	
CH				●	
IS		●		●	
LI		●			
ME		●		●	
MK	●	●		●	
NO	●	●		●	●
RS		●		●	
TR	●	●			
UK-ENG		●		●	●
UK-WLS		●			
UK-NIR		●		●	
UK-SCT	●	●			

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This figure presents a summary of the data displayed in Figures 4.2-4.4. For further details and explanations, see the reference figures.

CHAPTER 5: FLEXIBLE LEARNING

When discussing learning opportunities for adults, the concept of flexibility is of prime importance. This is because adults frequently need to balance multiple commitments, including their work, family responsibilities and other engagements. Consequently, they need greater flexibility when it comes to their participation in education and training, which implies a greater choice in terms of time, place, pace, content and mode of learning. Thus, the concept of flexibility in adult education and training goes hand in hand with the individualisation of learning.

The 2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways ([85]) emphases flexibility in adult education and training by referring to a three-step approach consisting of (1) skills assessment, (2) the provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer and (3) the validation and recognition of skills acquired. The 2019 Commission Staff Working Document, which takes stock of measures implemented by Member States in response to the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation, stresses that '[o]ffering suitable learning pathways to adults depends on the flexibility of the system and how it enables adults to combine learning with work or a busy family life' (European Commission 2019b, p. 15).

The discussion of flexibility in adult education and training in this chapter is divided into six sections. The chapter starts by outlining some barriers to adult participation in learning. It then looks at various modes of delivery and organisational arrangements that may have a positive impact on lowering these barriers. More specifically, the second section looks at the delivery of adult education and training programmes through distance learning. The third section examines the state of play with respect to the modularisation of programmes, while the fourth section concentrates on the development of credit-based programmes and qualifications. The fifth section investigates the learning prospects of adults with limited prior formal learning by looking at the permeability between educational levels. The final section looks at further approaches to tailoring education and training provision to the needs of adults. The discussion continues in Chapter 6, which covers another theme linked to flexibility in adult education and training: the recognition and validation of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

5.1. Why flexibility in adult learning matters

In the 2016 Adult Education Survey (AES), respondents who wanted to participate (or participate more) in education and training but who encountered difficulties were asked to specify the obstacles that had hindered their participation. The possible responses to this question included 'family reasons', 'schedule', 'no suitable education or training offer' or 'distance', i.e. obstacles that could potentially be overcome by the provision of flexible education and training.

Figure 5.1 depicts the EU-27 average data for these obstacles according to respondents' educational attainment levels. As the data show, regardless of level of education, family reasons and a busy schedule were more frequently cited as obstacles than distance or the lack of suitable education or training offer.

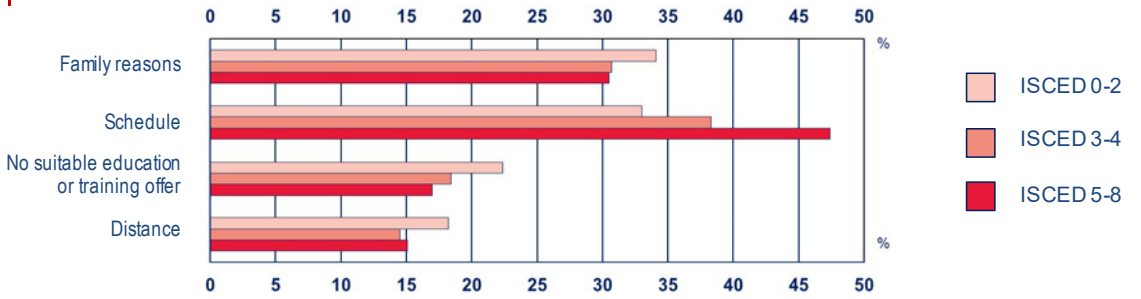
More specifically, in all educational attainment groups, family reasons were reported nearly twice as often as distance as an obstacle to participating in education and training; around one third (34.4 %) of adults who had not completed upper secondary education (ISCED 0-2) and who wanted to participate (or participate more) in education and training referred to this obstacle. With regard to having a busy schedule, there were perceptible differences between educational attainment groups: around one third

([85]) Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484/1, 24.12.2016.

(33.0 %) of adults with a low level of educational attainment (ISCED 0-2) who wanted to participate in education and training referred to this obstacle, whereas the same applied to almost half (47.3 %) of those with a tertiary-level qualification (ISCED 5-8).

The lack of suitable education and training provision was reported as an obstacle to participation by 22.4 % of adults with a low level of educational attainment (ISCED 0-2) who wanted to take part in education and training, 18.4 % of adults with a medium level qualification (ISCED 3-4) and 17.0 % of those holding a tertiary-level degree (ISCED 5-8). Distance, in turn, was referred to by 18.7 %, 14.7 % and 15.2 % of adults in the three educational attainment groups, respectively.

Figure 5.1: Adults (aged 25-64) who wanted to participate (or participate more) in education and training in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), by reason for not participating and educational attainment level (EU-27 average), 2016



Source: Eurostat AES [trng_aes_178] (data extracted 19 April 2020).

Explanatory notes

Online AES data code [trng_aes_178] refers to the following obstacles: distance, costs, family reasons, other personal reasons, health or age reasons, no suitable education or training offer, lack of support from employer or public services, schedule and other (reasons). Figure 5.1 includes only four of these reasons.

Data are sorted according to ISCED level 0-2.

Overall, Figure 5.1 shows that for around one in three adults with a low level of educational attainment (ISCED 0-2) who want to participate in education and training, family reasons and/or a busy schedule are among the obstacles that prevent them from doing so. Around one in five adults in the same educational attainment category report distance and/or the lack of suitable education or training offer among the obstacles.

The remainder of this chapter examines the modes of delivery and organisational arrangements in adult education and training that may potentially tackle these obstacles.

5.2. Distance learning

Distance learning is commonly seen as one of the approaches that can enhance the flexibility of education and training. Contrary to traditional learning, which requires learners to organise their personal or professional commitments around their studies, distance learning allows learners to organise their studies around their commitments.

This section discusses distance learning in two parts. The first part presents the main distance learning arrangements and large-scale initiatives that have been implemented across Europe, while the second part discusses the impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic on distance learning provision. In line with the focus of this report, both parts concentrate on distance learning provision situated at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4, i.e. up to the completion of upper secondary education or equivalent. Distance learning that covers only the higher education sector is not considered.

Distance learning is understood here as an overarching term including educational activities that are delivered at a distance using various communication media, but not necessarily electronic media; educational activities delivered using ICT (e-learning); and educational activities combining distance learning or e-learning with some face-to-face learning in education and training institutions (blended learning).

5.2.1. National distance learning providers and support measures

As Figure 5.2 shows, in a limited number of countries, major public or publicly subsidised distance learning providers offer qualifications at levels up to (and including) upper secondary education. These providers generally do not focus on adults, but target all those who cannot attend, for a variety of reasons, programmes in traditional settings. In other words, adults can make use of these learning opportunities in the same way as younger learners. Spain, France and Turkey ensure this type of provision.

In **Spain**, distance learning for adults is centrally coordinated and organised by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training through the Centre for Innovation and Development of Distance Education (CIDEAD) ([86]), which was established in 1992. Among its provision and services, CIDEAD delivers formal programmes, both general and vocational, at different levels. Depending on the programme, the content is structured either in knowledge areas or in modules. Alongside CIDEAD, which operates throughout Spain, several Autonomous Communities have institutions that are specifically dedicated to the provision of distance learning for adults.

In **France**, the National Centre for Distance Education (CNED) ([87]), which was established in 1939, provides education and training at all education levels (from pre-primary to higher education). Alongside formal programmes, the institution offers non-formal vocational training in a number of fields, as well as courses that prepare learners for public service recruitment competitions. The CNED has branches in eight major towns throughout France. The learning process is conducted through correspondence, online and face-to-face. Around 84 000 learners participated in CNED provision (formal and non-formal) in 2018.

In **Turkey**, since the 1990s, the Ministry of National Education has run a network of open education schools ([88]). These offer general and vocational lower and upper secondary education programmes (ISCED 2 and 3) to all those who, for various reasons, cannot pursue traditional education or who want to complete their unfinished education. There are around 770 examination centres and 3 500 contact offices (there are also around 30 examination centres located abroad).

In addition to the above countries, which have one key distance learning institution or institutional network, Norway has several publicly funded providers focusing on distance learning, all operating under the responsibility of the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills. The providers in question offer online upper secondary education programmes.

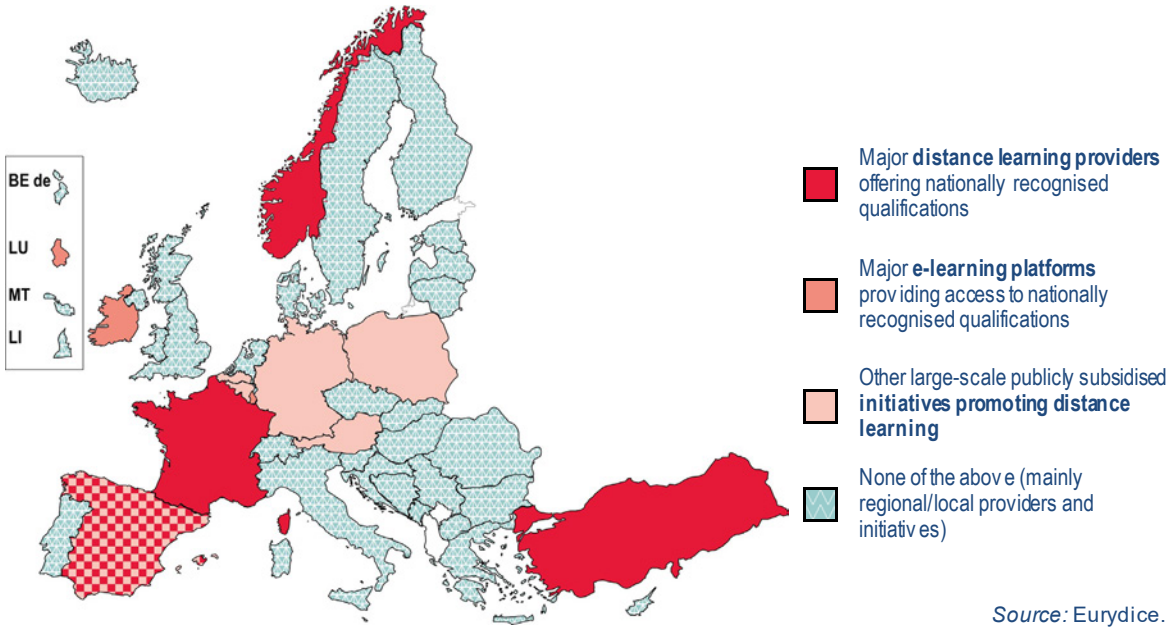
In some countries, access to formal qualifications by distance learning is ensured through major e-learning platforms rather than by distance learning institutions. This is the case in Ireland, where programmes provided by the platform eCollege lead to recognised further education and training qualifications, and in Luxembourg, where the platform eCampus enables learners to complete upper secondary education.

In **Ireland**, eCollege ([89]) is a leading national learning platform for further education and training. It is funded by SOLAS, the state agency responsible for further education and training. It provides a range of fully online programmes leading to recognised further education qualifications in a number of areas (business, project management, information technology, graphic design, web design, digital marketing, software development and basic computer literacy).

In **Luxembourg**, since 2005, top-level authorities have run an e-learning platform called eCampus ([90]), which allows learners to complete upper secondary education by distance learning. Between 100 and 150 learners use this service each year.

([86]) See: https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/educacion/mc/cidead/portada.html
([87]) See: https://www.cned.fr/
([88]) See: http://www.hbo.gov.tr/
([89]) See: https://www.ecollege.ie/
([90]) See: https://sites.google.com/ebac.lu/ecampus/accueil

Figure 5.2: Large-scale publicly subsidised distance learning arrangements covering adult education and training, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

This figure concentrates on distance learning arrangements initiated by top-level authorities. Distance learning is understood here as learning in which more than 50 % of the instruction time is organised at a distance. When referring to distance learning providers, the figure refers to providers for whom distance learning is their main mission/activity.

The figure does not include distance learning in the higher education sector. Moreover, it does not include publicly subsidised initiatives implemented in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The latter are outlined in Section 5.2.2.

In addition to establishing distance learning institutions or platforms providing access to nationally recognised qualifications, top-level authorities may provide other types of support for the development of distance learning. One key example of a large-scale publicly subsidised initiative is the programme Aula Mentor in Spain, which includes a whole infrastructure for the provision of non-formal distance learning courses for adults.

In **Spain**, Aula Mentor ([91]) is an internet-based open education and training system that provides around 170 non-formal education courses. It includes two main infrastructures: more than 500 classrooms with computer equipment and an internet connection, and an online platform designed and developed by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. Learners can choose their courses freely (i.e. there are no entry requirements) and support is provided by tutors. On successful completion of a programme, participants receive a certificate issued by the ministry. Almost 16 000 people were enrolled in the system between September 2019 and June 2020.

Other support measures for distance learning include initiatives targeting the development of the quality of the provision, the implementation of distance learning across the (adult) education and training sector and the enhancement of the competences of staff providing distance learning.

In the **French Community of Belgium**, the Centre for Educational Resources (*Centre de Ressources Pédagogiques* (CRP)) provides support for the integration of digital learning into the sector of social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*; see Annex II). In practice, this means that institutions providing social advancement education through e-learning can benefit from CRP advice and guidance.

In **Germany**, distance learning courses that fall within the scope of the German Distance Learning Protection Act may be provided by private organisations but they require state approval. The approval procedure, run by the Central Office for Distance Learning (*Staatliche Zentralstelle für Fernunterricht*), verifies not only the accuracy and didactic quality of the teaching material, but also the content of distance learning agreements between students and distance learning institutes.

([91]) See: http://www.aulamentor.es/

In **Austria**, the national portal dedicated to adult education ([92]), which is run by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, has included since 2019 a section on the digital professional development of adult educators ('DigiProf'). The aim is to offer up-to-date information and services on digital teaching and learning, while providing support for the entire field of adult education. 'DigiProf' includes information modules on digital tools, online courses and webinars, and a media library providing resources and background information (all directed towards adult educators).

In **Poland**, the Centre for Education Development (*Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji* (ORE)), which is a national teacher training institution, supports the development and implementation of distance learning in education and training institutions. ORE runs an online database consisting of almost 170 vocational education and training (VET) courses ([93]). Education and training institutions can download these courses free of charge and install them on their own e-learning platforms. In addition, ORE initiated in 2019 a project entitled 'Creating e-resources for vocational education and training' (*Tworzenie e-zasobów do kształcenia zawodowego*). Its main aim is to increase the use of ICT in VET.

Besides technical and/or methodological support, top-level authorities may also provide systematic direct financial support for (traditional) education and training providers that implement distance learning. This is the case in the Flemish Community of Belgium, where, since 2009, centres for adult education (*Centra voor Volwassenenonderwijs* (CVOs); see Annex III) have been able to apply for additional funding if they offer programmes in which at least 50 % of the content is provided through distance learning. At present, most of the 48 CVOs provide some programmes including distance learning.

Having no large-scale publicly subsidised distance learning arrangements or initiatives – the situation observed in around two thirds of all European countries (Figure 5.2) – does not imply that distance learning is underdeveloped or non-existent. It may be well established using other approaches, including initiatives at local and institutional levels. For example, in Sweden, distance learning is widespread, while being mainly organised at local level.

In **Sweden**, distance learning in adult education is relatively common. Decisions on these matters are taken at local level, by municipal adult learning centres or by independent providers. The Swedish solution has been to allow municipalities to procure distance education and thus allow the market to develop different solutions. The proportion of students studying at a distance has increased sharply during the last 10-year period, from a few per cent to just over 27 % in 2018.

Like Sweden, Denmark also reports the widespread use of distance learning: most local adult education centres (see Annex III) support distance learning. In Finland, both general upper secondary schools and VET institutions provide distance learning opportunities.

Moreover, countries having no major national providers of distance learning may still have one or several local distance learning institutions. In Croatia, for instance, a public distance learning institution – Birotehnika – founded by a local government (City of Zagreb), focuses on the delivery of upper secondary education. In Hungary, a distance learning upper secondary school (*Földes Ferenc Gimnázium Digitális Középiskola tagozat*) operates under the school district of Miskolc (*Miskolci Tankerületi Központ*). In Lithuania, two local institutions deliver adult education through distance learning (Vilnius Ozo gymnasium and Akmenė District Municipality Youth and Adult Education Centre).

Elements of distance learning may also be embedded in traditional forms of education and training. This is the case in Cyprus, where, since 2019, learners at evening schools (see Annexes II and III) have four days of on-site (face-to-face) learning and one day of online learning a week. In Italy, a similar situation exists in relation to provincial centres for adult education (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*; see Annex III): regulations authorise these centres to deliver up to 20 % of the course workload through online learning.

([92]) See: www.erwachsenenbildung.at

([93]) See: https://kno.ore.edu.pl

Finally, while the analysis does not consider distance learning within the higher education sector, some initiatives in this sector may enhance learning opportunities for adults with low levels of qualifications. For example, in France, since 2013, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has subsidised the platform *France université numérique* ([94]), which disseminates courses provided by teachers at French higher education institutions. There are no formal entry requirements and therefore adults with low levels of qualifications can take part with no restrictions. In France, the ministry also subsidises a network of 'digital campuses' (*Campus connectés* ([95])), which are study locations allowing learners to pursue distance learning close to home, with individual and collective tutoring. This can lead to qualifications ranging from an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*baccalauréat*) to a master's degree. The aim is to establish 100 digital campuses in medium-sized cities by 2022 (31 were in place at the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year).

5.2.2. Distance learning and the COVID-19 pandemic

It is not possible to discuss distance learning nowadays without mentioning the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the major health crisis caused by the pandemic has meant that all sectors of education have been put under unprecedented pressure to open up to distance learning. In early 2020, within the space of a few weeks, stakeholders at all levels and all over the world had to develop and implement innovative and creative solutions to ensure that education and training systems could continue to function. Like other sectors of education and training, the adult learning sector responded with a range of measures targeting both providers and learners. The examples below illustrate some of the support initiatives implemented ([96]).

In **Cyprus**, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, in March 2020, the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) decided to promote the utilisation of e-learning by organisers of subsidised training programmes, i.e. centres of vocational training and enterprises. This development is seen not only as a response to the health crisis, but also as a push for the faster adoption of ICT in vocational training.

In **Latvia**, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, an extra call using the European Social Fund was announced and around 300 programmes were selected to provide distance learning opportunities during the crisis period. The funded provision includes continuing VET, in-service training programmes and programmes covering parts of qualifications (modules and module groups).

In **Hungary**, in April 2020, the Ministry for Innovation and Technology launched a portal including a collection of digital VET content (*Szakképzési Tananyagtár* ([97])). The aim was to promote the digital switchover in initial and continuing VET in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The portal does not provide education or training, but allows VET teachers to share digital content with their colleagues and students.

In **Norway**, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and in the framework of the skills reform 'Learning throughout life' (*Lære hele livet*), national authorities have allocated dedicated funding for the digitalisation of further education at all levels, in particular programmes that are relevant for working life that target unemployed people and those who have lost their jobs.

As noted in an EU report mapping the response of the adult education sector to the COVID-19 crisis (European Commission, 2020a), adult learning providers have been disrupted by the crisis but have found ways to continue to serve learners. Some providers, especially those that already had prior experience in offering online courses, were able to react more promptly and adapt more easily to the unprecedented situation. However, the COVID-19 crisis has affected not only providers, but also learners themselves. It has challenged learners in terms of both their ICT equipment and their capacities for online learning. These aspects are particularly concerning in cases of vulnerable groups,

([94]) See: https://www.fun-mooc.fr

([95]) See: https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/pid39023/les-lieux-labellises-campus-connecte.html

([96]) This selection of examples is based on Eurydice data collection. For a more extended list of measures related to the COVID-19 crisis, see an EU report dedicated to this topic (European Commission, 2020a).

([97]) See: https://box.edu.hu/

including low-skilled adults, who are at the highest risk of learning disengagement and isolation. Thus, as the above report suggests, reaching out to vulnerable groups of learners is of prime importance.

This discussion recalls some potential disadvantages of distance learning, namely the fact that it runs the risk of excluding the adult population with low levels of or no ICT skills (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.5) and/or those with no computer or internet access. In other words, while distance learning is one of the possible methods through which adult learners may re-engage in education and training, its success will always depend on each learner's needs and abilities.

5.3. Modular programmes and qualifications

Modularisation refers to a process in which qualifications and/or education and training programmes are broken down into smaller parts or units. This is widely seen as a way of providing greater opportunities for learners to move in and out of education and training and achieve recognised qualifications over longer periods of time ([98]). Modularisation and unitisation also make it easier to tailor courses to different individuals or learning groups, providing only those elements that are needed. This can then support and complement the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

This section looks at the extent to which modularisation applies to programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults. Besides discussing the degree of implementation of modularisation, this section also examines reforms that took place in this area between 2015 and 2020.

As Figure 5.3 shows, about one third of the countries surveyed report that all or almost all programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults have a modular structure. In some countries, this goes hand in hand with the overall flexibility of the system and the individualisation of learning pathways. This commonly means that units of learning are found in all types of provision: in general education as well as VET, and in initial education as well as adult education and training.

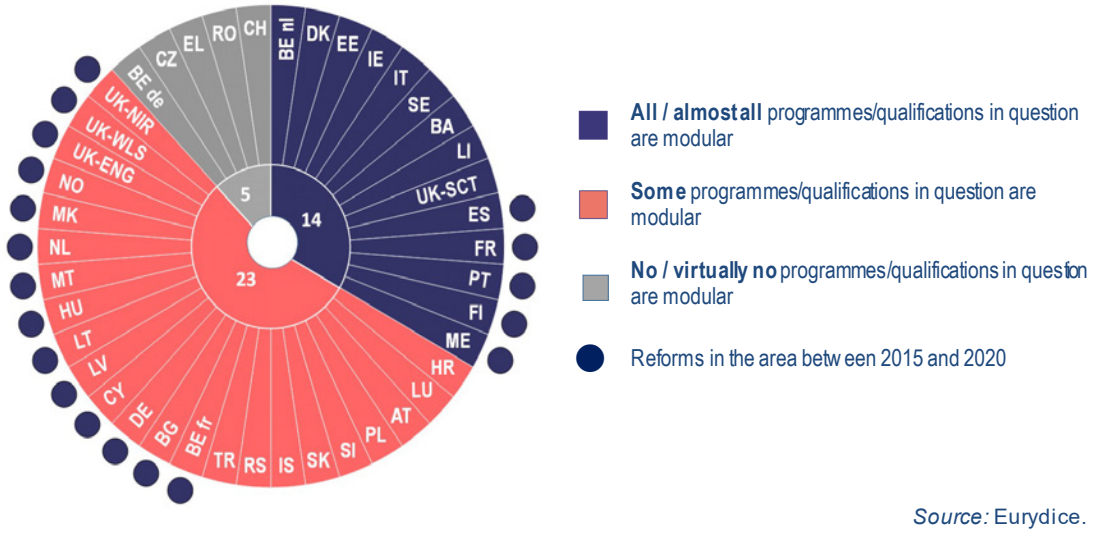
In **Estonia**, all VET curricula have a modular structure and in general upper secondary schools for adults a course system is used. Learners can choose single courses based on their needs. Students' workloads are established in their individual learning programmes. While there have been no regulatory changes in this area since 2015, modularisation has still gained ground in both VET and general adult upper secondary education. For example, progress has been made in implementing the recognition of prior learning and experience in upper secondary schools for adults, which in turn has fostered a modular approach to the curriculum.

In **Finland**, both general and vocational upper secondary qualifications/programmes consist of modules (units). In VET, an individual learning path is designed for all learners, taking into account their prior learning, needs and ways of learning. A personal competence development plan is drawn up for each student, detailing the combination of instruction, guidance and on-the-job learning. In upper secondary general education, the syllabus for adults is usually narrower than in education for young people and the instruction is more flexible. Several reforms that have taken place since 2015 have had an impact on modularisation. For example, a 2017 reform of basic education for adults emphasised flexible and individual learning pathways. A 2018 reform of VET strengthened the modular structure of the VET system. Moreover, a new curriculum for general upper secondary education, to be implemented in 2021, will emphasise a modular structure.

([98]) The topic of modularisation is closely related to ongoing debates and policy developments on 'micro-credentials'. This concept refers to smaller learning outcomes achieved following a short learning experience (e.g. a short course). According to Action 10 of the Commission's Communication on a European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (European Commission, 2020b), the aim at EU level is to develop shared standards to ensure the quality and transparency of micro-credentials, which should ultimately contribute to their portability and recognition across the EU. The work on micro-credentials also considers both their potential inclusion in national qualifications frameworks and the possibility of storing and showcasing them through Europass and its Digital Credentials.

In **Sweden**, the majority of programmes are structured into courses, modules and subjects and are not considered as set programmes that all students must read from a to z. Flexibility and individualisation have long been core values in Swedish adult education. Education must be adapted according to individuals' needs and circumstances, and it can vary both in length and in content.

Figure 5.3: Existence of modular programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Some countries that report the widespread use of modules link this to the conception or the content of their national qualifications frameworks and related registers or catalogues. These formally recognise learning outcomes that are smaller than a full qualification.

In **Portugal**, the National Qualifications Catalogue sets the education and training standards for most nationally recognised qualifications. These standards commonly include modules (small training units). The curricula for VET provision for adults are related to these standards.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the national qualifications framework contains approximately 11 500 qualifications, all of which are outcome based and modular. These qualifications vary in size, but the national qualifications framework is able to recognise learning with a credit value of 1 (corresponding to 10 notional learning hours).

Modularisation can also facilitate the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This is because it enables shorter learning experiences to be linked to formally recognised learning outcomes. France, where the validation of non-formal and informal learning is already well established, has recently taken steps in this direction.

In **France**, all nationally recognised qualifications, including those up to ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4, are open to the validation of non-formal and informal learning (*validation des acquis de l'expérience* (VAE)). Any person who has been in paid employment or self-employed, or who has been conducting a voluntary activity directly related to the content of a qualification for a minimum of one year, may apply for VAE towards a full or a partial qualification. While the VAE is not new (it has been in place since 2002), it was strengthened in 2018 by the Act on the freedom to choose one's professional future (*Loi pour la liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel*). This legal framework stipulates that qualifications consist of homogeneous and coherent blocks of competences that can be evaluated and validated separately. Thus, learners can accumulate blocks of competences (and consequently qualifications) progressively, through different means, such as the VAE, initial education and training, and continuing training. This block approach is also used in the funding scheme known as the personal training account (*Compte personnel de formation*).

In around half of the countries surveyed, some programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults have a modular structure. This commonly means that a specific subsector of education and training is subject to modularisation, whereas in other areas modularisation is more limited.

In the **French Community of Belgium**, the sector of social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*; see Annex II) provides tailor-made modular courses that include the possibility of validating one's prior (non-formal and informal) learning. Vocational training provision by the two key public providers – Le Forem and Bruxelles Formation – is modular to some degree.

In **Austria**, programmes for adults leading to a lower secondary education certificate (*Erwachsenengerechter Pflichtschulabschluss*) follow a modular structure (compulsory and elective subjects in different competence areas). Programmes aiming to facilitate adults' progression to a recognised VET qualification (*Lehrabschluss*) are also modular to a certain extent. In apprenticeship-intensive courses (*FacharbeiterInnen-Intensivausbildung*), learners attend only the modules they need, as prior qualifications and experience are taken into account. Similarly, the 'Competence with a system' (*Kompetenz mit System*) provision (see Annex II) also features three different building blocks, providing different points of entry into the programme depending on learners' prior qualifications and experience.

In **Slovenia**, programmes of upper secondary vocational and technical education include core subjects and technical or vocational modules that are optional or compulsory, depending on the programme. However, it is at schools' discretion and within their autonomy to decide how to implement programmes for adults. At the same time, adults with low levels of qualifications can enrol in the state-funded basic school programme (ISCED 2), where they pursue studies at their own pace according to their ability.

Only five countries or regions (the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Czechia, Greece, Romania and Switzerland) report that no or virtually no programmes or qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults have a modular structure. This generally means that modularisation is not in place to any substantial extent. However, even these countries have implemented relevant project-based initiatives and/or provide some opportunities for learners to follow modular programmes. For example, in Greece, various projects conducted by public employment services that target adults with low levels of qualifications are developing a modular approach. In Switzerland, although not specifically geared at adults, some VET programmes have modular curricula. Moreover, in the context of the validation of prior non-formal and informal learning, the competences not yet attained can be acquired by taking different modules. However, the validation of prior learning is possible only in a few professions.

Figure 5.3 also indicates that around half of the countries surveyed have implemented reforms and/or major national initiatives in the area of modularisation since 2015. Often, these reforms and initiatives do not refer specifically to adult education and training, but they still have an impact on it. Indeed, when programmes and qualifications associated with the system of initial education have a modular structure, it becomes easier for adults to (re-)engage in education and training.

In **Bulgaria**, in 2015, the implementation of a modular system was rather limited. A legal framework adopted in 2016 (the Law on Preschool and School Education and related steering documents) provided the basis for the introduction of modules and credits in the initial education and training system. At upper secondary level, there are now compulsory and optional modules. The modular system is also in place in VET. It enables learners to achieve units of learning outcomes and acquire either a full or a partial qualification. All learners – including adults – can make use of this opportunity.

Latvia has developed professional modular programmes in the context of a VET reform that has been ongoing since 2017. Anticipated regulatory changes should allow the use of modular programmes to assess adults' skills.

In **Lithuania**, since 2018, all VET programmes have had to have a modular structure and be credit based. It means that top-level authorities can only approve VET programmes that use modules and credits. However, there is no modular or credit-based system in secondary general education (up to ISCED 3).

Alongside modularisation reforms linked to the system of initial education and training that have some impact on adult education and training, there are also initiatives that concentrate specifically on adult learning. Norway provides a relevant example.

In **Norway**, the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills is responsible for three pilot modularisation initiatives that started in 2017 and will last until mid-2023. One of these initiatives concerns adult preparatory education (*forberedende voksenopplæring*), i.e. adult education at a level below upper secondary education. In this pilot, modular curricula have been developed in Norwegian as a second language, social studies, mathematics, science and English. In addition, there is a curriculum

for participants who need literacy training. The second modularisation initiative focuses on vocational education for adults who have completed lower secondary education (or similar). Here, the aim is to provide flexible ways for adults to achieve a certificate of apprenticeship. The third pilot is called the 'combination pilot' (*Kombinasjonsforsøket*). Within this third strand, training in adult preparatory education is combined with vocational education in one common scheme. The targets are adults who want to obtain a certificate of apprenticeship but who also need training below upper secondary level.

Overall, modularisation in adult education and training appears to be a dynamic field with the potential for further expansion. This is partly related to the fact that modularisation is linked to various other developments in (adult) education and training, including the implementation of national qualifications frameworks and registers (see also Chapter 3), the use of learning outcomes and the enhancement of opportunities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (see also Chapter 6).

5.4. Credit-based programmes and qualifications

Alongside modules, credits are yet another instrument that can potentially make adult learning more flexible and individualised. Indeed, one of the key aims of credit-based programmes is to support the continued accumulation of learning outcomes, which in turn may allow learners to build qualifications at their own pace. Credits can also contribute to the better transparency of programmes and qualifications and thus enhance mutual trust between education systems and providers. Consequently, they can make education and training not only more accessible for learners, especially adult learners, but also more attractive.

At European level, work on credits in education and training is carried out through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for higher education ([99]), as part of the Bologna Process, and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) ([100]). While these two credit systems do not specifically concern adult learning, they are both linked to it. Indeed, when considering national qualifications systems in a lifelong learning perspective, both the ECTS and ECVET are highly relevant for adult education and training.

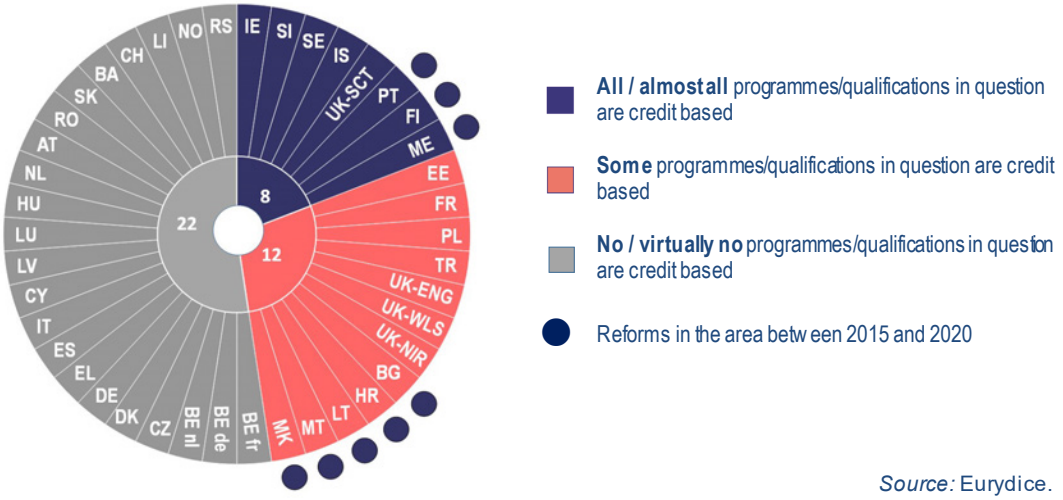
This section focuses on the use of credits in adult education and training. In line with the focus of this report, the section examines the extent to which existing programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults are credit based.

As Figure 5.4 shows, in around half of the countries surveyed, no or virtually no programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults are credit based. Thus, credit-based programmes are visibly less widespread in adult education and training than modular programmes (Figure 5.3).

([99]) The ECTS was originally set up in 1989 as a pilot scheme within the framework of the Erasmus programme in order to facilitate the recognition of study periods undertaken abroad by higher education students.

([100]) Between 2009 and 2020, the development of the ECVET was guided by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), OJ C 155, 8.7.2009. At present, it follows the Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, OJ C 417, 2.12.2020.

Figure 5.4: Existence of credit-based programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Less than a quarter of the countries surveyed indicate that all or almost all programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults are credit based. In these countries, credit-based programmes are commonly associated not only with VET but also with general education, as in the following examples.

In **Slovenia**, credit-based programmes are found in both general and vocational education. A general upper secondary programme (*gimnazija*) is awarded 240 credits and a *matura* course (i.e. a course leading to the upper secondary school leaving certificate) is awarded 60 credits. In VET, the number of credits varies from 60 for shorter courses to 240-300 for programmes in upper secondary technical education.

In **Finland**, since 2015, all qualifications in VET have used competence points, i.e. a credit-based system equivalent to ECVET points. Moreover, an ongoing reform is introducing credits in general upper secondary education. This will replace an earlier course-based structure.

It is noteworthy that, even in countries reporting the widespread use of credits, there are commonly programmes (within the studied scope) that do not use a credit-based approach. In Slovenia, for instance, formal and non-formal basic skills programmes do not use credits. This is consistent with the findings of the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015), which showed that programmes targeting the development of basic skills are rarely credit based. Indeed, the above report identified only a limited number of credit-based basic skills programmes, for example some programmes operating in Iceland (ibid., p. 85). Another example is found in Ireland, where most further education programmes are credit based, with the exception being apprenticeships. In the United Kingdom (Scotland), credits apply across all 11 500 qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF), but outside the SCQF some types of provision are not credit based (e.g. preparatory programmes aimed at enhancing the engagement of learners).

The information reported also suggests that it is difficult to separate the implementation of credits from developments related to national qualifications frameworks and registers. This is because regulations related to the above instruments sometimes explicitly stipulate a credit-based approach.

In **Portugal**, since 2017, all training standards for qualifications in the National Qualifications Catalogue have been associated with credits. Given the fact that almost all training programmes are linked to the catalogue, which is organised in short-term training units, most of the existing programmes can be considered to be credit based.

In **Montenegro**, based on the 2010 Law on the National Qualifications Framework and related steering documents, all nationally recognised qualifications and related programmes have to contain learning outcomes and a credit value. The actual revision of the programmes/qualifications has taken place mainly since 2016.

In around a quarter of all European countries, some programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults use a credit-based approach. When this is the case, credits are commonly associated only with VET programmes. Often, countries refer to credit-based schemes that have been put in place in the system of initial VET. Thus, these schemes do not target adults specifically, but apply to them in the same way as they apply to young people in initial VET.

In **Bulgaria**, modular learning in VET is based on a credit system. The credit system was enhanced in 2016 when a new section on credits in VET was introduced in the Vocational Education and Training Act. A national project conducted between 2017 and 2019 aimed to introduce and apply credits in VET.

In **Estonia**, a credit-based approach based on the ECVET is used in VET. One credit point corresponds to 26 hours of learning.

In **Lithuania**, since 2018, all VET programmes have had to have a modular structure and be credit based. Formal VET programmes must have no less than 30 and no more than 110 credits. Non-formal VET programmes must have no more than 30 credits. One credit consists of 27 hours of learning, of which 18 hours are contact hours and 9 hours are completed through self-learning.

As some of the previous examples show, the use of credits in programmes up to ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 is sometimes linked to reforms that took place quite recently, i.e. between 2015 and 2020. However, as several countries note, the formal adoption of credits in steering documents does not necessarily mean the widespread use of credits and/or enhanced flexibility for adult learners. Indeed, a number of credit-related developments have been initiated in the system of initial education and training in which flexibility is not among the main concerns. Thus, beyond looking at whether credits are in place, it is also necessary to examine whether a credit-based system provides tangible benefits for adult learners in terms of the individualisation of programmes.

In 2018, **Croatia** adopted a renewed classification of complete and partial qualifications and associated them with the national qualifications framework levels. A credit system is now formally in place and all adult education curricula should be credit based. However, implementation is still quite limited and the system has yet to be developed in a way that enables the individualisation and customisation of programmes.

In **North Macedonia**, following a 2017/18 reform, qualifications in three-year and four-year vocational education are credit based and integrated into the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (at levels 3 and 4, respectively). However, pupils and adults can only attain secondary education by following the same programme. Thus, the adaptation of programmes and qualifications to the needs and interests of adults is yet to be addressed.

Overall, compared with modules, credits are less extensively linked to programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4. Moreover, even when in place, credits do not always appear to be an instrument that enhances the flexibility of programmes followed by adults. Nevertheless, by quantifying the programme workload, credits contribute to better transparency and comparability of qualifications. It is possible that, over time, they will also start contributing to the permeability between key national qualifications and smaller 'non-formal' or 'partial' qualifications. This will make it possible to combine smaller learning outcomes with clearly defined credit values into major qualifications. This is also the aim of ongoing EU debates and developments related to 'micro-credentials' ([101]).

([101]) For further details on 'micro-credentials', see the related note in Section 5.3.

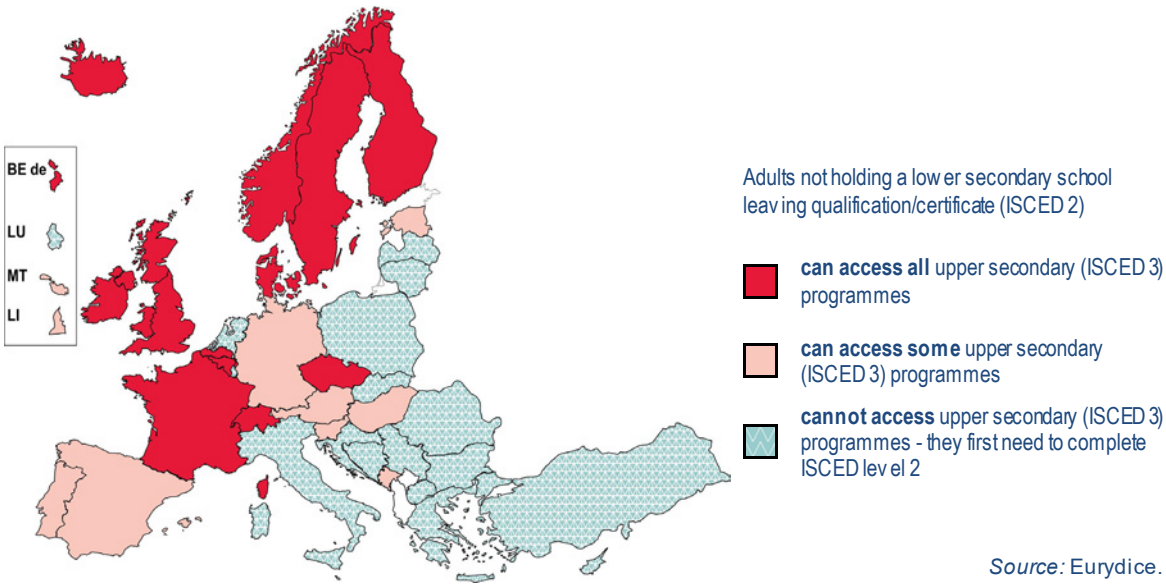
5.5. Progression between educational levels

The learning pathways of adults with low levels of qualifications are generally not straight or continuous; instead, they are usually characterised by gaps, interruptions or diversions. In this sense, the way that the education system is organised and how progression to the next stage is managed have consequences for adults who wish to re-enter the system at a later stage in life. The consequences may be greater for adults who have left initial education with low levels of qualifications or no qualifications at all.

This section examines the education prospects of adults with limited prior formal learning who may wish to follow upper secondary studies. As discussed in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1.1), 12.5 million adults in the EU-27 (5.3 % of the EU-27 adult population) have left the education system without completing the lower secondary level of education. This section investigates whether, according to regulatory frameworks, the adults in this situation can pursue upper secondary studies.

As Figure 5.5 shows, in almost half of the countries surveyed, most of which are situated in the eastern part of Europe, the completion of lower secondary education is a necessary condition for progression to further formal (upper secondary) studies. This applies not only to young people, but also to adults, potentially preventing those who have not completed lower secondary education from progressing to further studies. Nevertheless, countries applying this approach generally provide structured 'compensatory' or 'remedial' (basic education) programmes, allowing learners beyond the typical lower secondary age range to complete this level of education. Such programmes often include vocational elements (see Chapter 3 and Annex II for details).

Figure 5.5: Completion of lower secondary education (ISCED 2) by adults as a legal condition for accessing upper secondary programmes (ISCED 3), 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

In around a quarter of the countries surveyed, regulatory frameworks allow adults who have not completed lower secondary education to access some upper secondary programmes. When such partial regulatory flexibility is in place, it generally applies to VET, especially shorter practice-oriented upper secondary programmes (e.g. dual VET programmes).

In **Germany**, to take evening classes for the acquisition of a higher education entrance qualification (*Abendgymnasien*), applicants generally have to hold a *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* (i.e. ISCED 2 qualification). Candidates who cannot provide evidence of the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* or an equivalent qualification have to complete at least a six-month preliminary course focusing mainly on

German, a foreign language and mathematics. However, there are no formal qualification requirements to enter *Berufsschule* in the dual system.

In **Estonia**, based on the standard of vocational education, which entered into force in 2013, adults over the age of 22 without a basic school graduation certificate (ISCED 2) can enter into programmes of vocational secondary education. However, to enter other types of upper secondary education – for example programmes at upper secondary schools for adults – a basic school graduation certificate is required.

In **Spain**, access to intermediate vocational training (ISCED 3) without completion of lower secondary education is possible under the following conditions: candidates must be at least 17 years old and have successfully completed specific preparatory training or successfully passed an entrance examination. For entry into general upper secondary programmes, the completion of lower secondary education is required. However, educational administrations periodically organise examinations so that students who are at least 20 years old can obtain a qualification in general upper secondary education.

In **Austria**, most upper secondary programmes/qualifications require a certificate of completion of lower secondary education. However, entry into dual VET does not formally require such a certificate. Furthermore, a number of publicly subsidised programmes enable adults to acquire a recognised VET certificate (*Lehrabschluss*) as part of second-chance education, including apprenticeship-intensive courses (*FacharbeiterInnen-Intensivausbildung*) and the programme 'Competence with a system' (*Kompetenz mit System*; see Annex II).

In **Slovenia**, everyone who has fulfilled basic school obligation (i.e. attended school for nine years) and completed at least grade 7 of basic school (i.e. single-structure school including ISCED 1 and 2), as well as those who have completed basic education according to the adapted basic school programme of a lower educational standard, are able to access a short (two-year) upper secondary vocational education programme.

In **Portugal**, some upper secondary programmes/qualifications delivered under the responsibility of the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (*Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional*) are open to adults who have not completed lower secondary education. Upper secondary programmes coordinated by the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (*Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional*), namely apprenticeship courses, are accessible only to those holding an ISCED level 2 qualification.

In **Montenegro**, adults who have not completed lower secondary education but who have completed at least grade 7 of primary school (i.e. single-structure school including ISCED 1 and 2) and regularly attended classes until the age of 15 can enrol in a two-year programme to obtain an ISCED level 3 diploma.

In 16 of the systems surveyed, legislation does not restrict access to upper secondary education for adults who have not completed lower secondary education. This usually means that it is up to education and training providers to determine whether candidates are capable of following their chosen programme, i.e. whether they have sufficient knowledge, skills and competences.

In **Denmark**, adults who have not completed lower secondary education but who wish to follow an upper secondary programme are usually invited for a test and/or an interview to determine their eligibility.

In **Ireland**, the state generally does not set access requirements for adult education and training. These are determined within programmes by the providers.

Finland applies a general approach in which the 'road is not blocked' for further studies if earlier formal education is limited. Education providers can assess, on a case-by-case basis, whether candidates are capable of undertaking studies and can accept them even without a formal certificate.

In **Sweden**, the Education Act specifies that a student must have sufficient competence to benefit from education. School heads use different methods to determine if candidates have the sufficient prerequisites. This approach applies to Swedish residents aged 20 and above.

Regulations may also stipulate some common expectations and, in addition, refer to alternative entry routes. This is the case in Norway, where adults (aged 25 or above) who have not completed upper secondary education are legally entitled to pursue education at this level. Based on the Education Act, upper secondary education is, in principle, open only to learners who have completed lower secondary

education; however, the same act specifies that adults may be admitted to upper secondary education based on their prior experiential learning, i.e. without formal entry qualifications.

It is, however, important to note that non-restrictive regulations in terms of access to upper secondary education do not necessarily imply widespread use of flexibility in practice. Indeed, education and training providers – instead of top-level authorities – may specify rather strict access requirements, which may in practice exclude adults with limited prior formal learning, as in the following example.

> In **Iceland**, the Upper Secondary Education Act specifies that all those who have completed compulsory education (ISCED 2) or received equivalent basic education or reached the age of 16 have the right to be admitted to an upper secondary school. Upper secondary schools develop their own study programmes, study paths and specialties, subject to approval by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. An agreement between the ministry and schools determines the admission requirements. Some schools, especially those specialising in general upper secondary education, focus on prior formal learning when selecting applicants. Candidates with unsatisfactory results or grades have little chance of meeting the requirements for admission. Thus, some upper secondary schools are not open to adults who have not completed ISCED level 2 or who have completed ISCED level 2 but obtained unsatisfactory results.

The above suggests that a description of legal frameworks would benefit from complementary quantitative data on adults who have accessed upper secondary programmes without first having completed lower secondary education. This would provide a more balanced picture of how flexible progression really is in different national settings. Unfortunately, no such data are available.

Overall, as the discussion and examples in this section suggest, adults with limited prior formal learning achievements often have restricted options in terms of progression within the formal education system. Formal learning opportunities that are open to them at ISCED level 3 (if any) mainly include vocational programmes, especially short, practice-oriented VET programmes. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 3 (and detailed in Annex II), there are various 'compensatory' or 'remedial' programmes at ISCED level 2 that are designed specifically for people with limited prior formal learning. Moreover, with the development of national qualifications frameworks, it is sometimes possible for adults to achieve (some types of) nationally recognised qualifications, including qualifications at EQF level 3 or 4 ([102]). While these do not always allow further progression within the mainstream education system, they still contribute to improving the situation – in particular the labour market prospects – of those with low or no qualifications (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion).

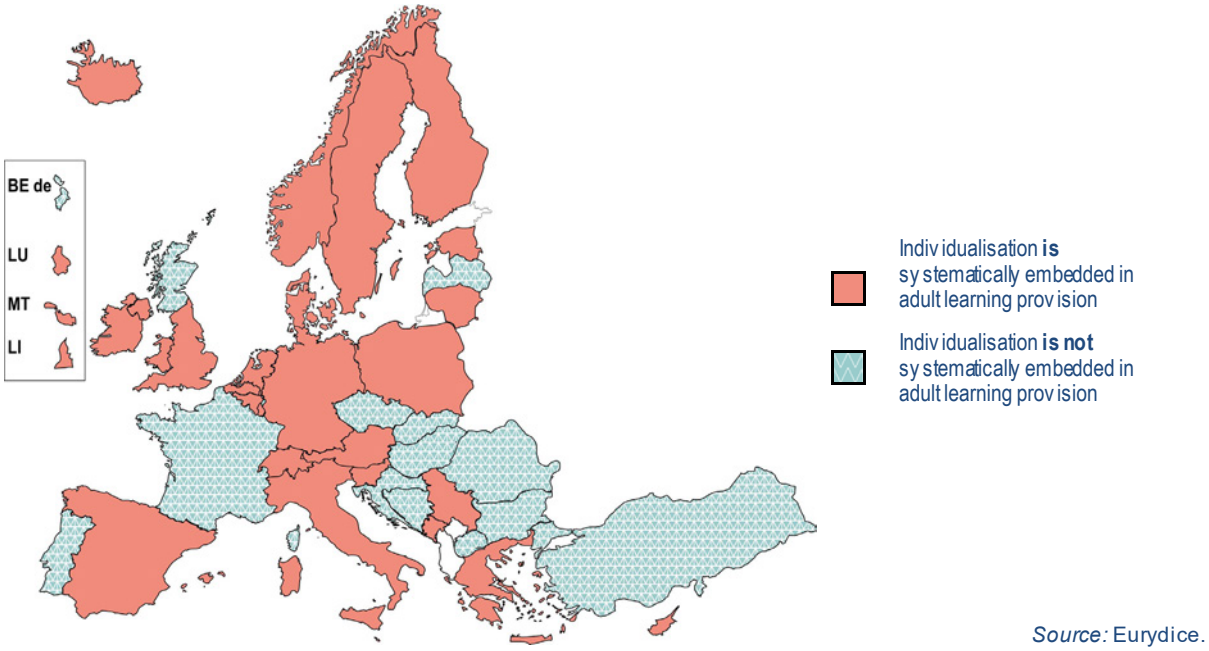
5.6. Individualisation of learning provision

All the approaches discussed in this chapter so far – i.e. distance learning, modularisation, credit-based programmes and qualifications, and permeability between educational levels – contribute to making education and training more flexible and thus more adapted to adult learners. This section examines whether the individualisation of programmes – i.e. tailoring of programmes to the needs of adults – is systematically embedded in education and training provision. The aim is to capture additional approaches that may potentially contribute to flexible and individualised learning pathways.

([102]) In this context, it is important to note that the Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (OJ C 484, 24.12.2016) does not explicitly refer to the completion of upper secondary education. It invites national authorities to '[o]ffer adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences, for example those who have left initial education or training without completing upper secondary education or equivalent […] access to upskilling pathways which provide them with the opportunity, according to their individual needs, to: (a) acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence; and/or (b) acquire a wider set of skills, knowledge and competences, relevant for the labour market and active participation in society […] by making progress towards a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4 depending on national circumstances'.

As Figure 5.6 shows, around two thirds of the countries surveyed report using systematic approaches to the individualisation of education and training provision. However, as this concept can be interpreted in various ways, it is important to understand what measures and approaches countries associate with individualisation. This is summarised in Annex V.

Figure 5.6: Systematic embedding of individualisation in adult learning provision, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

Countries were asked to report whether, in their education system, the individualisation of programmes – i.e. tailoring to the needs of each adult (e.g. following a skills assessment) – is systematically embedded in education and training provision. Those that provided a positive response (as depicted in Figure 5.6) were asked to outline the most important approaches to individualisation applied in their education system. Annex V provides further details on the reported approaches.

As Annex V demonstrates, some countries apply an underlying principle according to which all education and training programmes – including those targeting adults – are individualised. This principle is sometimes stipulated in key legal documents and it may entail an obligation for education and training providers to establish an individual study plan for each learner. Several Nordic countries refer to this approach (e.g. Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway).

In a number of countries, the individualisation goes hand in hand with an initial assessment of learners' skills and competences. Based on this initial assessment, learners are guided towards appropriate programmes. Programmes may even be shortened if learners already possesses some of the skills and competences covered by the provision in question. This initial assessment and potential adaptation of the programme duration is directly related to the topic of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, which is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Education and training provision can also be created specifically for individual learners or groups of learners. For example, in the system of adult education in the Flemish Community of Belgium, it is possible to organise 'open modules' that provide competences according to individual needs. In the same system, it is also possible to deliver 'tailor-made basic education', which refers to provision designed for specific target groups. Some other countries provide comparable programmes (e.g. Luxembourg and Malta).

The reported information also suggests that, beyond distance learning, modular programmes and credit-based qualifications, a variety of other approaches are used to adapt education and training to

constraints encountered by adults. Examples include part-time, evening or weekend courses, single-subject courses and programmes with flexible start dates.

Moreover, the individualisation of education and training is sometimes embedded in funding instruments, such as training vouchers. In Germany, for instance, a system of training vouchers is used within measures targeting the integration of jobseekers into the labour market. Individuals can use the training vouchers to choose training programmes from among those that adhere to certain official criteria. Estonia reports a comparable system of 'training cards'.

Finally, it is important to note that, among countries not reporting any systematic approaches to the individualisation of learning provision, some have mechanisms in place that are closely related to this theme. For example, in Portugal, no education and training programmes provide individualised training adapted to each person. Nevertheless, adults can validate their skills and competences within the system of the recognition, validation and certification of competences promoted by the 'Qualifica centres' (see Annex III). After validation, in order to achieve a recognised qualification, they can take one of several 'low duration training units'.

Summary

This chapter has examined the modes of delivery and organisational arrangements that may lower existing barriers to adult participation in education and training. To set the context for the analysis, the chapter began by exploring the results of the 2016 AES, namely the obstacles that hinder adults' participation in lifelong learning. As the AES shows, for around one in three adults with low levels of educational attainment (ISCED 0-2) who would like to participate (or participate more) in education and training, family reasons and/or a busy schedule are among the obstacles that prevent them from doing so. For around one in five adults in the same educational attainment category, distance and/or the lack of suitable learning provision are among the obstacles (see Figure 5.1). The chapter then examined modes of delivery and organisational arrangements that may potentially tackle these obstacles.

It is acknowledged that distance learning provides more flexibility to learners, notably by easing time constraints. However, as the analysis demonstrates, large-scale publicly subsidised distance learning provision or support measures concerning adult education and training are scarce. Indeed, only a limited number of countries have major institutions or e-learning platforms (open to adults) offering formal distance learning programmes at levels up to (and including) upper secondary education (see Figure 5.2). Other large-scale measures reported by countries include major infrastructure for the delivery of non-formal distance learning courses, support for the implementation of distance learning in (traditional) education and training settings, quality control of distance learning, and development of the competences of staff involved in distance learning.

As well as system-wide distance learning measures, local providers or initiatives often promote this mode of delivery. Thus, having no national provider of distance learning or no large-scale initiatives in this area does not imply that distance learning is underdeveloped or non-existent. Moreover, following the COVID-19 outbreak, public authorities all over Europe have supported a number of distance learning initiatives in all sectors of education and training, including the adult education and training sector. Some of these initiatives could potentially become permanent and institutionalised elements of adult learning systems.

The second topic discussed in this chapter – modularisation – appears to be a rather well-developed area. Indeed, in most European countries, modularisation applies to either some or (almost) all programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to

adults (see Figure 5.3). Modularisation has also been subject to a number of reforms between 2015 and 2020. This is partly related to the fact that the modular approach is linked to other developments in (adult) education and training, including the use of learning outcomes, the implementation of national qualifications frameworks and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Compared with modules, the use of credits is noticeably less widespread. Only around half of all countries surveyed report that either some or (almost) all programmes and qualifications up to (and including) ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 that are open to adults are credit based (see Figure 5.4). The number of countries that undertook reforms in this area in recent years (between 2015 and 2020) is also quite limited. Moreover, even when in place, credits do not always appear to be an instrument that enhances the flexibility of adult education and training provision.

The analysis has also examined the learning prospects of adults with limited prior formal learning who may wish to (re-)enter education. The focus was on legal requirements for progression from lower to upper secondary education. In almost half of the countries surveyed, most of which are situated in the eastern part of Europe, the completion of lower secondary education is a necessary condition to progress within the formal education system (see Figure 5.5). In some other countries, access to upper secondary education for those with very limited prior formal learning is possible but remains restricted to short VET programmes. In the remaining systems, legislation does not restrict access to upper secondary education for adults who have not completed lower secondary education.

In its final section, the chapter investigated whether the individualisation of programmes – i.e. tailoring of programmes to the needs of adults – is systematically embedded in education and training provision. Around two thirds of the countries reported that this is the case in their system. They referred to a range of measures and approaches including individual study plans, initial assessments of skills and competences, flexible modes of programme delivery and demand-side financial incentives allowing learners to choose their programme provider (see Figure 5.6 and Annex V).

Looking at the elements examined in this chapter from a country perspective (Figure 5.7), it appears that, in around half of the countries surveyed, all or almost all of the elements studied are in place (i.e. at most one element is missing). This means that there are various features at the system level that can potentially lead to flexible adult education and training provision. In contrast, in a limited number of countries, none or almost none of the elements examined is in place (German-speaking Community of Belgium, Czechia, Greece, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina). In these countries, it might be more challenging for adults to find education and training provision that is adapted to their needs and constraints.

Figure 5.7: Summary of modes of delivery and organisational arrangements in adult education and training, 2019/20

	Large-scale publicly subsidised distance learning provision or support measures	Modularisation of programmes/qualifications at least partly in place	Credit-based programmes/qualifications at least partly in place	Progression between educational levels ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 at least partly flexible	Systematic embedding of individualisation in the learning provision
BE fr	●	●		●	●
BE de				●	
BE nl	●	●		●	●
BG		●	●		
CZ				●	
DK		●		●	●
DE	●	●		●	●
EE		●	●	●	●
IE	●	●	●	●	●
EL					●
ES	●	●		●	●
FR	●	●	●	●	
HR		●	●		
IT		●			●
CY		●			●
LV		●			
LT		●	●		●
LU	●	●			●
HU		●		●	
MT		●	●	●	●
NL		●			●
AT	●	●		●	●
PL	●	●	●		●
PT		●	●	●	
RO					
SI		●	●	●	●
SK		●			
FI		●	●	●	●
SE		●	●	●	●
BA		●			
CH				●	●
IS		●	●	●	●
LI		●		●	●
ME		●	●	●	●
MK		●	●		
NO	●	●		●	●
RS		●			●
TR	●	●	●		
UK-ENG		●	●	●	●
UK-WLS		●	●	●	●
UK-NIR		●	●	●	●
UK-SCT		●	●	●	

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

This figure presents a summary of the data displayed in Figures 5.2-5.6. For further details and explanations, see the reference figures.

The figure refers to flexibility in adult education and training outside the higher education sector. This means that some approaches that might be widespread in the higher education sector – for example credits – are not covered.

For modularisation and credit-based programmes/qualifications that are 'at least partly in place', this means that either some programmes/qualifications are modular (or credit based) or all / almost all programmes/qualifications are modular (or credit based) (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

For progression between educational levels ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 that is 'at least partly flexible' (Figure 5.7), this means that adults not holding a lower secondary school leaving qualification/certificate (ISCED 2) can access either all upper secondary (ISCED 3) programmes or some upper secondary (ISCED 3) programmes.

CHAPTER 6: RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The day-to-day activities of adults, including their gainful employment, constitute a key source of skills and competences. Thus, underqualified adults may possess a range of skills and competences that are above their actual formal qualification levels. This is supported by the 2014 European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey, which showed that one in five older workers has the necessary job skills despite being underqualified (Cedefop, 2018). The recognition and validation of learning outcomes aims to help individuals identify their learning achievements acquired in non-formal and informal settings (e.g. in their job), make them more visible and, potentially, also make them more valued.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides some contextual information on European cooperation in the area of the recognition and validation of learning outcomes. The second part examines skills audits, i.e. an area closely related to the validation of learning. The third part discusses the actual validation of non-formal and informal learning, concentrating on arrangements in the education and training sector.

The analysis mainly relies on data collected for the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning ([103]). The 2016 Adult Education Survey (AES) provides complementary information.

6.1. Focus on non-formal and informal learning

While formal learning commonly leads to qualifications, non-formal and informal learning often remain invisible and unrecognised. This type of learning may include shorter courses that do not lead to any certification and learning that occurs during a range of daily activities, such as in the workplace. European policy promotes the recognition and validation of all types of learning, including non-formal and informal learning ([104]).

Since 2012, European cooperation in this area has been guided by the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([105]). Although not legally binding, the recommendation asked Member States to implement, no later than 2018, national validation arrangements. It also specified several principles to be applied in relation to validation arrangements, including linking validation to national qualifications frameworks, providing validation-related information and guidance, implementing quality assurance measures, focusing on disadvantaged groups and making provisions for the professional development of validation practitioners. Moreover, the recommendation promoted specific steps to take as part of the validation process, namely (1) the identification of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning, (2) the documentation of these outcomes, (3) their assessment and, finally, (4) the certification of the results of the assessment. Individuals should be able to take these steps either separately or in combination, in accordance with their needs.

Alongside the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, a number of other European policy documents and processes stimulate and promote validation

([103]) The Eurydice Network was not involved in the data collection feeding into the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Thus, the source of the qualitative indicators in this chapter is not given as Eurydice. Nevertheless, some Eurydice National Units provided comments on specific figures (Slovenia and the United Kingdom (Scotland)): Figure 6.1; Croatia and Slovenia: Figure 6.3; Czechia: Figure 6.5). In line with the methodology of this chapter, the figures in question display data collected within the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (i.e. changes suggested by Eurydice National Units are not displayed in the figures).

([104]) See 'Glossary' for definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

([105]) Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

arrangements. For example, the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning ([106]) aims, among its objectives, to establish better links between formal, non-formal and informal learning and, consequently, it supports the validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings. Another policy framework that makes explicit reference to the validation of learning outcomes is the 2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways ([107]). The recommendation supports access to upskilling for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications and envisages an upskilling pathway as a process connecting three phases: (1) skills assessment, (2) the provision of tailored, flexible and high-quality learning and (3) validation and recognition of the skills acquired. Further support for the implementation of validation arrangements was expressed in the 2020 Council Recommendation reinforcing the Youth Guarantee ([108]).

Overall, European policy recognises that the acquisition of knowledge and skills extends beyond formal education and training. The key idea is that individuals should have access to arrangements enabling them to identify, demonstrate and validate knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

6.2. Skills audits

Skills audits (or skills assessments) and the validation of learning outcomes are closely related concepts: both are referred to in the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([109]). The recommendation defines a skills audit as 'a process aimed at identifying and analysing the knowledge, skills and competences of an individual […] in order to define a career project and/or plan a professional reorientation or training project'. The recommendation also states that 'the aim of a skills audit is to help the individual analyse his/her career background, to self-assess his/her position in the labour environment and to plan a career pathway, or in some cases to prepare for the validation of non-formal or informal learning outcomes'. In other words, a skills audit is a formative assessment in its own right and, in some cases, it provides a basis for the validation of learning outcomes, i.e. a process measuring learning outcomes against a predefined standard.

When referring to skills audits, the 2012 Council Recommendation puts the emphasis on individuals who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment. It specifies that these groups should be able to undergo a skills audit within a reasonable period of time, ideally within six months of an identified need.

Another European policy document promoting skills assessments and audits is the 2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways ([110]). This recommendation specifies that adults – especially those with low levels of skills and/or qualifications – should have 'the opportunity to undergo an assessment, e.g. a skills audit, to identify existing skills and upskilling needs'. Depending on the outcome of the process, individuals should have the opportunity to follow an education/training programme and/or take part in a validation process to assess and certify the knowledge, skills and competences acquired.

([106]) Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, OJ C 189, 15.6.2017.

([107]) Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484/1, 24.12.2016.

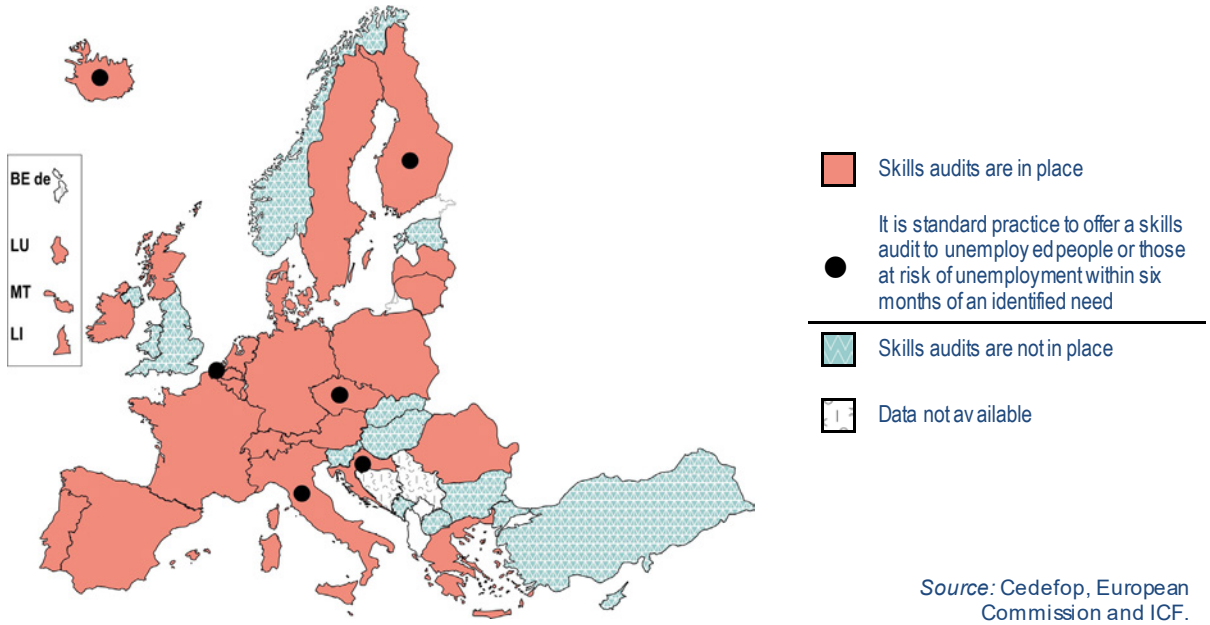
([108]) Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, OJ C 372, 4.11.2020.

([109]) Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

([110]) Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C484/1, 24.12.2016.

Based on the above policy documents and priorities – in particular the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([111]) – skills audits have been subject to regular monitoring within the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning ([112]). According to the most recent synthesis report linked to the inventory (Cedefop, European Commission and ICF, 2019), around two thirds of European countries have in place skills audits that are compatible with the definition in the 2012 Council Recommendation (Figure 6.1). When also considering the situation in 2014 and 2016, the synthesis report notes a trend towards an increase in the implementation of skills audits in Europe (ibid., p. 37).

Figure 6.1: Implementation of skills audits, 2018



Source: Cedefop, European Commission and ICF.

Explanatory notes

This figure is based on data published in the synthesis report of the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, European Commission and ICF 2019, pp. 37-38). The questionnaire that was used to collect data for the inventory included two questions on skills audits. The first was a general question: 'Are skills audits, where the definition is compatible/informed by the Council Recommendation in place?'. The second was a more specific question: 'Is it standard practice to offer people who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment the opportunity to undertake a skills audit?' (the second question included references to the time frame within which a skills audit was offered).

The questionnaire was completed by country experts selected by the contractor preparing the inventory (ICF International). The same experts also drafted country reports, which are available on the website of Cedefop ([113]).

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE de), Bosnia and Herzegovina and **Serbia**: Not covered in the source report.
Denmark and **France**: The source report indicates that these countries undertake skills audits but it specifies that information is not available on whether it is standard practice to offer a skills audit to people who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment.
Slovenia: While the source report does not indicate the presence of skills audits, the country report produced within the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Pavkov 2019b, pp. 8-10) outlines several activities in this area.
North Macedonia and **Montenegro**: Covered by a separate report (ETF, 2019), which specifies that, while these countries do not undertake skills audits as such, career orientation/professional plan initiatives are available from public employment services.
United Kingdom (SCT): While the source report indicates that Scotland undertakes skills audits, the country report produced within the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Scott 2019, p. 11) specifies that there are several examples of skills audits but that there is no national policy or framework covering this area.

([111]) Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

([112]) The European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning has been updated on a regular basis since 2004. See the Cedefop website for further details (https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/validation/inventory). Alongside the updates to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, a study by Besic et al. (2018) also provides data on skills audits in European countries.

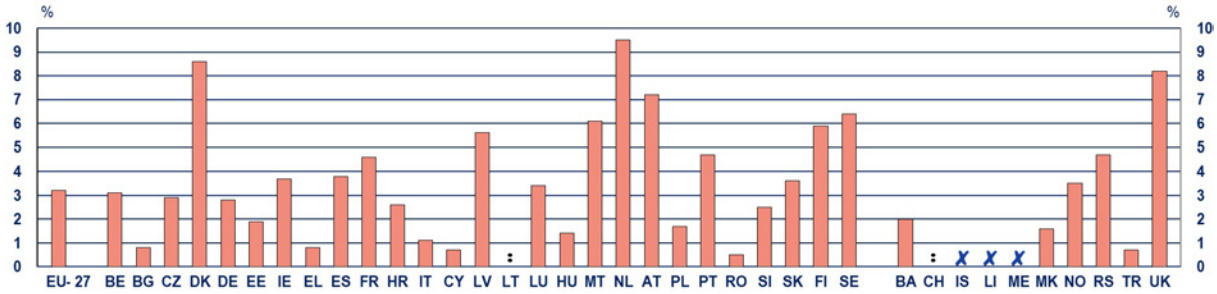
([113]) See: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory#Country

However, among countries with skills audits, only around half ([114]) provide this service as a standard offer for people who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment. Moreover, when this service is in place for the above groups, a skills audit may not always be accessible within the time span specified in the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, i.e. within six months of an identified need. Indeed, only six systems provide skills audits within six months for people who are unemployed and at risk of unemployment (the Flemish Community of Belgium ([115]), Czechia, Croatia, Italy, Finland and Iceland); in the remaining systems offering skills audits to these groups, a time frame is not specified (ibid., p. 38). In other words, only a limited number of European countries have in place prompt and systematic skills audits for people who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment that are compatible with the definition provided in the 2012 Council Recommendation.

The above qualitative information on the implementation of skills audits can be complemented with data from the 2016 AES quantifying the beneficiaries of skills audits and similar services. The AES enquired whether adults had received free guidance during the last 12 months and, if so, whether it included an assessment of skills and competences by means of tests, skills audits or interviews.

As Figure 6.2 shows, on average, across the EU-27, 3.2 % of adults reported that they had received an assessment of skills and competences by means of tests, skills audits or interviews during the year preceding the survey.

Figure 6.2: Adults (aged 25–64) who received a free assessment of skills and competences by means of tests, skills audits or interviews in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), 2016



EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
3.2	3.1	0.8	2.9	8.6	2.8	1.9	3.7	0.8	3.8	4.6	2.6	1.1	0.7	5.6	:	3.4	1.4	6.1
NL	**AT**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SI**	**SK**	**FI**	**SE**	**BA**	**CH**	**IS**	**LI**	**ME**	**MK**	**NO**	**RS**	**TR**	**UK**
9.5	7.2	1.7	4.7	0.5	2.5	3.6	5.9	6.4	2.0	:	✗	✗	✗	1.6	3.5	4.7	0.7	8.2

Source: Eurostat AES. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory notes

In the 2016 AES, respondents who indicated that they had received free information or advice/help on learning opportunities during the last 12 months were asked about the type of guidance received ('Which type of free information or advice/help concerning learning possibilities have you received?'). The possible (multiple) responses were:

- 'information or advice/help on learning possibilities';
- 'assessment of skills and competences through tests, skills audits or interviews';
- 'information or advice/help on procedure for validation/recognition of skills, competences or prior learning';
- 'other type of information or advice/help' (Eurostat, 2017).

This figure captures the second option.

Country-specific notes

Bulgaria, Greece and **Cyprus**: Low reliability because of the small sample size.
Lithuania: Data are not available because of the very small sample size.
Switzerland: Data were not collected for this item.

([114]) BE nl, CZ, IE, EL, HR, IT, LV, LU, MT, NL, PL, FI, CH and IS.

([115]) 'Belgium-Flanders' in the source report.

Among all countries covered by this report, the Netherlands registered the highest proportion of adults receiving such a service, at almost 10 %, followed by Denmark (8.6 %), the United Kingdom (8.2 %) and Austria (7.2 %). Most of these countries have in place skills audits that are compatible with the definition in the 2012 Council Recommendation (Figure 6.1). At the other end of the spectrum are Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Turkey, where the proportion of adults reporting that they had received an assessment of skills and competences by means of tests, skills audits or interviews did not exceed 2 %. Around half of these countries do not have skills audits in place that are compatible with the definition in the 2012 Council Recommendation (see Figure 6.1).

6.3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Contrary to skills audits, which aim to help individuals analyse their career and learning trajectories, the process of validation (of non-formal and informal learning) seeks to measure learning outcomes in a more prescribed way, generally against a predefined standard. As mentioned in Section 6.1, the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([116]) asked Member States to implement, no later than 2018, arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning enables an assessment of whether this objective has been attained.

6.3.1. Overview of arrangements

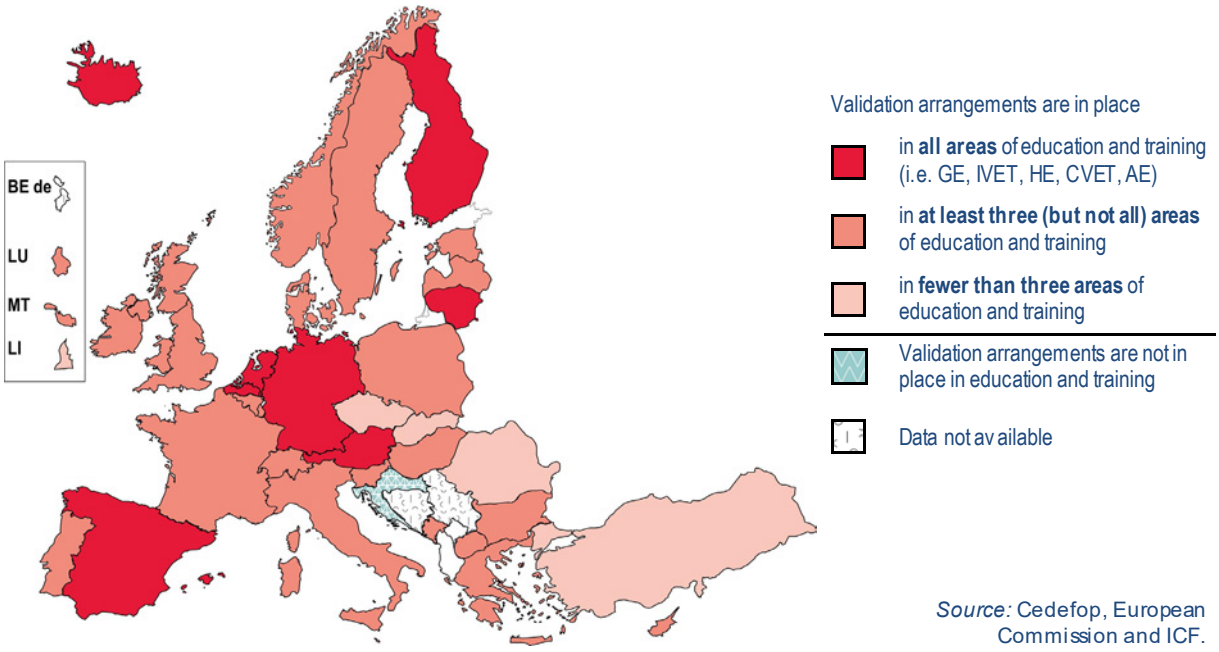
As Figure 6.3 shows, validation arrangements are in place in virtually all European countries. Croatia is the only country that does not have systematic validation arrangements in place in education and training; however, it does have validation arrangements in place outside education and training, namely in the labour market and the third sector ([117]) (Cedefop, European Commission and ICF 2019, pp. 12 and 53-55).

Although the validation of non-formal and informal learning is now widespread in Europe, the extent of the arrangements in place differs substantially between countries. Indeed, as Figure 6.3 indicates, only around one quarter of all European countries have validation arrangements in place in all areas (subsectors) of education and training, including general education, initial vocational education and training, higher education, continuing vocational education and training, and adult education. Most countries exclude one or two of the above areas, meaning that they provide validation opportunities in most education and training subsectors but not all. In five countries (Czechia, Slovakia, Romania, Liechtenstein and Turkey), the extent of validation is even more limited: systematic arrangements exist in only one or two education and training subsectors (e.g. continuing vocational education and training in Czechia, and continuing vocational education and training and adult education in Slovakia and Turkey).

([116]) Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

([117]) The questionnaire that was used to collect data for the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning defines the validation in the **labour market sector** as validation initiatives in the private sector that aim to enable individuals to access private sector jobs or to move within the private sector labour market (to support career development). These initiatives might therefore be promoted, for example, by employers or employers' associations. When referring to the **third sector**, the questionnaire indicates that validation might refer, for example, to validation to support youth work, to support volunteers, to validate non-formal learning opportunities offered by third sector organisations, or validation arrangements developed by third sector organisations such as charities or non-governmental organisations, to support a variety of target groups (e.g. refugees/migrants, the unemployed, young people facing exclusion, people with a disability, etc.).

Figure 6.3: Overview of the implementation of validation arrangements in education and training, 2018



Source: Cedefop, European Commission and ICF.

Explanatory notes

This figure is based on data published in the synthesis report of the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, European Commission and ICF 2019, pp. 53-55). The questionnaire that was used to collect data for the inventory referred to five areas of education and training: general education (GE), initial vocational education and training (IVET), continuing vocational education and training (CVET), adult education (AE) and higher education (HE). IVET, CVET and AE were defined using the 2014 Cedefop glossary of education and training policy (Cedefop, 2014). GE was defined as general compulsory and upper secondary education. The questionnaire acknowledged that, while some areas are reasonably clearly defined (e.g. HE), the interpretation of other areas (e.g. CVET and AE) can differ between countries and also within a country. Thus, the number of areas per country should be interpreted with caution.

For details regarding the methodology used in the data collection, see Figure 6.1.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE de), Bosnia and Herzegovina and **Serbia**: Not covered in the source report.
Croatia: The source report indicates that there are no systematic validation arrangements in place in education and training. Nevertheless, the country report produced within the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Pavkov 2019a, pp. 7-11) outlines some initiatives in this area. Moreover, according to the source report, validation opportunities are provided outside education and training, namely in the labour market and the third sector.

Another aspect that differentiates countries is the actual output of the validation process. Indeed, validation can lead to various outputs, including the award of a qualification, credits or modules, programme exemptions and programme admissions. The 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning highlights in this context that the validation process should enable individuals to 'obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, part qualification' ([118]). In other words, while not excluding other outputs, the recommendation puts the emphasis on access to qualifications.

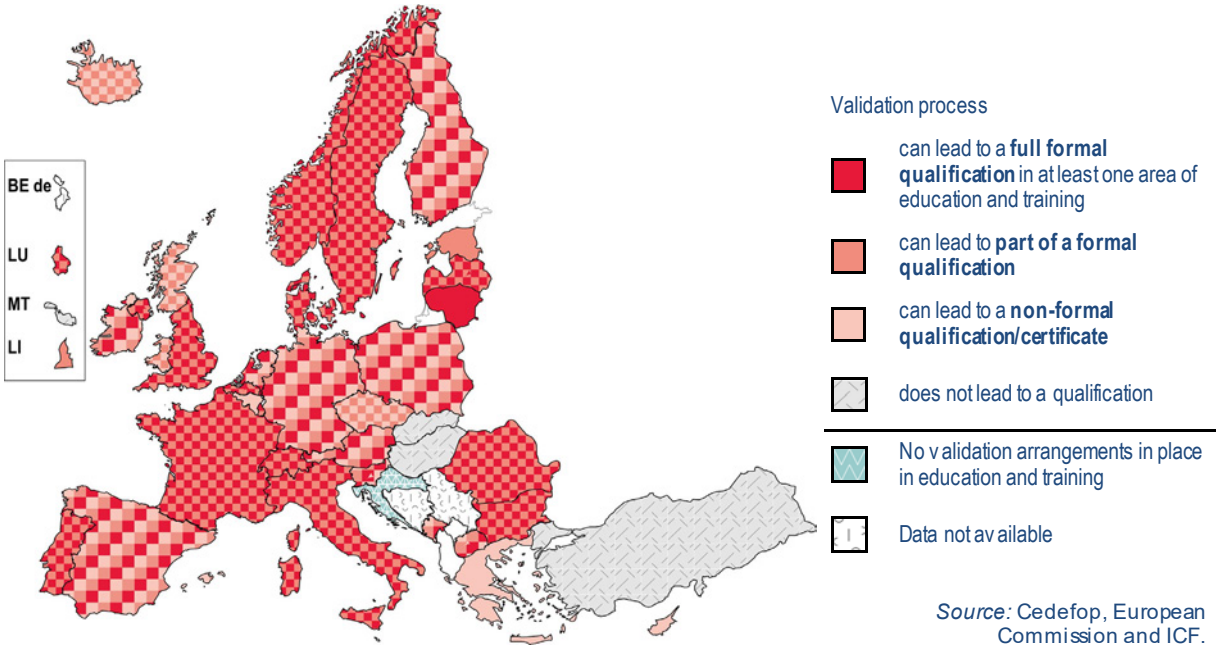
As Figure 6.4 demonstrates, the validation of non-formal and informal learning can lead to qualifications in nearly all European countries. Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and Turkey are the only exceptions. However, while the validation of non-formal and informal learning can lead to qualifications in almost all European countries, these are not necessarily full formal qualifications. More specifically, in a number of countries or regions (French Community of Belgium ([119]), Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein and the United Kingdom (Wales and Scotland)), the validation process

([118]) Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

([119]) 'Belgium-Wallonia' in the source report.

can lead to the award of parts of formal qualifications and/or non-formal qualifications/certificates, but not full formal qualifications.

Figure 6.4: Qualifications as an output of the validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2018



Source: Cedefop, European Commission and ICF.

Explanatory notes

This figure is based on data published in the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, European Commission and ICF 2019, pp. 16-17).

For details regarding the methodology used in the data collection, see Figure 6.1.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE de), Bosnia and Herzegovina and **Serbia**: Not covered in the source report.
Slovakia: Not listed in the source report in any of the main categories displayed in the figure (i.e. full formal qualification; part of a formal qualification; non-formal qualification). However, it is listed in the category 'access to the labour market (e.g. a qualification that is compulsory to exercise a certain job)'. This category is not considered in Figure 6.4.
North Macedonia and **Montenegro**: Information taken from a different synthesis report (ETF 2019, p. 7).

It is also noteworthy that, when validation arrangements allow qualifications to be obtained, this does not necessarily apply to all areas of education and training. The synthesis report of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning in this context notes that validation leading to full formal qualifications is more common for arrangements linked to initial vocational education and training. In contrast, in the area of higher education, the most common output of the process is access to (higher education) programmes (Cedefop, European Commission and ICF 2019).

6.3.2. Monitoring of the use of validation arrangements

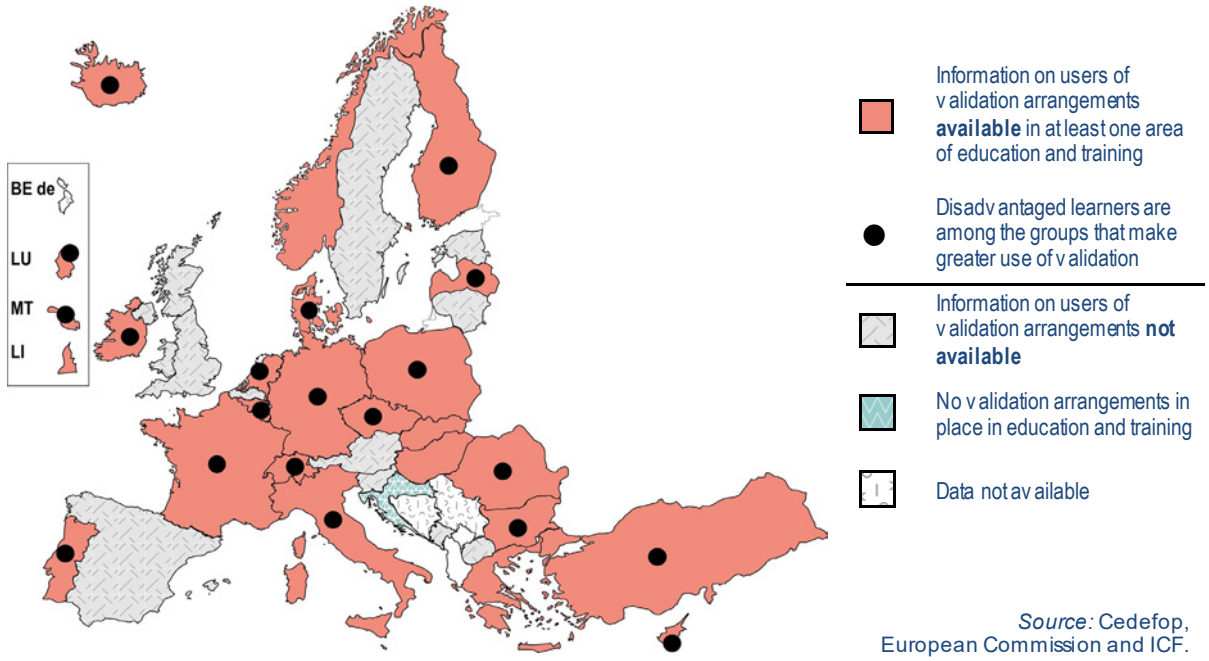
When arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are in place, it is important to understand who uses them, in particular whether they represent a real qualification upgrading opportunity for various groups of learners commonly regarded as disadvantaged, such as individuals with low levels of skills and qualifications, early school leavers, jobseekers, older workers, migrants and refugees, and people with disabilities. In order to examine this dimension, authorities responsible for the arrangements in question need to monitor their implementation and gather data on beneficiaries. However, as the synthesis report of the 2018 European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning notes, 'data collection on different aspects of validation (participation,

type of qualification or outcomes achieved, user characteristics, success rate, length of procedure, etc.) remains at a low level' (Cedefop, European Commission and ICF 2019, p. 33).

As Figure 6.5 shows, in around a quarter of the systems surveyed, no data are available on users of validation arrangements in education and training. In the remaining systems, information is available but not necessarily in all areas (subsectors) of education and training in which validation arrangements exist. In other words, data collection is generally not comprehensive even in those countries that have in place some monitoring procedures on the use of validation (ibid., p. 33).

Countries with information on users of validation arrangements frequently report that groups commonly regarded as disadvantaged – including individuals with low levels of skills and qualifications, early school leavers, jobseekers, older workers, migrants and refugees, and people with disabilities – are among those that make greater use of validation (Figure 6.5). However, this does not mean that these learners make greater use of validation in all education and training areas; this may be the case in only one or two areas. Moreover, no country refers to all of the above categories when reporting on groups making greater use of validation.

Figure 6.5: Information on users of validation arrangements in education and training, 2018



Source: Cedefop, European Commission and ICF.

Explanatory notes

This figure is based on unpublished data that were collected for the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The question relating to the figure was phrased as follows: 'Based on the data available, what groups make greater use of validation initiatives in this sector?' The potential (non-exclusive) responses were as follows: A. males; B. females; C. young people; D. low-skilled individuals; E. low-qualified individuals; F. highly-qualified people; G. early school leavers; H. initial VET students/applicants; I. HE students/applicants; J. adult learners; K. jobseekers/unemployed or individuals at risk of unemployment; L. volunteers; M. workers; N. older workers; O. migrants/refugees; P. people with disabilities. Countries that selected options D, E, G, K, N, O or P (at least one option) are included in the figure as those where disadvantaged learners are among the groups that make greater use of validation. Countries that selected 'information not available' or 'do not know' are included in the figure under 'information on users of validation arrangements not available'.

The questionnaire covered validation arrangements in three sectors: education and training, the labour market sector and the third sector. The figure refers only to validation arrangements in education and training.

For further details regarding the methodology used in the data collection, see Figure 6.1.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE de), Bosnia and Herzegovina and **Serbia**: Not covered in the reference data collection.
Lithuania: Did not answer the question. However, the national report related to the validation inventory states that there is no evidence on the achievement of set validation targets (Beleckiene 2019, p. 14). Thus, Lithuania is included under 'information on users of validation arrangements not available'.
Slovenia: Answered 'do not know'. Slovenia is therefore included under 'information on users of validation arrangements not available'.
Montenegro: The category selected for Montenegro ('information on users of validation arrangements not available') is based on the information provided in the national report. This report states that implementation of the revised Law on National Vocational Qualifications (2016) has not yet begun (Dimovska 2019, p. 18). Thus, data on the distribution of users by category are not available.
North Macedonia: The category selected for North Macedonia ('information on users of validation arrangements not available') is based on the information provided in the national report. This report states that the system has not yet been implemented and, for this reason, data on the distribution of users by category are not available (Spasovski 2019, p. 18).

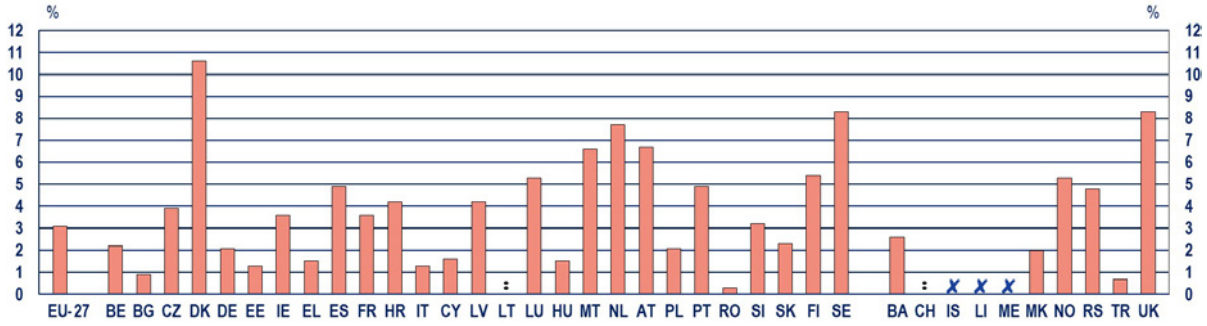
6.3.3. Guidance related to the validation and recognition of skills

While there are no comparable data that allow quantification of the use of validation arrangements across Europe, the 2016 AES allows the extent to which adults benefit from validation-related guidance services to be evaluated. More specifically, in the survey, adults who received guidance during the 12 months preceding the interview were asked to indicate whether this included guidance on the validation or recognition of skills, competences or prior learning. To some extent, this can be seen as an indirect measure of the implementation of validation arrangements. Indeed, if the proportion of adults receiving guidance on validation is high, it can be expected that validation arrangements have a well-established position in a system. This is supported by the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([120]), which states that one of the principles related to the arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning should be that 'information and guidance on the benefits of, and opportunities for validation, as well as on the relevant procedures, are available to individuals and organisations'.

As Figure 6.6 shows, on average, across the EU-27, 3.1 % of adults reported receiving information or advice on the validation or recognition of skills, competences or prior learning during the 12 months preceding the interview. When considering all countries covered by this report, Denmark registered the highest proportion of adults receiving such information or advice (10.6 %), followed by Sweden and the United Kingdom (both 8.3 %). Other countries with relatively high proportions of adults reporting that they received information or advice on the validation or recognition of skills (at least 5 %) included Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland and Norway. Three of these countries – the Netherlands, Austria and Finland – have validation arrangements in place in all five areas of education and training (i.e. general education, initial vocational education and training, higher education, continuing vocational education and training, and adult education; see Figure 6.3). In the remaining countries with relatively high proportions of adults reporting that they received validation-related information or advice, validation arrangements are in place in at least three (but not all) areas of education and training (see Figure 6.3). At the other end of the spectrum are Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Hungary, Romania, North Macedonia and Turkey, where the proportions of adults reporting that they received information or advice on the validation or recognition of skills did not exceed 2 %. Most of these countries report validation arrangements in at least three (but not all) areas of education and training; in Romania and Turkey, only two areas are covered (see Figure 6.3).

([120]) Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

Figure 6.6: Adults (aged 25-64) who received free information or advice on procedures for the validation or recognition of skills, competences or prior learning in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), 2016



EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
3.1	2.2	0.9	3.9	10.6	2.1	1.3	3.6	1.5	4.9	3.6	4.2	1.3	1.6	4.2	:	5.3	1.5	6.6
NL	**AT**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SI**	**SK**	**FI**	**SE**	**BA**	**CH**	**IS**	**LI**	**ME**	**MK**	**NO**	**RS**	**TR**	**UK**
7.7	6.7	2.1	4.9	0.3	3.2	2.3	5.4	8.3	2.6	:	✗	✗	✗	2.0	5.3	4.8	0.7	8.3

Source: Eurostat AES. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory notes

In the 2016 AES, respondents who indicated that they had received free information or advice/help on learning opportunities during the last 12 months were asked about the type of guidance received ('Which type of free information or advice/help concerning learning possibilities have you received?'). The possible (multiple) responses were:

- 'information or advice/help on learning possibilities';
- 'assessment of skills and competences through tests, skills audits or interviews';
- 'information or advice/help on procedure for validation/recognition of skills, competences or prior learning';
- 'other type of information or advice/help' (Eurostat, 2017).

This figure captures the third option.

Country-specific notes

Bulgaria, Cyprus and **Romania**: Low reliability because of the small sample size.
Lithuania: Data are not available because of the very small sample size.
Switzerland: Data were not collected for this item.

Summary

This chapter has looked at various aspects of the recognition and validation of learning outcomes. Using data from the 2018 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning ([121]), the chapter first showed that around two thirds of European countries have in place skills audits that are compatible with the definition in the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([122]) (see Figure 6.1). When also considering the situation in 2014 and 2016, the inventory notes a trend towards the increased implementation of skills audits in Europe. However, skills audits are not always a standard offer for unemployed people and, even when they are provided, this is not always within the time frame specified in the recommendation, i.e. within six months.

The 2016 AES complements the above information by proving data on adults who received an assessment of skills and competences by means of tests, skills audits or interviews during the year preceding the survey (see Figure 6.2). On average, across the EU-27, 3.2 % of adults reported that they had received such a service within the 12 months preceding the interview. When considering both EU Member States and non-EU countries, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and the United Kingdom registered the highest proportions (between 7 % and 10 %).

([121]) See: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/validation/inventory

([122]) Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

Moving from skills audits to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, the chapter showed that virtually all European countries have in place validation arrangements in at least one area (subsector) of education and training (see Figure 6.3). This is aligned with the key objective in the 2012 Council Recommendation ([123]) to have validation arrangements in place in all countries no later than 2018. However, the extent of validation opportunities as well as outputs of the validation process differ greatly across countries. For example, in a number of countries, the validation of non-formal and informal learning does not lead to a full formal qualification. Instead, it may be possible to achieve only parts of formal qualifications and/or non-formal certificates/qualifications. In addition, in some countries the validation process does not lead to any of these outputs (see Figure 6.4).

Countries with validation arrangements in place do not always monitor different aspects of the validation process. Thus, data on the beneficiaries of validation are limited. Nevertheless, most countries with data on beneficiaries indicate that at least some categories of learners commonly regarded as disadvantaged (e.g. individuals with low levels of skills or qualifications, early school leavers, jobseekers, older workers, migrants and refugees, and people with disabilities) are among those making greater use of validation in at least one education and training area (see Figure 6.5).

While there are no comparable data allowing quantification of the use of validation arrangements across Europe, the 2016 AES provides information on the extent to which adults benefit from validation-related guidance services (see Figure 6.6). On average, across the EU-27, 3.1 % of adults reported having received information or advice on the validation or recognition of skills, competences or prior learning during the 12 months preceding the interview. Denmark registered the highest proportion of adults receiving such information or advice (10.6 %), followed by Sweden and the United Kingdom (both 8.3 %).

When considering the different qualitative aspects discussed in this chapter, the following picture emerges (Figure 6.7):

In some countries or regions, all of the aspects discussed are present or, at most, one element is missing (French Community of Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Finland, Switzerland and Iceland). These countries have both skills audits and validation arrangements in place and they monitor (at least to some extent) users of validation services.

At the other end of the spectrum are countries where, at most, two of the aspects studied are present (Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and most parts of the United Kingdom). Most of these countries have in place some validation arrangements in education and training (all except Croatia), but they do not provide skills audits (except Croatia, where skills audits are in place). Moreover, data on beneficiaries of existing validation arrangements are generally limited.

The remaining countries belong to an intermediate category, with three or four out of the six aspects studied in place (Flemish Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Austria, Sweden, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey and the United Kingdom (Scotland)). This group includes various subprofiles: countries without skills audits or those without data on beneficiaries of validation arrangements (or some combination of these elements).

([123]) Ibid.

Figure 6.7: Summary of the implementation of skills audits and the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL), 2018

	Skills audits		VNIL in education and training (E&T)		Information on users of VNIL arrangements	
	In place	Standard offer for unemployed people within six months	In place in at least one E&T subsector	Can lead to a qualification	Available in at least one E&T sub-sector	Greater use of VNIL by disadvantaged learners
BE fr	●		●	●	●	●
BE de	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
BE nl	●	●	●	●		
BG			●	●	●	●
CZ	●	●	●	●	●	●
DK	●	:	●	●	●	●
DE	●		●	●	●	●
EE			●	●		
IE	●		●	●	●	●
EL	●		●	●	●	
ES	●		●	●		
FR	●	:	●	●	●	●
HR	●	●				
IT	●	●	●	●	●	●
CY			●	●	●	●
LV	●		●	●	●	●
LT	●		●	●		
LU	●		●	●	●	●
HU			●		●	
MT	●		●		●	●
NL	●		●	●	●	●
AT	●		●	●		
PL	●		●	●	●	●
PT	●		●	●	●	●
RO	●		●	●	●	●
SI			●	●		
SK			●		●	
FI	●	●	●	●	●	●
SE	●		●	●		
BA	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
CH	●		●	●	●	●
IS	●	●	●	●	●	●
LI	●		●	●	●	
ME			●	●		
MK			●	●		
NO			●	●	●	
RS	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
TR			●		●	●
UK-ENG			●	●		
UK-WLS			●	●		
UK-NIR			●	●		
UK-SCT	●		●	●		

Source: Cedefop, European Commission and ICF.

Explanatory note

This figure presents a summary of the data displayed in Figures 6.1 and 6.3-6.5. For further details and explanations, see the reference figures.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE de), Bosnia and Herzegovina and **Serbia**: Not covered by the reference data collection.
Denmark and **France**: The reference data collection indicates the presence of skills audits but it is specified that information is not available on whether it is standard practice to offer skills audits to people who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment.

CHAPTER 7: AWARENESS-RAISING AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The average participation rates for adults in education and training remain low across Europe and a growing number of adults need reskilling and upskilling training, as recently re-iterated in the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) ([124]).

In particular, adults with low levels of educational attainment are less likely to engage in learning (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.10), which is why it is important to ensure that all adults, but especially those with lower levels of educational attainment, are aware of the learning opportunities available. Awareness-raising and outreach activities are recognised to play a key role in this respect.

This chapter begins by providing some theoretical and statistical information on awareness-raising and outreach in the context of adult learning. It then presents an overview of awareness-raising activities across Europe to promote adult learning, in particular those targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or no qualifications. It also captures public authorities' efforts to reach out to and re-engage these target groups.

7.1. The role of awareness-raising and outreach

To increase the participation of adults in education and training, they need to be informed about existing learning opportunities and the benefits that lifelong learning can bring to their professional careers and personal lives. One way to achieve this is through campaigns to raise awareness of adult learning opportunities.

This was also highlighted in the 2016 Upskilling Pathways Recommendation ([125]), which advocated the implementation of 'motivation and outreach measures that include raising awareness on the benefits of upskilling, making available information on existing guidance, support measures, upskilling opportunities and responsible bodies, and providing incentives to those least motivated to take advantage of these'.

Awareness-raising and outreach continue to be emphasised as important policy measures, e.g. in a report of the European Commission's Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) Working Group on Adult Learning (European Commission, 2020c). The increase in online delivery of programmes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic poses new challenges related to accessing learning opportunities, in particular for adult learners from vulnerable backgrounds. Support structures therefore need to ensure that all adult learners can be reached and that existing adult learners are effectively supported using the new online modes of delivery (European Commission, 2020a).

Awareness-raising activities in the area of adult learning can take place as one-off events or as events organised on a regular basis; they can promote the benefits of adult learning in general or advertise specific types of provision (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). However, public awareness campaigns may not be the most effective tool for targeting and reaching adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (OECD, 2019c).

In order to successfully reach under-represented groups, outreach activities can be implemented (ibid.). Targeted outreach activities promoting adult learning aim to increase the participation of people who do not search for learning opportunities by themselves. These types of activities may involve

([124]) Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), OJ C 66, 26.2.2021.

([125]) Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484/1, 24.12.2016.

cooperation with local stakeholders, such as schools and community organisations, and include tracking, contacting and engaging individuals who are outside the reach or scope of education, training, employment and/or welfare measures (Cedefop, 2020b).

Before describing the current awareness-raising and outreach activities that are being implemented in European countries, it is useful to examine some data on adults' interest in and research into learning opportunities, which provides a better understanding of the context.

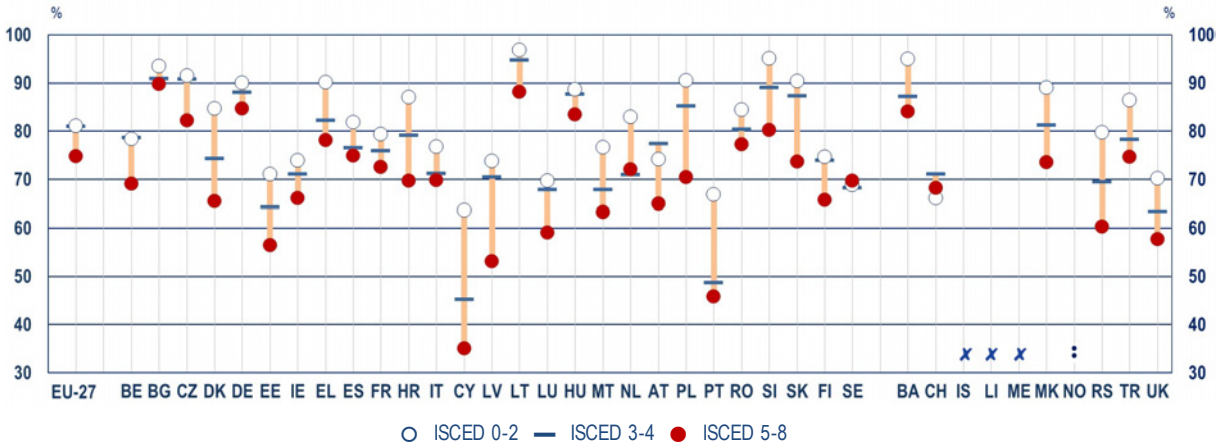
7.2. Adults' willingness to engage in learning opportunities

Data from the 2016 Adult Education Survey (AES) provide context for the discussion about awareness-raising and outreach activities to increase participation in lifelong learning. Several elements from the survey are interesting in this regard, including data on non-participants in education and training and data on the extent to which people search for information about learning opportunities.

In the AES, adults who did not participate in education and training activities during the 12 months preceding the survey were asked to indicate whether they would have liked to participate in such activities. On average, across the EU-27, around 80 % of non-participants reported that they did not wish to participate in education and training in the 12 months preceding the survey ([126]) ([127]).

Data by highest level of educational attainment (Figure 7.1) indicate that in almost all European countries, the proportion of non-participants reporting that they did not wish to participate in education and training was higher among adults with a lower level of educational attainment (ISCED 0-2) than among adults who hold a tertiary education qualification (ISCED 5-8). This supports the assertion that, while it is challenging to raise the interest of all non-participants, it is even more pressing to reach adults with low levels of qualifications.

Figure 7.1: Adults (aged 25-64) not participating in education and training who indicated that they did not want to participate in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), by educational attainment level, 2016



Source: Eurostat AES [trng_aes_197] (data extracted 24 July 2020).

([126]) Eurostat AES [trng_aes_197] (data extracted 25 March 2021). For participation (and non-participation) rates across countries, see Chapter 1, Figure 1.7.

([127]) In this context, a Cedefop survey (Cedefop, 2020d) provides some further insights on opinions on adult learning. Among other findings, the survey shows that in 22 out of the 30 European countries surveyed, the most frequent reason respondents give for not taking part in organised training is that they feel they do not need it.

%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
ISCED 0-2	81.1	78.4	93.5	91.5	84.7	90.0	71.1	73.9	90.1	81.8	79.4	87.0	76.8	63.6	73.8	96.8	69.7	88.6	76.6
ISCED 3-4	81.0	78.6	90.9	90.8	74.3	88.0	64.2	71.1	82.2	76.5	75.9	79.1	71.2	45.2	70.5	94.7	67.8	87.7	67.9
ISCED 5-8	74.8	69.1	89.7	82.2	65.5	84.7	56.5	66.1	78.1	74.9	72.5	69.7	69.8	35.0	53.1	88.2	59.1	83.5	63.2
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
ISCED 0-2	82.9	74.2	90.5	66.8	84.4	95.1	90.4	74.6	68.8	95.0	66.1	✗	✗	✗	89.0	:	79.7	86.4	70.2
ISCED 3-4	70.9	77.4	85.2	48.7	80.4	89.0	87.3	73.9	68.2	87.2	71.0	✗	✗	✗	81.2	:	69.4	78.3	63.4
ISCED 5-8	72.1	65.0	70.4	45.8	77.3	80.2	73.6	65.7	69.7	84.0	68.2	✗	✗	✗	73.5	:	60.3	74.6	57.7

Source: Eurostat AES [trng_aes_197] (data extracted 24 July 2020).

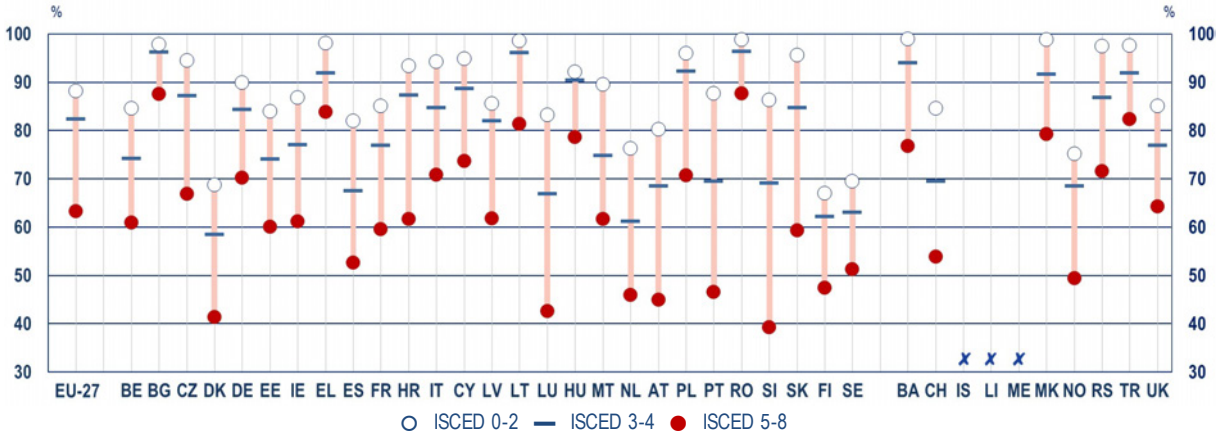
Explanatory note

In the 2016 AES, respondents indicating that they did not participate in education and training during the last 12 months were asked to indicate whether they would have liked to participate. This figure relates to those who did not participate in education and training and who reported that they did not want to participate. The figure does not take into account the fact that participation (and non-participation) rates vary across countries (for more details, see Chapter 1, Figure 1.7).

Closely related to the question of whether people want to participate in lifelong learning is the question of whether people undertake self-directed research into the available learning opportunities. The 2016 AES asked whether respondents (i.e. both those who participated in education and training and non-participants) had searched for information about learning opportunities during the 12 months preceding the survey. The survey revealed that, on average, across the EU-27, only around one quarter (21.1 %) of adults searched for information about learning opportunities ([128]).

Differences can again be observed when considering the data by highest level of education attained (Figure 7.2). In all European countries, people with a lower level of educational attainment were less likely to search for information about learning opportunities than people with a higher level of educational attainment. On average, across the EU-27, 88.1 % of adults with low levels of educational attainment (ISCED 2 at most) did not search for information about learning possibilities, whereas 82.3 % of adults who had completed upper secondary education or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3-4) and 63.3 % of those with a tertiary education degree (ISCED 5-8) did not search for information.

Figure 7.2: Adults (aged 25-64) who did not look for information about learning opportunities in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), by educational attainment level, 2016



Source: Eurostat AES. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

([128]) Eurostat AES [trng_aes_184] (data extracted 25 March 2021).

%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
ISCED 0-2	88.1	84.6	97.8	94.5	68.7	89.9	83.9	86.8	98.1	81.9	85.0	93.3	94.2	94.8	85.5	98.5	83.2	92.1	89.5
ISCED 3-4	82.3	74.2	96.2	87.2	58.4	84.3	74.0	77.0	91.8	67.5	76.9	87.3	84.7	88.6	82	96.1	66.9	90.4	74.8
ISCED 5-8	63.3	60.9	87.5	66.9	41.3	70.2	60.0	61.2	83.8	52.6	59.6	61.7	70.8	73.7	61.8	81.3	42.6	78.6	61.6
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
ISCED 0-2	76.2	80.2	96.0	87.7	98.8	86.3	95.6	67.0	69.5	98.9	84.6	✗	✗	✗	98.8	75.2	97.4	97.6	85.0
ISCED 3-4	61.2	68.4	92.2	69.5	96.3	69.1	84.7	62.1	63.0	93.9	69.5	✗	✗	✗	91.6	68.5	86.8	91.8	76.9
ISCED 5-8	45.9	44.9	70.7	46.6	87.6	39.3	59.3	47.4	51.2	76.7	53.9	✗	✗	✗	79.2	49.4	71.5	82.3	64.2

Source: Eurostat AES. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory note

In the 2016 AES, respondents were asked: 'During the last 12 months, have you looked for any information concerning learning possibilities (either on formal or non-formal education and training)?' Possible responses were 'yes' or 'no' (Eurostat, 2017). The figure captures the percentages of adults (aged 25-64) who responded 'no', by educational attainment level.

The country-specific data indicate that, in some countries, more than 95 % of adults with low levels of educational attainment did not search for information about learning opportunities. This was the case in Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. At the other end of the spectrum are four Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway) and the Netherlands, where adults with low levels of educational attainment were slightly more active in searching for information about learning opportunities than in other European countries. In these countries, the percentages of people with low levels of qualifications who did not search for information about learning did not exceed 80 % (Finland registered the lowest figure, at 67.0 %).

A rather low willingness of non-participants to take part in education and training (Figure 7.1) and limited self-directed research into learning opportunities (Figure 7.2), in particular amongst adults with low levels of educational attainment, indicate a clear need for awareness-raising and outreach activities to make adults aware of the available learning opportunities. The following sections present an overview of campaigns and initiatives promoted by top-level authorities that aim to raise adults' awareness of existing learning opportunities and reach out, in particular, to those with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

7.3. Awareness-raising activities across Europe

Raising awareness among adults that learning is a lifelong endeavour to be pursued at regular intervals has been among the key priorities of the renewed European agenda for adult learning ([129]). To support the implementation of this agenda at national and regional levels, the ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning and a network of national coordinators were established. Other objectives of these groups have been to promote transnational cooperation, to share examples of good practice, and raise awareness of the importance of adult learning, including disseminating information on policy developments (European Commission, 2019a).

In order to obtain information on existing policies and measures that aim to inform adults about learning opportunities and the benefits of lifelong learning, European countries were asked, in the context of data collection for this report, to identify up to three large-scale publicly subsidised awareness-raising initiatives or campaigns dedicated to this topic that have taken place between 2015 and 2020. Whereas the majority of countries or regions ([130]) confirmed having carried out such

([129]) Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, OJ C 372, 20.12.2011.

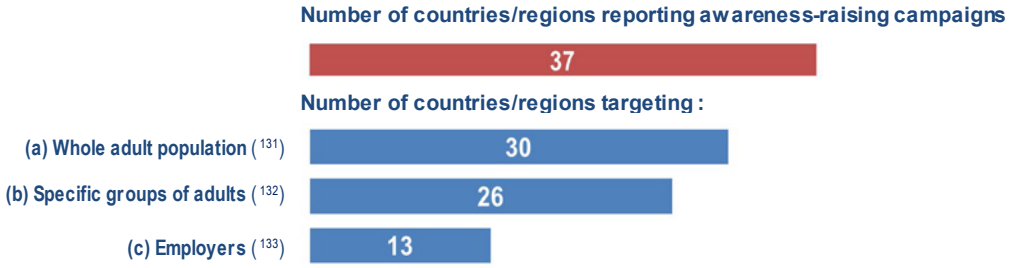
([130]) BE fr, BE de, BE nl, BG, DK, DE, EE, IE, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, SI, SK, FI, SE, CH, IS, LI, ME, MK, NO, RS, TR, UK-ENG, UK-WLS, UK-NIR and UK-SCT.

awareness-raising activities, five – Czechia, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina – reported that they had not done so.

In most countries, at least one large-scale publicly subsidised initiative or campaign had taken place during the reference period to raise awareness of the opportunities for adult learning; in fact, around half of the countries or regions reported carrying out two or three such initiatives or campaigns. In the majority of cases, these were regular activities, e.g. activities taking place on an annual basis.

The reported awareness-raising activities can be distinguished according to their main target group (Figure 7.3). Countries indicated whether their initiatives were aimed at (a) the whole adult population (in 30 countries); (b) specific groups of adults, such as adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, unemployed people or job seekers, adult learning professionals, young or elderly people, people from a migrant background, women or people with disabilities (in 26 countries); and/or (c) employers (in 13 countries).

Figure 7.3: Target group(s) of large-scale publicly subsidised awareness-raising campaigns on adult education and training that were implemented in 2015-2020, by number of countries/regions reporting them



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This figure captures the numbers of countries or regions that reported addressing the abovementioned target groups in the context of large-scale publicly subsidised campaigns that took place between 2015 and 2020 to raise awareness of the opportunities for adult learning. The number of target groups is higher than the number of countries/regions reporting awareness-raising campaigns as countries/regions could report up to three relevant campaigns; moreover, some reported campaigns were directed at more than one target group.

(a) Awareness-raising activities in adult education and training targeting the whole adult population

The reported awareness-raising activities targeting the whole adult population had different aims and objectives, including the promotion of lifelong learning, informing about education and training opportunities, and raising awareness about the importance of basic skills. In fact, most countries that conducted awareness-raising activities targeting the whole adult population, held national events promoting lifelong learning or informing about the available education and training opportunities for adults ([134]).

In **Bulgaria** the 'National days for lifelong learning' (*Natsionalni dni za uchene prez tseliya zhivot*) ([135]), organised by the Vocational Education and Training Directorate of the Ministry of Education and Science, were held annually between 2015 and 2019 in different cities in Bulgaria. The main goals of the campaign were to promote adult learning and increase the attractiveness of this sector.

In **Spain**, a large one-week fair called 'AULA: International student exhibition and educational opportunities' (*AULA: Salón internacional del estudiante y oferta educativa*) ([136]) has taken place annually since 1993. At the fair, training providers (educational

([131]) BE fr, BE de, BE nl, BG, DE, EE, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, SI, SK, SE, CH, ME, MK, NO, TR, UK-ENG, UK-WLS, UK-NIR and UK-SCT.

([132]) BE fr, BG, DK, DE, EE, IE, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, NL, AT, PL, PT, IS, FI, SE, CH, IS, LI, ME, MK, RS and TR.

([133]) BE fr, BG, DK, HR, IT, CY, LV, NL, PL, PT, CH, ME and UK-NIR.

([134]) Including BE fr, BG, EE, ES, HR, IT, CY, LV, LU, MT, NL, AT, PL, SI, SK, ME, MK, UK-ENG and UK-WLS.

([135]) See: http://lll.mon.bg/?p=3951

([136]) See: https://www.ifema.es/aula

and training centres, organisations and service companies) provide information about their training opportunities and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training provides guidance and information about the educational opportunities available and about scholarships and grants. At this event, adults can find information about formal and non-formal training options.

The **Luxembourgish** campaign 'It's never too early or too late to learn' (*Et ass ni ze fréi oder ze spéit fir ze léieren – Il n'est jamais trop tôt ou trop tard pour apprendre*) ([137]) is organised annually by the Department of Adult Education, usually in July or September. It is financed by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth. The key messages are related to the education and training opportunities available and the benefits of adult learning. The campaign also aligns with the publication of the annual catalogue of adult learning opportunities and providers.

In some countries or regions, awareness-raising activities targeting the whole adult population aim to promote specific educational and training opportunities. For example, in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, regular campaigns are carried out to promote dual training; or in Hungary and Switzerland regular events and campaigns are used to highlight the attractiveness and importance of vocational education and training ([138]); and in the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) an annual campaign aims to highlight the benefits of apprenticeships.

Other countries, such as Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Scotland), have organised initiatives or campaigns targeting the whole adult population that aim to raise awareness of the importance of basic skills and the problems related to a lack of such skills.

As part of the **German** 'National decade for literacy and basic education 2016-2026' (*Nationale Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung 2016-2026*') ([139]), public relations activities are used to tackle existing prejudices and to increase awareness of the importance and necessity of literacy and basic skills among the general public and in the immediate environment of the people concerned.

Similarly, in the **Netherlands**, the 'Reading and writing week' (*Week van Lezen en Schrijven*) ([140]) has been running annually since 2005, with the main aims being to draw national attention to the consequences of having low levels of basic skills and to stimulate a positive learning culture.

(b) Awareness-raising activities in adult education and training targeting specific groups of adults

The reported awareness-raising activities addressing specific groups of adults mostly target those with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, job seekers or unemployed adults, young or older people, people from a migrant background, women and people with disabilities.

Thus, in addition to the abovementioned awareness-raising activities focussing on low levels of basic skills or low qualifications that target the whole adult population, several countries – such as Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Cyprus, Portugal, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Serbia – report having conducted similar initiatives or campaigns targeting specifically those adults who have low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

In **Ireland**, the annual national adult literacy and numeracy awareness campaign 'Take the first step' ([141]), is a key part of the 'Further education and training literacy and numeracy strategy 2014-2019'. The campaign aim is to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy issues in the adult population and to support and encourage people who have difficulties with reading, writing, mathematics or technology to get the help they need.

([137]) See: https://men.public.lu/fr/formation-adultes.html; https://men.public.lu/dam-assets/catalogue-publications/formation-des-adultes/informaions-generales/catalogue-formation-adultes.pdf

([138]) In the context of the annual 'European vocational skills week', local, regional and national events and activities take place to showcase the best of vocational education and training across Europe. See: https://ec.europa.eu/social/vocational-skills-week/events-and-activities_en

([139]) See: https://www.alphadekade.de

([140]) See: https://www.lezenenschrijven.nl/wat-doen-wij/oplossing-voor-je-vraagstuk/week-van-lezen-en-schrijven (called 'Literacy week' (*Week van de Alfabetisering*) until 2019).

([141]) See: https://www.takethefirststep.ie

The **Swiss** national campaign 'Just better!' (*Einfach besser!*) ([142]) aims to raise public awareness of the topic of basic skills through posters, flyers, online banners, and radio and TV advertisements. The goal is to motivate adults who struggle in everyday life because of a lack of basic skills to attend courses in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT. In this way, the campaign aims to promote social integration, employability and a better quality of life.

In **Liechtenstein**, the 'Me too' (*Ich auch*) ([143]) campaign started as part of the implementation of the renewed European agenda for adult learning and ran from 2014 until 2018. The actions, especially the consultation and awareness-raising campaigns, continue to be implemented, targeting people with low levels of basic competences.

Other specific groups of adults targeted by awareness-raising activities across Europe include job seekers and unemployed adults. Several countries or regions, including the French Community of Belgium, Denmark, France, Croatia, Cyprus and Latvia, have conducted initiatives addressing this particular target group, with the aim of raising their awareness of existing adult education and training opportunities.

In the **French Community of Belgium**, the 'Formtruck' ([144]) meets Brussels citizens in the streets. The main objective is to help jobseekers search for training opportunities. The 'Formtruck' also works with different training institutions, and it can be used for awareness-raising during specific events.

In **Cyprus**, the Human Resource Development Authority ([145]) systematically conducts informative meetings and awareness-raising campaigns, utilising all mass communication media, to reach unemployed and economically inactive adults as well as employers and employees, and provide them with information and advice on training opportunities.

Adult education professionals have been the main target group of awareness-raising initiatives and campaigns in some countries, for example Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Poland and Serbia.

In **Spain (*Comunidad Autónoma de Castilla y León*)**, informative seminars ([146]) target guidance and support specialists in schools to help them improve their knowledge of adult education provision.

One of the activities of the **Serbian** Association of Andragogists, the Serbian Association for Adult Education and the Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade is the annual event 'Building bridges in adult education' (*Gradimo mostove u obrazovanju odraslih*) ([147]). The event gathers together different organisations involved in adult education and adult education practitioners from Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo. Target groups in this initiative are adult education practitioners, teachers and trainers, researchers and decision-makers.

Several countries have also targeted other specific groups of adults, such as young people (e.g. in Estonia, Finland and Switzerland), older people (e.g. in Poland and Montenegro), people from a migrant background (e.g. Finland), women (e.g. in Croatia, Montenegro and Turkey) and people with disabilities (e.g. in Turkey).

(c) Awareness-raising activities in adult education and training targeting employers

Some countries or regions, such as Denmark, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), reported having conducted awareness-raising activities targeting employers. The main aim of these initiatives has been to create awareness and provide information about adult education programmes and schemes.

The **Danish** campaign 'Adult apprentice: One scheme - two winners' (*Voksenlærlingeordningen - en ordning, to vindere*) ([148]), which ran in 2019, was a collaboration between the trade union confederation, a broad range of trade unions and unemployment insurance funds, and the Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment. The aim was to raise awareness among members of the trade unions, as well as employers, about the advantages of the adult apprentice scheme, which helps unskilled jobseekers obtain a vocational education by providing subsidies to employers to cover the costs of taking on apprentices.

([142]) See: https://www.besser-jetzt.ch
([143]) See: https://www.ich-auch.li
([144]) See: https://www.bruxellesformation.brussels/le-formtruck-outil-mobile-innovant/
([145]) See: https://www.hrdauth.org.cy
([146]) See: https://www.educa.jcyl.es/adultos/es
([147]) See: https://www.aes.rs/en/organizacija/
([148]) See: https://fho.dk/blog/2019/08/28/voksenlaerling-en-ordning-to-vindere/

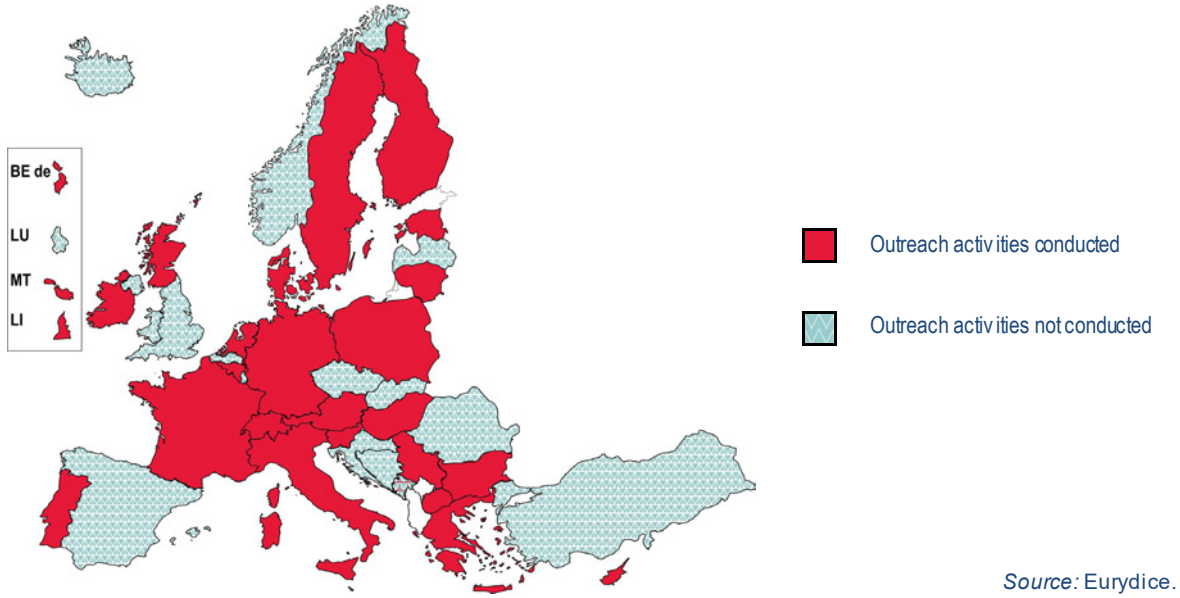
In **Poland**, the 'Non-formal education congress' (*Kongres edukacji pozaformalnej*) ([149]), organised by the Polish Chamber of Training Companies in cooperation with the Open University of the University of Warsaw, has taken place four times since 2014. The congress targets, among others, employers and entrepreneurs and aims to boost non-formal education and raise awareness of the value of lifelong learning.

Other initiatives and campaigns have had the objective of encouraging employers' involvement in adult learning, i.e. encouraging them to support and provide learning opportunities for their employees. This was the case for the 'I work and learn' forum (*Es strādāju un mācos*) ([150]) that took place in 2019 in Latvia and the 2017 'Qualifica programme' (*Programa Qualifica*) ([151]) campaign in Portugal. Similarly, in Switzerland the 'Just better!... In the workplace' (*Einfach besser!... am Arbeitsplatz*) ([152]) initiative targets employers and aims to ensure that their employees' receive training in basic skills that is tailored to their workplace.

7.4. Educational outreach activities across Europe

In addition to awareness-raising initiatives and campaigns, targeted outreach activities focused on identifying and directly engaging with adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications have been implemented, with the aim of involving this group in adult learning opportunities. Just over half of all European countries or regions confirmed having conducted large-scale publicly subsidised initiatives to reach out to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4: Large-scale publicly subsidised educational outreach activities targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

Educational outreach refers to a range of activities designed to identify and attract non-learners, in order to encourage them to enrol in education and training programmes. This figure presents large-scale publicly subsidised educational outreach activities targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

([149]) See: https://www.kep.com.pl

([150]) See: https://epale.ec.europa.eu/lv/content/pieauguso-izglitibas-forums-es-stradaju-un-macos

([151]) See: https://www.qualifica.gov.pt

([152]) See: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/de/home/bildung/weiterbildung/foerderschwerpunkt-grundkompetenzen-am-arbeitsplatz.html

Several different approaches to educational outreach can be distinguished. Countries may provide public subsidies to organisations or programmes conducting educational outreach activities; they may provide funding to authorities at lower decision-making levels (e.g. regions, municipalities) or other actors (e.g. the social partners) for conducting educational outreach activities; or they may financially support the implementation of shorter term projects involving educational outreach activities. Some countries use more than one approach for promoting educational outreach.

The most widespread approach is the provision of public subsidies to organisations or programmes conducting educational outreach activities. In countries such as Denmark, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Austria and Slovenia, for example, the financially supported organisations are mainly involved in the provision of educational counselling and guidance and the training of adults who are either jobseekers or currently employed but insufficiently skilled.

> The **Portuguese** 'Qualifica centres' (*Centros Qualifica*) ([153]), which are structures funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and state budget, play a key role in attracting adults with low levels of qualifications and motivating them to enrol in education and training programmes. Cooperation with different stakeholders (employers, education and training providers, municipalities) is fundamental for identifying and reaching out to adults with low levels of qualifications and providing guidance on and referrals to education and vocational training opportunities.
>
> In **Austria**, the 'Educational counselling and guidance services' (*Netzwerk Bildungsberatung*) ([154]), which are co-financed with national and ESF funding and funding from the federal states, are committed to reaching out to potentially disadvantaged groups of adults, including adults with low levels of qualifications. Specific actions include the provision of mobile counselling and the holding of outreach activities in public spaces and through employers.

In several other countries, such as Estonia, the Netherlands and Switzerland, public subsidies are provided to organisations for reaching out to and supporting adults with the aim of improving their general basic skills.

> The association of **Estonian** adult educators 'ANDRAS' (*Eesti Täiskasvanute Koolitajate Assotsiatsioon*) ([155]) is a strategic partner of the Ministry of Education and Research. ANDRAS´s activities are financed from the state budget and aim, among other things, to identify adults with lower levels of education and direct them towards learning opportunities. For this purpose, ANDRAS has built networks all over Estonia and supports them through various events and activities at national and local levels.
>
> In the **Netherlands**, several organisations tackling low levels of literacy receive subsidies from the national government (through the 'Count on skills' programme), including the Reading and Writing Foundation (*Stichtig Lezen en Schrijven* ([156])), the Royal Library (*Koninklijke Bibliotheek* ([157])) and the ABC Foundation (*Stichting ABC* ([158])).

Another approach involves the provision of public subsidies for programmes providing educational outreach activities. Examples of this approach are found in the French Community of Belgium, France, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and North Macedonia. In most cases, the outreach activities take place in the context of 'Youth guarantee' schemes ([159]), thus targeting younger people who are job seekers or not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

([153]) See: https://www.qualifica.gov.pt

([154]) See: https://www.bildungsberatung-wien.at (for the websites of the counselling agency of Vienna) and https://www.bildungsberatung-stmk.at (for the websites of the counselling agency of Styria)

([155]) See: https://www.andras.ee

([156]) See: https://www.lezenenschrijven.nl

([157]) See: https://www.kb.nl

([158]) See: https://st-abc.nl/

([159]) The 'Youth guarantee' is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. See the Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, OJ C 372, 4.11.2020.

In **France** the 'Youth guarantee' (*Garantie jeunes*) ([160]) was set up in 2013 to identify young people between 16 and 25 years of age who are in situations of social disadvantage and direct them towards employment or training. To implement the guarantee, a contract is signed between the young person and the local mission. Financial assistance is also provided.

In **North Macedonia**, the 'Youth guarantee' (*Mladinska garancija*) ([161]) is open to all young people up to 29 years of age who are NEETs. Young people are provided with adequate employment opportunities, are included in active employment measures or are provided with opportunities to return to education through second-chance programmes within four months of their registration with the Employment Service Agency. One of the three pillars of the guarantee scheme consists of outreach activities directed towards NEETs in order to inform them about the scheme and make them aware of its benefits.

In some countries, for example Ireland and Hungary, outreach activities carried out in the context of publicly subsidised programmes are also related to the labour market but the target group is not only young people but also adults.

In **Hungary**, one of the objectives of the 'Open learning centres' (*Nyitott Tanulási Központok*) ([162]) is to reach out to 20 000 adults (in particular adults with low levels of qualifications or with outdated vocational qualifications) and inform them about the low-threshold labour market competence development training and guidance services on offer.

In other countries, large-scale publicly subsidised programmes that aim to reach out to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications focus less on employment-related skills and more on basic skills development, as in the following examples.

In **Germany**, as part of the 'National decade for literacy and basic education 2016-2026' (*Nationale Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung 2016-2026*') ([163]), the *Länder* support measures aimed at encouraging learners to participate in literacy and basic education programmes, including through the dissemination of information and guidance on training opportunities.

In both **Greece** and **Cyprus**, publicly subsidised educational outreach activities (through media and social media campaigns, websites, etc.) aim to motivate adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications to enrol in second-chance and vocational education and training programmes.

Apart from public subsidies for organisations or programmes conducting educational outreach activities, some countries, such as Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland, have funding arrangements in place to support either authorities at lower decision-making levels (e.g. regions, municipalities) or other stakeholders (e.g. social partners) in their efforts to reach out to and provide support to adults with low levels of basic skills or low qualifications.

In **Denmark**, an outreach fund (*Puljen til opsøgende arbejde*) ([164]), set up as part of the 'Tripartite agreement' in 2017, aims to motivate adults to participate in continuing and further education and therefore to address the challenges of insufficient basic skills and lack of skilled labour in the Danish labour market. The fund is managed by the Ministry of Employment and finances several different initiatives, e.g. an initiative related to the establishment of a corps of training ambassadors.

In **Sweden**, a government grant within the frame of the 'Knowledge boost' programme (*Kunskapslyftet*) ([165]) is available to municipalities for attracting more people to participate in adult learning at lower or upper secondary level, especially those who need further education but who are unable to find suitable learning opportunities on their own.

In **Switzerland**, the 'Federal act on continuing education' (*Bundesgesetz über die Weiterbildung / Loi fédérale sur la formation continue*) ([166]) allows the Confederation to financially support the cantons. Currently, 20 cantons have signed a performance agreement with the federal government to motivate adults to participate in education and promote the development of basic skills.

([160]) See: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000033692654&categorieLien=id

([161]) See: https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/juli-2018-ns_article-mtsp-vo-prvite-tri-meseci-od-pilot-programata-mladinska-garancija-vraboteni-419-lica.nspx

([162]) See: https://nyitok.hu/

([163]) See: www.alphadekade.de

([164]) See: https://www.uvm.dk/puljer-udbud-og-prisuddelinger/puljer/puljeoversigt/tidligere-udmeldte-puljer/voksne/201117-pulje-til-opsoegende-arbejde-2021

([165]) See: https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2018/07/50-miljoner-for-att-locka-fler-till-vuxenutbildning/

([166]) See: https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2016/132/de

As well as these more regular types of public subsidies for programmes or organisations implementing outreach activities, some countries, such as Denmark, Estonia, Poland and Slovenia, reported also supporting shorter term projects that aim to reach out to and involve adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications in programmes for skills development or to obtain further qualifications. In Liechtenstein, this is the only type of large-scale publicly subsidised outreach activity reported. Examples of this type of outreach activity are as follows.

In **Poland**, the project 'Opportunity – New opportunities for adults' (*SZANSA – Nowe możliwości dla dorosłych*) ([167]) is co-financed by the ESF and will be implemented until the end of 2021. The project's main goal is to reach and support adults with low levels of skills, knowledge and competences who are not eligible for support under the 'Youth guarantee' (employees, unemployed or inactive adults, adults from disadvantaged areas (rural areas, small towns and/or post-industrial municipalities), people aged 50+, immigrants, adults with intellectual disabilities, etc.).

In **Slovenia**, the public tender 'Development of basic and vocational skills of low-qualified 2018-2022' (*Javni razpis za pridobivanje temeljnih in poklicnih kompetenc 2018-2022*) ([168]), initiated and funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and co-funded by the European Social Fund, aims to improve the basic and vocational competences of adults with low levels of qualifications (with less than four years of upper secondary education) and low-skilled adults above the age of 45. Amongst the funded activities and services are outreach activities in the form of eight educational movies (available for free from the project website ([169])), which are intended as a motivational and educational tool for developing the target groups' basic skills and competences.

([167]) See: https://szansa-power.frse.org.pl/

([168]) See: https://www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/2018006100001/javni-razpis-za-pridobivanje-temeljnih-in-poklicnih-kompetenc-od-2018-do-2022-krajsi-naslov-javnega-razpisa-tpk-2018-2022-st--5442-86201814-ob-283818

([169]) See: https://pismenost.acs.si/en/resources/educational-audio-and-visual-resources/visual-resources/on-the-path-to-a-successful-life/

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of quantitative and qualitative data related to awareness-raising and outreach in the context of adult learning. First, it presented data from the 2016 AES showing that, across the EU-27, around 80 % of adults who did not participate in education and training in the 12 months preceding the survey did not wish to do so. The proportion of non-participants reporting that they did not wish to participate in education and training was higher among adults with lower levels of educational attainment than among those with a tertiary education qualification (see Figure 7.1).

Similarly, the analysis of data on self-directed research into available learning opportunities shows that, in all European countries, people with a lower levels of educational attainment are less likely to search for information about learning opportunities than people with a higher level of educational attainment (see Figure 7.2). These results highlight the importance of awareness-raising and outreach activities for ensuring that adults, especially those with lower levels of qualifications or lower basic skills, are aware of the available learning opportunities and for promoting their participation in education and training.

Regarding the efforts made by European countries in relation to awareness raising and outreach, most countries reported that they carried out at least one large-scale publicly subsidised awareness-raising initiative or campaign between 2015 and 2020. These reported awareness-raising activities targeted the whole adult population or specific groups of adults (such as adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, unemployed people or job seekers, adult learning professionals, young or elderly people, people from a migrant background, women or people with disabilities), or employers (see Figure 7.3).

Publicly subsidised outreach activities targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications were reported by just over half of all European countries or regions (see Figure 7.4). The different approaches taken by countries to support targeted outreach activities include financial support for organisations or programmes conducting educational outreach, the provision of funding (e.g. to authorities at lower decision-making levels) for conducting educational outreach, and/or financial support for the implementation of shorter term projects involving educational outreach.

The overall picture that emerges from this analysis is thus that the majority of European countries or regions publicly subsidises awareness-raising initiatives or campaigns on adult education and training, while only around half of them provide public subsidies for initiatives that aim to reach out to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (see Figure 7.5). It should be noted, however, that amongst the reported awareness-raising activities there are also some that target adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications as well as other specific groups of adults who may benefit from further education and training, such as job seekers or unemployed adults, young or older people, people from a migrant background, women and people with disabilities.

Finally, three countries – Czechia, Romania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina – did not report any large-scale publicly subsidised awareness-raising or outreach activities.

Figure 7.5: Summary of large-scale publicly subsidised awareness-raising and outreach activities promoting the education and training of adults (with low levels of basic skills or qualifications), 2019/20

	Large-scale publicly subsidised awareness-raising campaigns on adult education and training, 2015-2020	Large-scale publicly subsidised educational outreach activities targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications
BE fr	●	●
BE de	●	●
BE nl	●	
BG	●	●
CZ		
DK	●	●
DE	●	●
EE	●	●
IE	●	●
EL		●
ES	●	
FR	●	●
HR	●	
IT	●	●
CY	●	●
LV	●	
LT		●
LU	●	
HU	●	●
MT	●	●
NL	●	●
AT	●	●
PL	●	●
PT	●	●
RO		
SI	●	●
SK	●	
FI	●	●
SE	●	●
BA		
CH	●	●
IS	●	
LI	●	●
ME	●	
MK	●	●
NO	●	
RS	●	●
TR	●	
UK-ENG	●	
UK-WLS	●	
UK-NIR	●	
UK-SCT	●	●

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This figure presents a summary of the data displayed in Figures 7.3 and 7.4. For further details and explanations, see the reference figures.

CHAPTER 8: GUIDANCE SERVICES

In addition to awareness-raising and outreach activities, guidance services can also play an important role in encouraging adults to take part in education and training. Guidance can facilitate the process of setting learning and progression goals or finding suitable education and training options and mapping out a pathway to reach the educational and professional goals set (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

Moreover, guidance provision can also contribute to other public policy goals such as social inclusion and the economic integration of individuals and groups, thus reducing unemployment levels and increasing overall productivity and development (ELGPN, 2015).

This chapter starts with a brief introduction to and some contextual statistical data on the topic of guidance. It then presents the personal guidance services that are available to adults in European countries and the self-help guidance tools and on-line databases that outline the learning opportunities available.

8.1. The need for guidance

Guidance is usually a shared policy responsibility of several ministries at national and regional levels. It may also involve the participation of national councils or forums for lifelong guidance that help ensure cooperation on and coordination of lifelong guidance policies and measures (ELGPN, 2015). Guidance services cover a range of activities, including information giving, counselling, competence assessment, support and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills ([170]). They can be provided in schools, at job or training centres, at public employment services, in the workplace, in community centres or in other settings.

Guidance can play an important role in helping adults navigate the available education and training opportunities and other related services. In particular, it may help encourage those who have low levels of basic skills or qualifications to take part in adult learning. Indeed, the 2016 Upskilling Pathways Recommendation ([171]) advocates the provision of guidance and/or mentoring services to support learners' progression through all steps of the upskilling process. Moreover, by providing high-quality information and individualised advice, especially to adults with low levels of skills or qualifications, guidance services can facilitate higher rates of participation and more inclusive participation in adult learning.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting upskilling or reskilling through guidance services has become even more important. Many adults, in particular those with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, have lost their jobs and need to retrain in order to adapt to a changing job market, characterised by an increased use of digital technologies, among other things (OECD, 2021). At the same time, the provision of guidance services has become more challenging as some of the more traditional ways of offering guidance (e.g. face-to-face) are not available because of the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic.

Thus, guidance services that take a holistic approach to the dispositional and situational barriers to learning, employment and social inclusion, as well as the potential of individuals, are crucial (European Commission, 2020c).

([170]) Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies, OJ C 319, 13.12.2008.

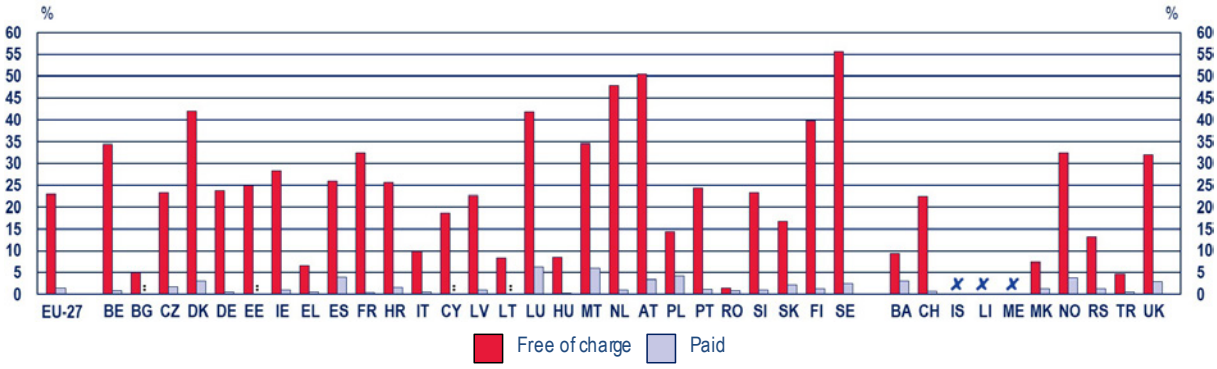
([171]) Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484/1, 24.12.2016.

Before analysing in more depth the policies and measures related to the provision of guidance services across Europe, some statistical data on the use of guidance services by adults in Europe are presented to set the context.

8.2. Adults' use of guidance services

The 2016 Adult Education Survey (AES) allows to study the extent to which adults in Europe benefit from guidance services related to education and training. The survey asked whether adults had received any information or advice on learning opportunities from institutions or organisations during the 12 months preceding the survey. As Figure 8.1 shows, on average across the EU-27, around a quarter of adults reported having received free of charge information or advice on learning opportunities, and less than 2 % reported that they had paid for guidance services. It thus appears that, when adults receive guidance related to education and training from institutions or organisations, this service is usually free.

Figure 8.1: Adults (aged 25-64) who received (free or paid) information or advice on learning opportunities from institutions/organisations in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), 2016



%	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
Free	23.0	34.4	5.0	23.3	42.0	23.7	25.0	28.3	6.6	26.0	32.4	25.7	9.8	18.7	22.7	8.3	41.9	8.5	34.6
Paid	1.5	0.8	:	1.8	3.1	0.6	:	1.1	0.5	4.0	0.4	1.7	0.6	:	1.0	:	6.4	0.3	6.0
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	BA	CH	IS	LI	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR	UK
Free	47.9	50.5	14.5	24.3	1.5	23.3	16.8	39.8	55.6	9.4	22.5	✗	✗	✗	7.4	32.4	13.3	4.7	32.0
Paid	1.1	3.4	4.2	1.2	0.9	1.1	2.3	1.3	2.6	3.1	0.7	✗	✗	✗	1.4	3.8	1.3	0.6	3.0

Source: Eurostat AES. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory notes

Within the 2016 AES, respondents were asked: 'During the last 12 months, have you received any information or advice/help on learning possibilities from institutions/organisations (include all types of services and all modes of service received: face to face, internet, mail, phone, fax, posters, leaflet, etc.)?'

The possible responses were:

- 'yes, I received free of charge information or advice/help on learning opportunities from institutions/organisations';
- 'yes, I paid for information or advice/help on learning opportunities from institutions/organisations';
- 'no, I did not receive any information or advice/help on learning opportunities from institutions/organisations' (Eurostat, 2017).

This figure focuses on the first two options.

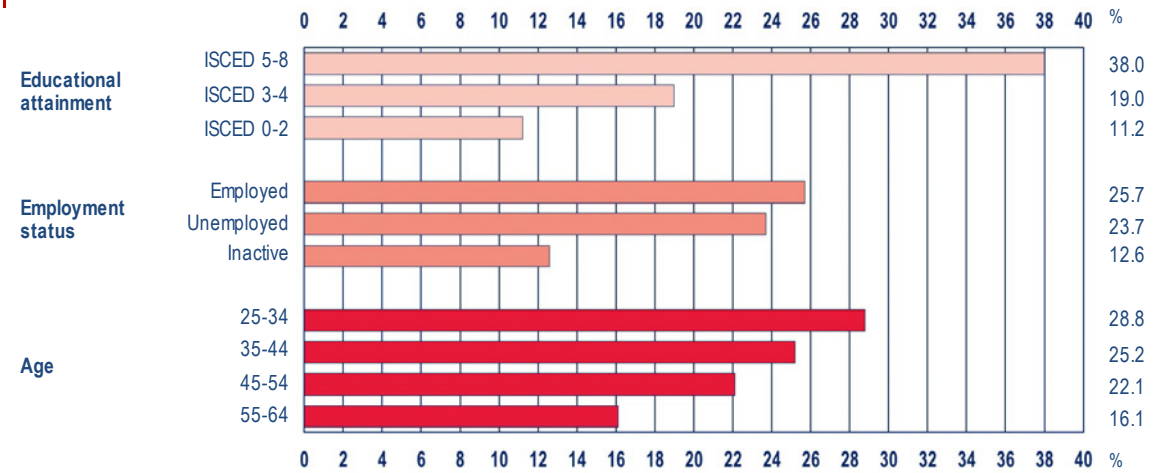
Country-specific notes

Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Netherlands and **Finland**: Low reliability for the percentages of adults who received information or advice on learning opportunities from institutions/organisations for a fee because of the small sample size.
Bulgaria, Cyprus and **Lithuania**: Data on adults who received information or advice on learning opportunities for a fee are not available because of the very small sample size.

The countries with the highest percentages of adults reporting that they had received free information or advice on learning opportunities – more than 40 % – were Sweden (55.6 %), Austria (50.5 %), the Netherlands (47.9 %), Denmark (42.0 %) and Luxembourg (41.9 %). In contrast, in a number of European countries, less than 10 % of adults reported having received free guidance on learning opportunities during the 12 months preceding the survey. This applies to Italy (9.8 %), Bosnia and Herzegovina (9.4 %), Hungary (8.5 %), Lithuania (8.3 %), North Macedonia (7.4 %), Greece (6.6 %), Bulgaria (5.0 %), Turkey (4.7 %) and Romania (1.5 %). The geographical distribution of countries at the two ends of the spectrum suggests that adults in eastern and south-eastern Europe are less likely to receive information or advice on learning opportunities from institutions or organisation than those in northern and western Europe.

Some major differences are apparent when considering the proportions of adults who reported having received free guidance by educational attainment level, employment status and age (Figure 8.2). For example, while on average across the EU-27, 38.0 % of adults who had completed tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) indicated that they had received free information or advice on learning opportunities during the last 12 months, this figure drops to 19.0 % for those who had completed at most upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3-4) and to 11.2 % for those with at most lower secondary education (ISCED 2). In other words, adults with a lower educational attainment level were less likely to report having received guidance on learning opportunities from institutions or organisations than those with higher attainment levels.

Figure 8.2: Adults (aged 25-64) who received free information or advice on learning opportunities from institutions/organisations in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), by educational attainment level, employment status and age (EU-27 average), 2016



Source: Eurostat AES. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory notes

Inactive people are those who are not part of the labour force, meaning that they are neither employed nor unemployed. They are not working and are not available or looking for work either, even though they are of working-age.

See Figure 8.1 for details on how this question was phrased in the AES.

Similar disparities appear in relation to employment status: across the EU-27, employed people (25.7 %) reported slightly more frequently than unemployed people (23.7 %) that they had received free information or advice on learning opportunities. For the latter, public employment services (PESs) are typically the key providers of information and services. The economically inactive were by far the least likely to report receiving free information or advice on learning opportunities (12.6 %), even though they may have a similarly strong need for information and guidance.

Age also appears to be a determining factor in terms of accessing free guidance on learning opportunities. The older the respondents, the lower the likelihood that they reported having received information or advice related to education during the 12 months preceding the survey (e.g. this was the case for 28.8 % of those in the 25-34 years age group compared with 16.1 % of those aged 55-64).

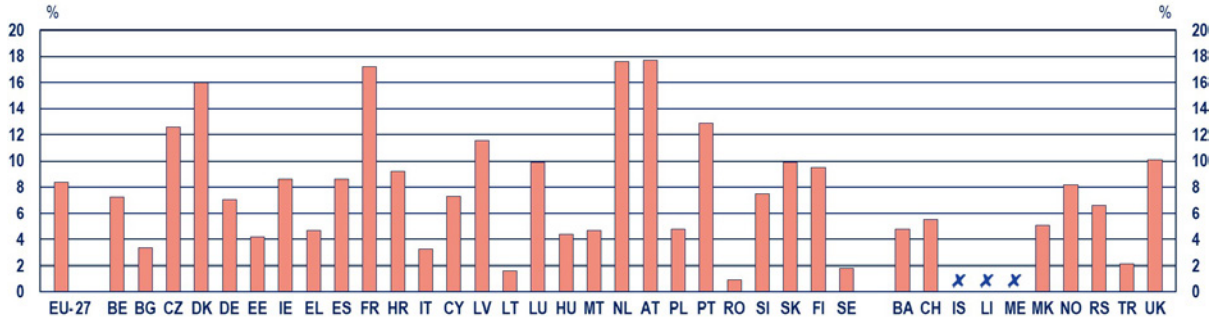
Modes of delivery of guidance

Guidance on learning opportunities can be delivered in various ways. One well-known and effective approach is through face-to-face contact with a counsellor (Whiston, Mitts and Li, 2019). Another method of delivery is through computer-based applications, i.e. programmes enabling self-guidance and/or self-assessment. Adults can also obtain guidance from dedicated materials and information presented online. However, self-guidance and online tools should not replace traditional face-to-face delivery as this may hinder access for adults with limited digital skills or those who do not know where or how to find help for decision-making (OECD, 2021).

The AES investigated how widespread the different modes of delivery of (free) education and training guidance are. Figure 8.3 focuses on guidance involving face-to-face interactions with a counsellor. On average, across the EU-27, 8.4 % of adults indicated that they had received free face-to-face guidance on learning opportunities from institutions during the 12 months preceding the survey.

The countries with the highest rates of adults reporting having received free information or advice on learning opportunities through face-to-face interactions with a counsellor – more than 12 % – were Czechia (12.6 %), Portugal (12.9 %), Denmark (16.0 %), France (17.2 %), the Netherlands (17.6 %) and Austria (17.7 %). In contrast, guidance delivered through face-to-face interactions with a counsellor was reported by very few adults (less than 2 %) in Lithuania, Romania and Sweden.

Figure 8.3: Adults (aged 25-64) who received free information or advice on learning opportunities through direct face-to-face interactions with a counsellor in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), 2016



EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
8.4	7.2	3.4	12.6	16.0	7.0	4.2	8.6	4.7	8.6	17.2	9.2	3.3	7.3	11.6	1.6	9.9	4.4	4.7
NL	**AT**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SI**	**SK**	**FI**	**SE**	**BA**	**CH**	**IS**	**LI**	**ME**	**MK**	**NO**	**RS**	**TR**	**UK**
17.6	17.7	4.8	12.9	0.9	7.5	9.9	9.5	1.8	4.8	5.5	✗	✗	✗	5.1	8.2	6.6	2.1	10.1

Source: Eurostat AES. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory note

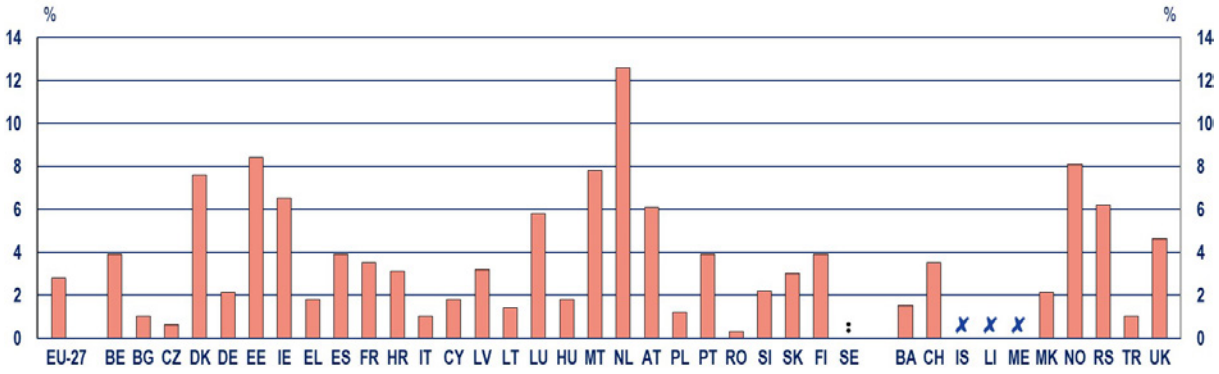
Within the 2016 AES, respondents indicating that they had received free information or advice/help on learning opportunities during the last 12 months were asked about the mode of delivery of the guidance ('In which way did you receive this free information or advice/help on learning possibilities?'). The possible (multiple) responses were:

- 'face-to-face interaction';
- 'interaction with a person through internet, phone, e-mail or any other media';
- 'interaction with a computer based application for information or advice/help (including online self-assessment tools)';
- 'no interaction, only information through dedicated material (books, posters, websites, leaflet, TV programme, etc.)' (Eurostat, 2017).

This figure captures the first option.

Receiving guidance on learning opportunities from computer-based applications is less common than receiving guidance involving direct contact with a counsellor (Figure 8.4). On average, across the EU-27, only 2.8 % of adults reported that they had obtained information or advice on learning opportunities through computer-based applications during the 12 months preceding the survey. Across all countries analysed, the highest proportion of beneficiaries was recorded in the Netherlands (12.6 %), followed by Estonia (8.4 %), Norway (8.1 %), Malta (7.8 %), Denmark (7.6 %), Ireland (6.5 %), Serbia (6.2 %), Austria (6.1 %) and Luxembourg (5.8 %). In some countries, such as Bulgaria, Czechia, Italy, Romania and Turkey, receiving guidance through computer-based applications was barely reported (1 % or less adults).

Figure 8.4: Adults (aged 25-64) who received free information or advice on learning opportunities through interactions with computer-based applications in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), 2016



EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
2.8	3.9	1.0	0.6	7.6	2.1	8.4	6.5	1.8	3.9	3.5	3.1	1.0	1.8	3.2	1.4	5.8	1.8	7.8
NL	**AT**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SI**	**SK**	**FI**	**SE**	**BA**	**CH**	**IS**	**LI**	**ME**	**MK**	**NO**	**RS**	**TR**	**UK**
12.6	6.1	1.2	3.9	0.3	2.2	3.0	3.9	:	1.5	3.5	✗	✗	✗	2.1	8.1	6.2	1.0	4.6

Source: Eurostat AES. Data extracted and calculated by Eurostat.

Explanatory note

See the explanatory notes in Figure 8.3 for details on how this question was phrased in the AES. Of the possible replies, this figure captures the third option.

Country-specific notes

Bulgaria, Czechia, Lithuania and **Romania**: Low reliability because of the small sample size.
Sweden: Data are not available because of the very small sample size.

8.3. Provision of guidance services across Europe

Following on from the discussion of indicators related to adults' use of guidance services, the following sections focus on the provision of large-scale publicly subsidised guidance services. They thus present an overview of the services supported by top-level authorities across Europe that are open to adults and that aim to promote adult participation in education and training ([172]). The analysis moreover also covers services targeting specific groups of the adult population, such as adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, unemployed people, older workers and young people.

In most countries, the main publicly subsidised guidance services open to adults are located within PESs (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). PESs are generally associated with four main functions, namely: job brokering; providing labour market information; administering active labour market measures (e.g. guidance or assistance with job searches and/or job-related workshops or

([172]) National information on guidance systems and practices in Europe can also be found in Cedefop's 'Inventory on lifelong guidance'. See: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices

training programmes); and administering unemployment benefits. Often in PESs, special career guidance counsellors provide in-depth services to help find the right learning opportunities. In addition to personal guidance services provided by PESs, other providers may also offer guidance on education and training opportunities for adults.

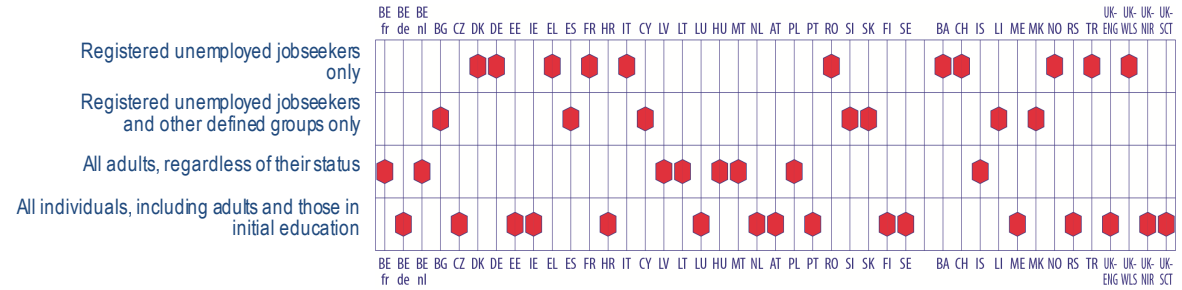
In the following sections, several different types of publicly supported guidance services – personal guidance from a counsellor, self-help guidance tools, and education and training online databases – are presented and analysed with regard to their availability for adults who are looking for information about learning opportunities.

8.3.1. Personal guidance services from a counsellor

Personal guidance services delivered in the context of PESs and involving direct contact with a counsellor are available everywhere in Europe. While the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) suggested that guidance services provided by PESs mainly targeted unemployed job seekers, the data collection carried out for this report shows that in around half of the countries or regions analysed all adults are able to benefit from such services, regardless of their employment status (Figure 8.5). In some countries, these services are also available to those who are in initial education.

In the remaining countries, only registered unemployed jobseekers or registered unemployed jobseekers and some other specific groups are able to benefit from personal guidance involving direct contact with a PES counsellor. The specific groups include people who are currently employed but who are looking for new employment opportunities or who wish to improve their future career prospects (e.g. in Spain, Cyprus or Slovakia), students (e.g. in Bulgaria, Slovenia or North Macedonia) and or people receiving state grants/loans or social welfare support (e.g. in Liechtenstein).

Figure 8.5: Target groups of personal guidance services involving direct contact with a counsellor, provided in the context of PESs, 2019/20



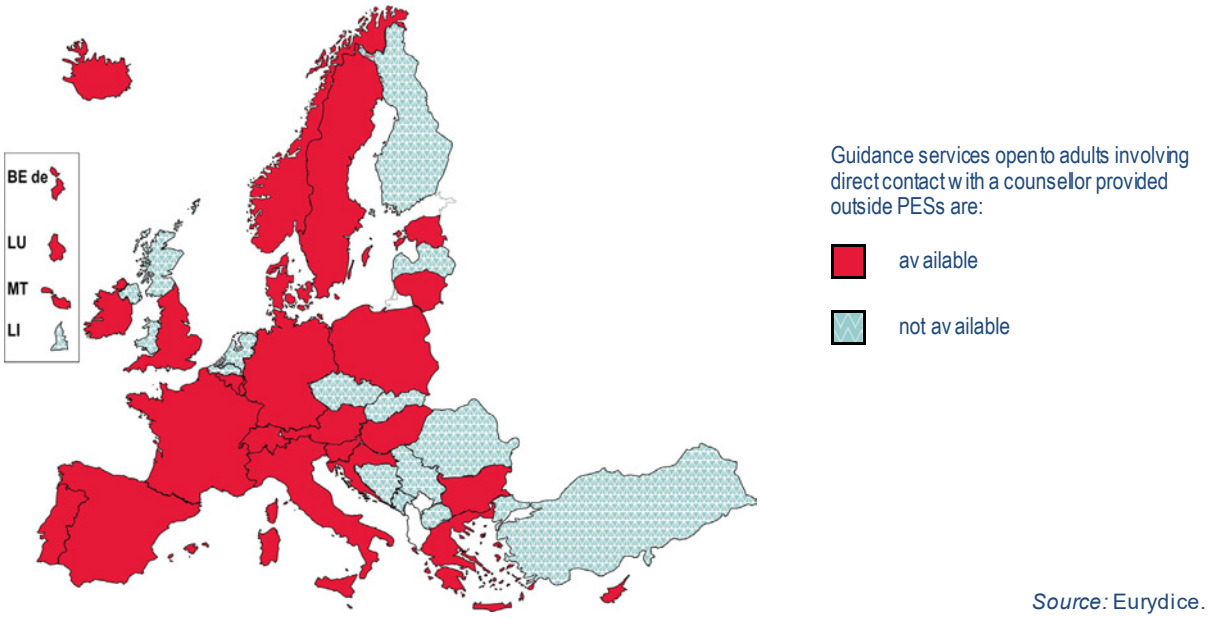
Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

Guidance refers to a range of activities designed to help individuals make educational, vocational or personal decisions and carry them out before and after they enter the labour market. Personal guidance services involve direct contact with a counsellor and may be provided in the context of PESs, i.e. the authorities responsible for connecting jobseekers with employers.

In addition to personal guidance services offered in the context of PESs, large-scale publicly subsidised personal guidance services that are open to adults and involve direct contact with a counsellor may also be offered outside PESs. According to the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015), publicly subsidised guidance services outside PESs were limited in most European countries, yet there were some examples of relevant practice. The current data collection, however, shows that over half of all European countries have such guidance services in place (Figure 8.6).

Figure 8.6: Large-scale publicly subsidised personal guidance services open to adults involving direct contact with a counsellor, provided outside PESs, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This figure captures reporting of the two most important large-scale publicly subsidised personal guidance services that are open to adults and that involve direct contact with a counsellor provided outside PESs (see Figure 8.5 for a definition of PESs).

The target group for these guidance services offered outside PESs is, in the majority of cases, all individuals, i.e. adults and those who are in initial education. Where guidance is provided in the context of a specific initiative it may focus on a specific target group, such as adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (e.g. in Austria, Portugal, Iceland and the United Kingdom (England)) or young people/adults (e.g. in Denmark, Hungary and Malta).

In **Austria**, the Central Advice Centre for Basic Education and Literacy (*Zentrale Beratungsstelle für Basisbildung*) targets adults with low levels of basic skills. Established over 10 years ago with the aim of informing and promoting the development of basic skills and literacy at different levels, the institution provides guidance and counselling directly by phone through the 'Alfatelefon', by WhatsApp and by text message, as well as in person. The responsible/subsidising authority is the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

In **Denmark**, the Municipal Youth Guidance Units (established in 2019) target young people aged between 15 and 25, focusing on the transition from lower secondary school to youth education or to the labour market. Moreover, Study and Career Guidance Denmark (established in 2004) provides guidance regarding both the choice of further education and subsequent job opportunities for all who want it, in particular students in or who have finished upper secondary education.

In most other countries with large-scale publicly subsidised personal guidance services open to adults and young people that involve direct contact with a counsellor and take place outside PESs, several types of guidance services can be distinguished. Some services place a stronger emphasis on providing information and guidance on education and training opportunities. Others emphasise more the connection to the labour market and guiding employment-related decisions. In addition, some guidance services provide information on both learning opportunities and professional development, two areas that are, in fact, closely interrelated.

Examples of the first type of personal guidance services provided outside PESs, i.e. those placing the main emphasis on education- and training-related advice, can be found in Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania and Slovenia.

The **German** 'InfoWeb further education' (*InfoWeb Weiterbildung*) was originally a project that was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2002–2004). It aimed to increase transparency in continuing education, and various methods were developed for this purpose. Today, the InfoWeb continues to provide general adult education guidance through its Info Telephone, which helps people establish their individual needs and realise their further education goals.

The **Slovenian** state-funded project Guidance Centres for Adult Education started in 2002 with the aim of providing information and guidance on educational and training opportunities, free of charge. The centres continue to provide high-quality, professional and comprehensive information and personal guidance and support to all adults to help them with their educational and training endeavours.

Examples of large-scale publicly subsidised personal guidance services taking place outside PESs that focus on guiding employment-related decisions can be found in the French and German-speaking Communities of Belgium, Bulgaria, France and Norway.

Created in **France** in 2014, 'Professional development counselling' (*Conseil en évolution professionnelle* (CEP)) is a free and personalised support system that is available to anyone wishing to take stock of their professional situation. It is provided by advisers from authorised bodies and is accessible to private sector employees, public sector officers, self-employed people, unemployed people and early school leavers. There are different authorised CEP bodies.

Career guidance centres that are free and open to all exist in all counties in **Norway**. National coordination of career guidance centres began in 2011 through a careers unit at the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (*Direktoratet for høyere utdanning og kompetanse*) and the centres are organised through the career guidance partnership network (*Partnerskap for karriereveiledning*). The centres are owned by the counties, in some cases in cooperation with labour and welfare authorities.

Examples of personal guidance services provided outside PESs that are open to adults and young people and that put an equal emphasis on the provision of both guidance on education and training opportunities and careers advice can be found in Ireland, Spain, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland.

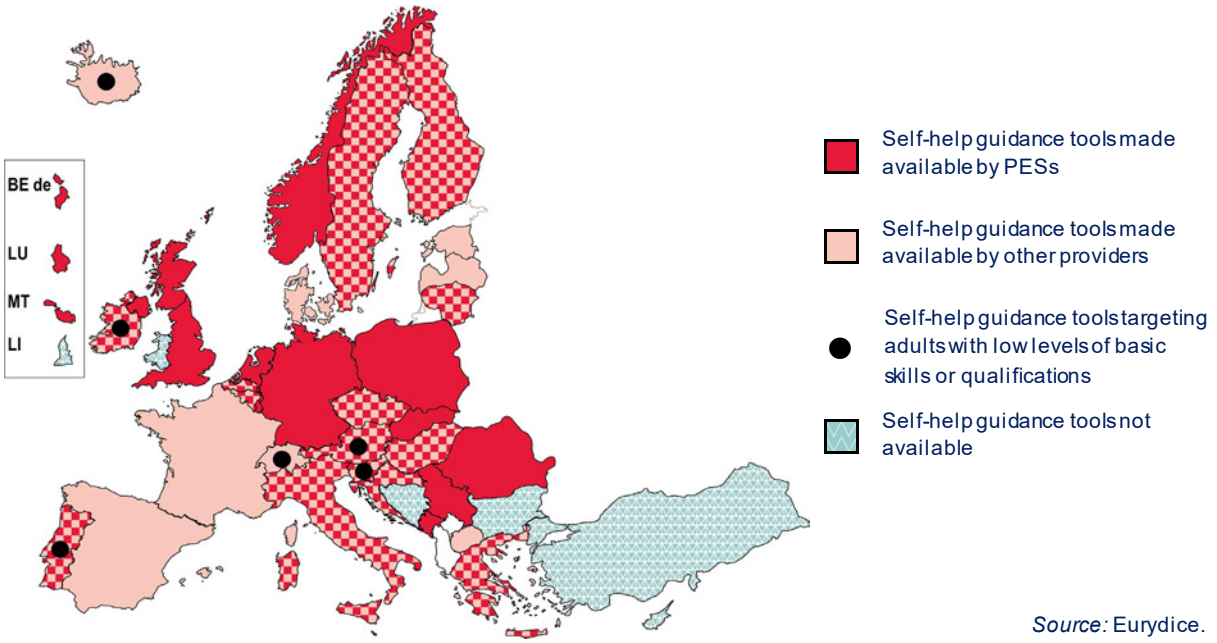
In **Luxembourg**, the 'House of Guidance' (*Maison de l'orientation*), set up in 2012, is the public one-stop shop for educational and vocational guidance services. Its activities are coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth. Guidance is also delivered by the vocational education and training guidance office of the PES (professional and careers guidance); regional youth guidance services (*Antennes locales pour jeunes*) for young people in transition from school to work life; and the Adult Education Department (educational guidance for adults).

In **Sweden**, schools and municipal adult education institutions are responsible for providing educational and careers guidance. Several actors and authorities cooperate to provide individuals with the guidance needed. These actors and authorities have overlapping assignments and thus common focus areas; their focus varies depending on where the guidance is provided. Careers guidance provided through the Swedish Employment Service emphasises to a greater extent the connection to the labour market than guidance provided by actors within the field of education. Cooperation processes are developed locally based on the prevailing conditions and needs.

8.3.2. Self-help guidance tools

As well as personal guidance services involving direct contact with a counsellor, other tools and forms of support can promote adult participation in education and training. These include self-help guidance tools providing information and advice on adult learning opportunities and/or labour market options, which adults can utilise independently (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Self-help guidance tools are designed to help individuals make informed educational, professional or personal decisions without the aid of others (e.g. based on self-assessment). As Figure 8.7 shows, such tools are found in all European countries/regions except for Bulgaria, Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Turkey and the United Kingdom (Wales).

Figure 8.7: Large-scale publicly subsidised self-help guidance tools, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

Self-help guidance tools are designed to help individuals make informed educational, vocational or personal decisions without the aid of others (e.g. based on self-assessment). This figure shows countries with self-help guidance tools that are provided/run by PESs (see Figure 8.5 for a definition of PESs) or by other providers receiving public subsidies for this service.

In more than half of the countries, the self-help guidance tools are provided or run by PESs. Somewhat fewer countries have – either in addition to or instead of the tools offered by PESs – large-scale publicly subsidised self-help guidance tools that are run by other providers. In Denmark, Estonia, Spain, France, Latvia, Switzerland, Iceland and North Macedonia, only other providers (not PESs) provide self-help guidance tools.

Among the self-help guidance tools provided by national PESs, both interactive and informative tools can be found. Interactive tools allow people to personalise their self-help guidance experience, for example by introducing their data, which is then matched with the available learning or job opportunities, while informative tools provide a range of information that can help people in their self-directed searches for education, training and employment opportunities.

The (interactive and informative) self-help guidance tools provided by PESs evidently have a strong focus on employment and career development. Examples of interactive self-help guidance tools that allow adults to introduce and analyse their skills and competences and match them with career opportunities are found in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland).

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, the website 'My career' (*Mijn loopbaan*) and related careers guidance page ([173]) are important tools for adults who would like to shape their own careers. Videos explain the positive impact of careers guidance and how it works in practice. Adults can upload their competences and skills to the 'competences database' and obtain an overview of possible careers opportunities based on their skills and knowledge; they can also discover which skills, competences or knowledge they need to expand in order to obtain access to a profession they are interested in. The website also provides guidance on where they can expand their skillset and competences (programmes, courses, etc.).

([173]) See: https://www.vdab.be/mijnloopbaan and https://www.vdab.be/loopbaanbegeleiding

The **Austrian** 'Career compass' (*Karrierekompass*) compiles information and self-help guidance tools on topics related to the labour market and the professional world ([174]). It addresses all individuals (including those in initial education and adults) and is open to the public. The tools include, among other things, online self-assessments to obtain careers guidance ([175]) and guidance on (further) education and training decisions ([176]).

Other interactive self-help guidance tools provided by PESs include interview simulators (French Community of Belgium) and personality tests (the Netherlands).

Among the interactive self-help guidance tools provided by or run by providers other than PESs are online questionnaires that can be used by adults to undertake self-assessments of their preferred fields of study and/or employment. Examples of such tools can be found in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Estonia, Croatia, Italy, Hungary and Iceland.

In **Croatia**, as well as online counselling, the Lifelong Career Guidance Centres provide brochures, leaflets and information on different types of group activities and workshops giving advice on seeking and creating professional opportunities and improving job-searching techniques. They also provide self-assessment questionnaires on personal interests and competences that can be used in searching a database with detailed descriptions of occupations.

Through the **Hungarian** 'Career guidance portal' ([177]), adults can access a questionnaire that aims to help them identify their professional interests.

In **Iceland**, a questionnaire is available on the web portal 'Next step' ([178]) that serves as an online self-assessment tool for all citizens to help them better understand their area of professional interest.

Other interactive self-help guidance tools offered by providers other than PESs include an online career guidance tool and exercises to help adults develop their career management skills (Greece) and a tool to help users define a training pathway based on their age, initial training and interests (Spain).

Informative self-help guidance tools are also provided in many countries and regions by PES ([179]) and other providers ([180]). These generally consist of websites providing information to assist adults in making decisions about their education, training and/or career paths. They also often provide an overview of available education and training opportunities (see also Section 8.3.3. 'Online databases on education and training opportunities') or information on financial support.

In the context of the data collection carried out for this report, countries were asked about any existing self-help guidance tools that explicitly target adults with low levels of basic skills or qualification. Only six countries reported having such publicly subsidised tools – Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland and Iceland.

The self-help guidance tools provided in **Portugal** ([181]), **Slovenia** ([182]) and **Iceland** ([183]) are more interactive in the sense that they include self-assessment tools addressed at adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications to evaluate their competences and qualifications and obtain information and guidance on their future learning and career paths.

([174]) See: https://www.karrierekompass.at/
([175]) See: http://www.berufskompass.at/startseite-mobil/
([176]) See: https://www.ausbildungskompass.at/
([177]) See: https://palyaorientacio.nive.hu/kerdoiv-kozepiskola-es-felnott
([178]) See: https://www.naestaskref.is
([179]) Including in BE fr, BE de, CZ, DE, EL, HR, IT, LT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SE, NO, RS and UK-ENG.
([180]) Including in DK, IE, FR, LV, LT, AT, FI, SE, CH and MK.
([181]) See: htts://www.passaportequalifica.gov.pt
([182]) For example, the 'Individual education plan – Simplified' or the 'Questionnaire for validation of digital competences' (paper version and e-version), both developed and managed by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.
([183]) See: https://www.naestaskref.is

In **Austria** ([184]) and **Switzerland** ([185]), on the other hand, the self-help guidance tools mainly provide adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications with information on courses promoting literacy and the development of basic skills and/or information on how to obtain qualifications.

In **Ireland** ([186]), online learning courses, including guidance, are available for adults with low levels of basic skills and those who are unemployed and who wish to learn at their own pace.

8.3.3. Online databases on education and training opportunities

In addition to the aforementioned self-help guidance services – or as part of them – education and training databases may be available for adults who are looking for information about learning opportunities. This service may not be used by everyone, as the 2016 AES shows that most adults, and in particular adults with low levels of educational attainment, do not necessarily conduct self-directed research about learning opportunities (see Figure 7.2). Nevertheless, online databases can be a valuable information source for those adults who are searching for information about suitable education and training programmes.

As part of the data collection carried out for this research, countries were therefore asked about the availability of large-scale online databases, developed with public support, where adults can find information about learning opportunities, including basic skills courses and programmes leading to qualifications at ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4. They were also asked about the availability of publicly subsidised online databases tailored specifically to the needs of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

With regard to the former, around two thirds of all European countries report the existence of a general online database(s) of learning opportunities, including programmes on basic skills and programmes leading to ISCED level 3 / EQF level 4 qualifications (Figure 8.8). This is a notable increase compared with the situation captured in the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015), when only around half of all European countries reported the existence of comprehensive online databases of learning opportunities for adults. However, as was the case at the time of the 2015 Eurydice report (ibid.), only a few (10) countries or regions have publicly subsidised online databases tailored specifically to the needs of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications. In Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Serbia and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), neither of these types of databases can be found.

The general online databases can be distinguished according to their main scope. Some are focused specifically on adult education and training opportunities. Others have a broader scope covering all or most of the learning provision within the education and training system, including adult learning. Finally, some focus on professional training opportunities linked to career development.

Examples of the main type of online database, i.e. databases focusing specifically on adult education and training opportunities, can be found in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Croatia, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

In **Spain**, the website of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training provides information on all non-university learning and teaching opportunities in the education system, including formal and non-formal training courses and programmes, access routes, free tests, recognition and accreditation procedures, validation of professional competences, centres where such courses can be

([184]) See: https://www.basisbildung-alphabetisierung.at

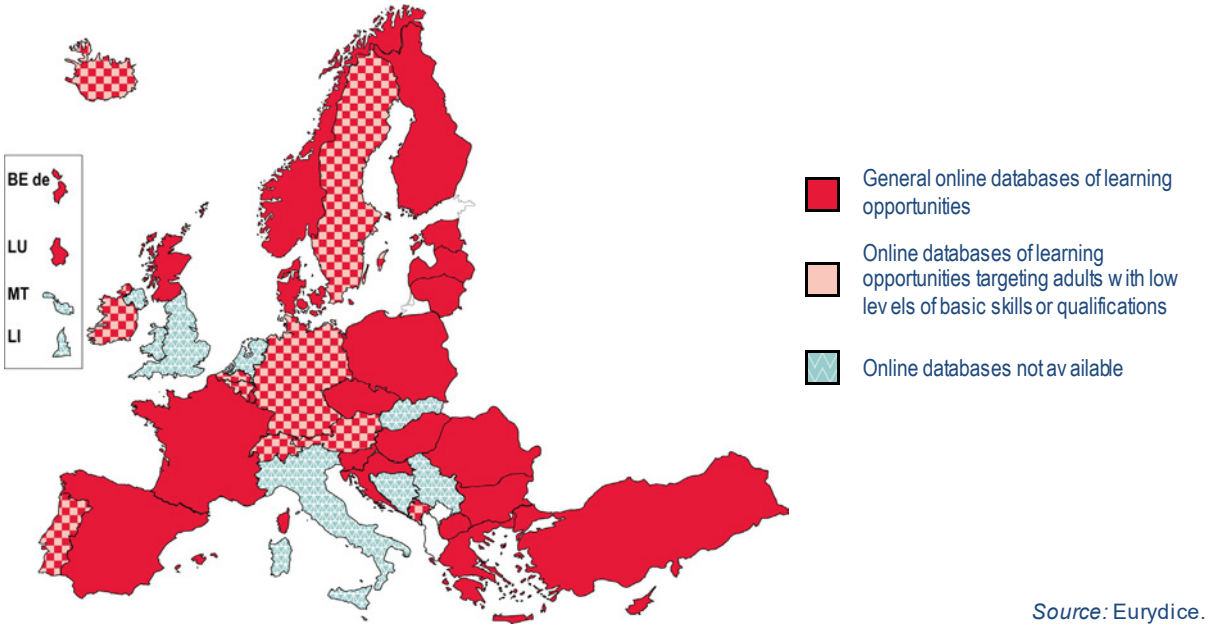
([185]) See: https://www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/show/7193 and https://www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/show/37865

([186]) See: https://www.ecollege.ie/

taken throughout the country ([187]). In addition, the ministry has developed several specific portals on vocational training, distance training, non-formal online training programmes, etc. ([188]). Similarly, the regional education administrations provide related information through their own web pages.

In **Montenegro**, the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports includes a database detailing all education programmes that are available to adults and the licensed organisers that implement these programmes ([189]).

Figure 8.8: Large-scale publicly subsidised online databases of learning opportunities, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This figure captures the availability of major (system-wide) publicly subsidised online databases in which adults can find information about the learning opportunities that are open to them, including basic skills programmes and programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to ISCED 3 / EQF 4. It also shows the availability of publicly subsidised online databases of education/training opportunities tailored specifically to the needs of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

Examples of large-scale online databases that have a broader scope, covering all or most of the learning provision within the education and training system, including adult learning, can be found in Denmark, Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

The **Greek** database of learning opportunities PLOIGOS ([190]) contains approximately 13 000 learning opportunities. It covers education programmes of all types and at all levels, including EQF level 4.

In **Finland**, an official website provides information about study programmes that lead to a degree ([191]). The website is kept up-to-date and contains information on the different degrees and qualifications provided in educational institutions in Finland. The service can be used to find different study options and apply for these online. The website and database was created in the early 2010s and is maintained by the Finnish National Agency for Education.

Examples of publicly subsidised online databases focusing mainly on professional education and training opportunities linked to career development and employment can be found in Bulgaria, France, Latvia, Austria, Portugal, Romania and Switzerland.

([187]) See: http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/contenidos/estudiantes/portada.html
([188]) See: https://www.todofp.es, http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/mc/cidead/portada.html and www.aulamentor.es
([189]) See: http://www.mpin.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rId=381927&rType=2
([190]) See: http://ploigos.eoppep.gr/ekep/external/index.html;jsessionid=198F6693E2DE0E3377A45E48EAB198D1
([191]) See: https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/what-is-studyinfo/

In **Bulgaria**, a database organised by the National Employment Agency and funded by the state budget under the 2020 national employment action plan focuses on training courses for unemployed people ([192]).

In **Romania**, the National Employment Agency provides an online database detailing vocational training programmes ([193]). The database is updated monthly.

Finally, publicly subsidised online databases tailored specifically to the needs of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications can be found in the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland and Montenegro. In some of these countries and regions (the French and Flemish communities of Belgium, Germany, Ireland and Austria), there are online databases that are specifically dedicated to providing information and learning opportunities promoting adult literacy and the development of basic skills.

The database of the **German** Federal Association for Literacy and Basic Skills provides information on adult education in the area of literacy. The association is supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and is a partner within the 'National decade for literacy and basic education 2016-2026' initiative. The database has been in existence for over 10 years ([194]).

In **Ireland**, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) has developed the interactive website 'Learn with NALA' ([195]) to inform adults about a wide range of literacy and numeracy courses. The website also provides support to adults throughout their use of the service: from initial assessment to accreditation and progression to further education or work.

In the other countries or regions – Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland and Montenegro – information on learning opportunities for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications is accessible through general websites on adult education and training opportunities (e.g. in dedicated sections).

([192]) See: https://www.az.government.bg/pages/grafici-za-obuchenia/#
([193]) See: https://www.anofm.ro
([194]) See: https://kursdatenbank.alphabetisierung.de/
([195]) See: https://www.nala.ie/

Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of statistical data related to adults' use of guidance services and the provision of publicly subsidised or supported guidance services across Europe. The services investigated include personal guidance services involving direct contact with a counsellor, self-help guidance tools and online databases of learning opportunities.

Regarding adults' use of guidance services, data from the 2016 AES show that, on average across EU-27 countries, around a quarter of adults received free information or advice on learning opportunities from institutions or organisations during the 12 months preceding the survey. Fewer than 2 % of adults reported paying for guidance (see Figure 8.1).

An analysis of the proportion of adults receiving free guidance on learning opportunities from institutions or organisations according to their socio-economic characteristics shows that those with lower educational attainment levels reported less frequently receiving guidance than those with higher attainment levels. Similarly, unemployed or economically inactive adults reported less frequently receiving guidance than employed adults. In addition, the older the respondents, the lower the likelihood of reporting having received free guidance on education during the 12 months preceding the survey (see Figure 8.2). The results therefore indicate that those adults who may need information and guidance about learning opportunities the most are in fact the least likely to use such services.

This chapter investigated, moreover, how widespread different modes of delivery of (free) guidance are. According to the AES, 8.4 % of adults had received face-to-face free guidance services during the 12 months preceding the survey (see Figure 8.3). Receiving guidance on learning opportunities from computer-based applications was comparatively less common. On average, across the EU-27, only 2.8 % of adults reported that they received information or advice on learning opportunities through a computer-based application during the 12 months preceding the survey (see Figure 8.4).

The qualitative analysis presented in this chapter then investigated the provision of guidance services across Europe. Guidance that is provided in the context of PESs and that involves direct contact with a counsellor is available everywhere in Europe. Whereas the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) suggested that guidance services provided by PESs mainly target unemployed jobseekers, the data collection carried out for this report shows that in around half of the countries or regions analysed all adults can benefit from such services, regardless of their employment status (see Figure 8.5). In some countries, these services are also available to those who are in initial education. The remaining countries report that only registered unemployed jobseekers or, in some cases, other specific groups (such as those looking for a career change, students, and people receiving state loans or support) can benefit from personal guidance involving direct contact with a PES counsellor.

While at the time of the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) publicly subsidised guidance services outside PESs were limited in most European countries, over half of all European countries currently report having large-scale publicly subsidised personal guidance services involving direct contact with a counsellor that are generally open to all individuals (see Figure 8.6). These services focus on providing information and guidance on education and training opportunities and/or on career development.

In addition to personal guidance services involving direct contact with a counsellor, self-help guidance tools are available in most European countries (except for the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Turkey and the United Kingdom (Wales)). These tools can help individuals make informed educational, professional or personal

decisions without the aid of others (e.g. based on self-assessment) (see Figure 8.7). The self-help guidance tools available across European countries are provided or run either by PESs or by other providers. They may be interactive tools, which allow adults to personalise their self-help guidance experience, or informative tools, which present a range of information that can help adults in their self-directed search for education, training and employment opportunities.

Only six countries – Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland and Iceland – reported having major publicly subsidised self-help guidance tools that explicitly target adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

Finally, around two thirds of all European countries report providing publicly subsidised online databases of learning opportunities for adults. This is a notable increase compared with the situation captured in the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015), when only around half of all European countries reported having comprehensive online databases of learning opportunities for adults.

However, as was the case at the time of the 2015 Eurydice report, currently only a few (10) countries or regions provide publicly subsidised online database tailored specifically to the needs of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (see Figure 8.8).

When evaluating the overall situation regarding the provision of publicly supported guidance services across Europe (see Figure 8.9), it is evident that such services are, in fact, widely available. In many countries, most of the guidance services investigated are available. As mentioned above, guidance services that are provided in the context of PESs and that involve direct contact with a counsellor are available everywhere in Europe. Other providers also deliver such services to adults in most countries. Similarly, large-scale publicly subsidised self-help guidance tools and online databases of education and training opportunities are available in most countries.

In contrast, targeted guidance services that are tailored specifically to the needs of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications exist in only few European countries. This finding goes hand in hand with the quantitative data presented in this chapter, which showed that guidance services are underused by some groups of adults, including those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Figure 8.9: Summary of large-scale publicly subsidised guidance services on learning opportunities for adults, 2019/20

	Large-scale personal guidance services open to adults involving direct contact with a counsellor, provided outside PESs	Large-scale publicly subsidised self-help guidance tools provided by PESs or other providers		Large-scale publicly subsidised online databases of learning opportunities	
		Large-scale self-help guidance tools open to adults	Large-scale self-help guidance tools targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications	Large-scale online databases open to adults	Large-scale online databases of learning opportunities targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications
BE fr	●	●		●	●
BE de	●	●		●	
BE nl		●		●	●
BG	●			●	
CZ		●		●	
DK	●	●		●	
DE	●	●		●	●
EE	●	●		●	
IE	●	●	●	●	●
EL	●	●		●	
ES	●	●		●	
FR	●	●		●	
HR	●	●		●	
IT	●	●			
CY	●			●	
LV		●		●	
LT	●	●		●	
LU	●	●		●	
HU	●	●		●	
MT	●	●			
NL		●			
AT	●	●	●	●	●
PL	●	●		●	
PT	●	●	●	●	●
RO		●		●	
SI	●	●	●	●	
SK		●			
FI		●		●	
SE	●	●		●	●
BA					
CH	●	●	●	●	●
IS	●	●	●	●	●
LI					
ME		●		●	●
MK		●		●	
NO	●	●		●	
RS		●			
TR				●	
UK-ENG	●	●			
UK-WLS					
UK-NIR		●			
UK-SCT		●		●	

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This figure presents a summary of the data displayed in Figures 8.6-8.8. For further details and explanations, see the reference figures.

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GLOSSARY

I. Terminology

Adult (Adult learner): An individual over 18 years of age who has already left the initial education and training system (see ► 'Initial education'). Younger people (aged 16 and above) are considered only where provision for them is also open to those aged 18 and above.

Adults with low levels of basic skills: In this report, this refers to (1) adults who can at most complete very simple reading tasks, such as read brief texts on familiar topics, and very simple mathematical tasks, such as one-step or simple processes involving counting, sorting, basic arithmetic operations and simple percentages (OECD, 2019b); (2) adults who cannot use computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the internet (Cedefop, 2014); and (3) adults who have a very low level of command of the official language of the country in which they live (i.e. insufficient for proper and effective interpersonal communication).

Awareness-raising: A process that seeks to inform and educate people about a topic or issue with the intention of influencing their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards the achievement of a defined purpose or goal (Sayers, 2006).

Basic skills (in adult education and training): In this report, basic skills (or basic skills provision/programmes) refer to literacy, numeracy and digital skills, and local language skills for speakers of other languages (with or without reference to other skills).

Credit: According to the Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning ([196]), 'credit means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes.'

Direct education/training costs: The immediate costs of education and training. For individuals, this may include programme fees and other payments for programmes, costs of study materials and costs of travelling to course facilities. For employers, this may include programme fees and other payments for programmes, costs of study materials and reimbursement of costs incurred by employees for travelling to course facilities. It may also include the costs of internal trainers and training centres and training rooms.

Distance learning: In this report, distance learning is understood as an overarching term including educational activities that are delivered at a distance through various communication media but not necessarily through electronic media; educational activities delivered using ICT (e-learning); and educational activities combining distance learning or e-learning with some face-to-face learning in education and training institutions (blended learning).

([196]) Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, OJ C 189, 15.6.2017.

Educational institution (Education/training institution): According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 79), an educational institution is an '[e]stablished institution that provides education as its main purpose, such as a school, college, university or training centre. Such institutions are normally accredited or sanctioned by the relevant national education authorities or equivalent authorities. Educational institutions may also be operated by private organisations, such as religious bodies, special interest groups or private educational and training enterprises, both for profit and non-profit.'

Education provider (Provider): According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 79), an education provider is an 'organization that provides education, either as a main or ancillary objective. This can be a public educational institution, as well as a private enterprise, non-governmental organization or non-educational public body.'

European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning: See the second section of the glossary ('II. Classifications and reference frameworks').

Evaluation: An assessment carried out to measure the success (of a strategy/programme/initiative) against a predefined objective.

Formal education: According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 80), formal education is '[e]ducation that is institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognised private bodies and – in their totality – constitute the formal education system of a country. Formal education programmes are thus recognised as such by the relevant national education authorities or equivalent authorities, e.g. any other institution in cooperation with the national or sub-national education 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.' See also ► 'Non-formal education'.

For-profit private institution: See ► 'Private institution (providing adult education/training)'.

General education: According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 80), general education refers to '[e]ducation programmes that are designed to develop learners' general knowledge, skills and competencies, as well as literacy and numeracy skills, often to prepare students for more advanced education programmes at the same or higher ISCED levels and to lay the foundation for lifelong learning. General education programmes are typically school- or college-based. General education includes education programmes that are designed to prepare students for entry into vocational education but do not prepare for employment in a particular occupation, trade, or class of occupations or trades, nor lead directly to a labour market-relevant qualification.' See also ► 'Programme (Education/training programme)'.

Guidance: A range of activities designed to help individuals make educational, vocational or personal decisions and carry them out before and after they enter the labour market (Cedefop, 2014).

Incidental or random learning: According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 80), incidental or random learning refers to '[v]arious forms of learning that are not organized or that involve communication not designed to bring about learning. Incidental or random learning may occur as a by-product of day-to-day activities, events or communication that are not designed as deliberate educational or learning activities. Examples may include learning that takes place during the course of a meeting, whilst listening to a radio programme, or watching a television broadcast that is not designed as an education programme.'

Indirect education/training costs: For individuals, these costs most often relate to the reduction in / interruption of gainful work (i.e. the reduction in / loss of income). Financial instruments that can reduce these indirect education/training costs commonly include paid education/training leave and grants and/or loans for living costs. For employers, these costs commonly refer to the labour costs of the participation of employees in education and training during paid working hours (i.e. personnel absence costs). Financial instruments that can reduce these indirect education/training costs include subsidies for the forgone productivity or wage-replacement benefits.

Informal learning: According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 80), informal learning refers to '[f]orms of learning that are intentional or deliberate but are not institutionalised. It is consequently less organised and structured than either formal or non-formal education. Informal learning may include learning activities that occur in the family, workplace, local community and daily life, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially-directed basis.' See also ► 'Formal education' and ► 'Non-formal education'.

Initial education: The formal education of individuals before their first entrance into the labour market (UNESCO-UIS, 2012).

International Standard Classification of Education: See the second section of the glossary ('II. Classifications and reference frameworks').

Intersectoral coordinating body: A top-level body/authority responsible for horizontal (intersectoral, interministerial) coordination. Such a body is usually expected to ensure that policies designed by different ministries do not overlap, address gaps in provision and are mutually reinforcing. As well as representatives of (at least two) top-level authorities, other decision-making levels (e.g. regions) or stakeholders (e.g. social partners) may also be involved.

Large-scale initiatives/programmes/schemes: Initiatives/programmes/schemes that operate throughout the whole country or a significant geographical area rather than being restricted to a particular institution or geographical location. They are intended as a long-term element of the system with resources planned to cover several consecutive years (as opposed to initiatives with short-term project-based funding covering only one or two years).

Low-qualified adults (Adults with low levels of qualifications): Individuals who have completed education or qualifications corresponding to ISCED levels 0-2 at most (see ► 'International Standard Classification of Education'). This means that they have not completed upper secondary education (or equivalent).

Modularisation: A building blocks approach to education and training programmes / qualifications in which the content is broken down into smaller units. These smaller units – modules – may be taken on their own or combined with other modules. Modular programmes often do not have clearly defined sequencing.

Monitoring: The process of systematic data gathering, analysis and use of information by top-level authorities to inform policy.

Non-formal education: According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 81), non-formal education refers to '[e]ducation 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 the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided 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 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. Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development.' See also ► 'Formal education'.

Non-profit private institution: See ► 'Private institution (providing adult education/training)'.

Outreach (Educational outreach): A range of activities designed to identify and attract non-learners, in order to encourage them to enrol in education and training programmes.

Private institution (providing adult education/training): An institution either that is controlled/managed by a non-governmental organisation (e.g. a church, trade union, business enterprise, foreign or international agency) or whose governing board consists mostly of members who are not selected by a public agency (UNESCO-UIS/OECD/Eurostat, 2016). For the purpose of this report, private institutions are subdivided into:

- non-profit private institutions, which are engaged in some activity of public benefit without any intention of earning income for their owners, with all of the income and donations used for operating the organisations;
- for-profit private institutions, which are operated by profit-seeking businesses.

Programme (Education/training programme): A coherent set or sequence of educational activities designed and organised to achieve pre-determined learning objectives or accomplish a specific set of educational tasks over a sustained period (UNESCO-UIS, 2012).

Programme group: A range of education/training programmes (see ► 'Programme (Education/training programme)') that are developed under the same (top-level) programme umbrella, under which individual providers can build their provision.

Public employment service: The authority responsible for connecting jobseekers with employers.

Public institution (providing adult education/training): An institution that is controlled and managed either directly by a public education authority or agency of the country where it is located, or by a governing body (council, committee, etc.), most of whose members are either appointed by a public authority of the country where it is located or elected by public franchise (UNESCO-UIS, OECD and Eurostat, 2016).

Qualification: According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 82), a qualification is the 'official confirmation, usually in the form of a document, certifying the successful completion of an education programme or a stage of a programme. Qualifications can be obtained through: i) successful completion of a full education programme; ii) successful completion of a stage of an education programme (intermediate qualifications); or iii) validation of acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, independent of participation in an education programme. This may also be referred to as a 'credential'.'

Quantitative target (National quantitative target): Numerical objective set by top-level authorities.

Second-chance education: According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 82), second-chance education refers to '[e]ducation specifically targeted at individuals who, for a variety of reasons, never attended school or left school either before completion of the level of education in

which they were enrolled or completed the level but wish to enter an education programme or occupation for which they are not yet qualified. Participants are often older than the typical target age group for the given ISCED level programme (but not necessarily adults). Sometimes also referred to as 'bridging programmes' or 're-integration programmes'.'

Self-help guidance tool: A guidance tool designed to help individuals to make informed choices about occupations, education/training or employment without the aid of others (e.g. based on self-assessment). See also ► 'Guidance'.

Skills audit: According to the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([197]), 'a skills audit means a process aimed at identifying and analysing the knowledge, skills and competences of an individual, including his or her aptitudes and motivations in order to define a career project and/or plan a professional reorientation or training project; the aim of a skills audit is to help the individual analyse his/her career background, to self-assess his/her position in the labour environment and to plan a career pathway, or in some cases to prepare for the validation of non-formal or informal learning outcomes.'

Strategic policy document: Official policy document on an important policy area that is usually issued by top-level authorities and sets out specific objectives to be met and/or the detailed steps or actions to be taken within a given timeframe, in order to reach a desired goal(s) or target(s).

Top-level authority: The highest level of authority with responsibility for defined policy areas in a given country, usually located at national (state) level.

Validation (of non-formal and informal learning): According to the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ([198]), 'validation means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard, and it consists of the following four distinct phases: (1) identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual; (2) documentation to make visible the individual's experiences; (3) a formal assessment of these experiences; and (4) certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification.

Vocational education: According to the ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS 2012, p. 84), vocational education refers to '[e]ducation programmes that are designed for learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies specific to a particular occupation, trade, or class of occupations or trades. Vocational education may have work-based components (e.g. apprenticeships, dual-system education programmes). Successful completion of such programmes leads to labour market-relevant vocational qualifications acknowledged as occupationally-oriented by the relevant national authorities and/or the labour market.' See also ► 'Programme (Education/training programme)'.

Work-based learning: Acquisition of knowledge and skills through carrying out – and reflecting on – tasks in a vocational context, either in the workplace (such as alternance training) or in a vocational education and training institution (Cedefop, 2014).

([197]) Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012.

([198]) Ibid.

II. Classifications and reference frameworks

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)

The ISCED classification (UNESCO-UIS, 2012) has been developed to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. The classification covers formal and non-formal education programmes offered at any stage of a person's life. More specifically, it covers a variety of education programmes that are designed within a national context, such as initial education, regular education, second-chance programmes, literacy programmes, adult education, continuing education, open and distance education, apprenticeships, technical and vocational education, training and special needs education.

The ISCED levels are as follows ([199]):

ISCED level 0: Early childhood education

Programmes at ISCED level 0, or early childhood education, are typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and introduce young children to organized instruction outside of the family context.

ISCED level 1: Primary education

Programmes at ISCED level 1, or primary education, are typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy) and establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge, personal and social development, in preparation for lower secondary education. It focuses on learning at a basic level of complexity with little, if any, specialisation.

Age is typically the only entry requirement at this level. The customary or legal age of entry is usually not below 5 years old nor above 7 years old. This level typically lasts six years, although its duration can range between four and seven years.

Formal and non-formal literacy programmes that are similar in complexity of content to programmes already classified as primary education, aimed at adults and youth older than typical ISCED level 1 students, are also included at this level.

ISCED level 2: Lower secondary education

Programmes at ISCED level 2, or lower secondary education, are typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from ISCED level 1. Usually, the aim is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and human development upon which education systems may then expand further educational opportunities. Some education systems may already offer vocational education programmes at ISCED level 2 to provide individuals with skills relevant to employment.

Programmes at this level are usually organized around a more subject-oriented curriculum, introducing theoretical concepts across a broad range of subjects.

ISCED level 2 begins after four to seven years of ISCED level 1 education, with six years of ISCED level 1 being the most common duration. Students enter ISCED level 2 typically between ages 10 and 13 (age 12 being the most common).

This level also includes adult education programmes equivalent in complexity of content to the education given in programmes already classified at this level.

([199]) The text that follows quotes various parts of the ISCED manual (UNESCO-UIS, 2012).

ISCED level 3: Upper secondary education

Programmes at ISCED level 3, or upper secondary education, are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both.

Programmes at this level offer students more varied, specialised and in-depth instruction than programmes at ISCED level 2. They are more differentiated, with an increased range of options and streams available. Teachers are often highly qualified in the subjects or fields of specialisation they teach, particularly in the higher grades.

ISCED level 3 begins after 8 to 11 years of education since the beginning of ISCED level 1. Pupils enter this level typically between ages 14 and 16. ISCED level 3 programmes usually end 12 or 13 years after the beginning of ISCED level 1 (or around age 17 or 18), with 12 years being the most widespread cumulative duration. However, exit from upper secondary education may range across education systems from usually 11 to 13 years of education since the beginning of ISCED level 1.

This level also includes adult education programmes equivalent in complexity of content to the education given in programmes already classified at this level.

ISCED level 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Post-secondary non-tertiary education provides learning experiences building on secondary education, preparing for labour market entry as well as tertiary education. It aims at the individual acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies lower than the level of complexity characteristic of tertiary education. Programmes at ISCED level 4, or post-secondary non-tertiary education, are typically designed to provide individuals who completed ISCED level 3 with non-tertiary qualifications required for progression to tertiary education or for employment when their ISCED level 3 qualification does not grant such access. For example, graduates from general ISCED level 3 programmes may choose to complete a non-tertiary vocational qualification; or graduates from vocational ISCED level 3 programmes may choose to increase their level of qualifications or specialise further. The content of ISCED level 4 programmes is not sufficiently complex to be regarded as tertiary education, although it is clearly post-secondary.

This level also includes adult education programmes equivalent in complexity of content to the education given in programmes already classified at this level.

ISCED level 5: Short-cycle tertiary education

Programmes at ISCED level 5, or short-cycle tertiary education, are often designed to provide participants with professional knowledge, skills and competencies. Typically, they are practically-based, occupationally-specific and prepare students to enter the labour market. However, these programmes may also provide a pathway to other tertiary education programmes. Academic tertiary education programmes below the level of a Bachelor's programme or equivalent are also classified as ISCED level 5.

This level also includes adult education programmes equivalent in complexity of content to the education given in programmes already classified at this level.

ISCED level 6: Bachelor's or equivalent level

Programmes at ISCED level 6, or Bachelor's or equivalent level, are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level are typically theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions.

This level also includes adult education programmes equivalent in complexity of content to the education given in programmes already classified at this level.

ISCED level 7: Master's or equivalent level

Programmes at ISCED level 7, or Master's or equivalent level, are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level may have a substantial research component but do not yet lead to the award of a doctoral qualification. Typically, programmes at this level are theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and other tertiary educational institutions.

ISCED level 8: Doctoral or equivalent level

Programmes at ISCED level 8, or doctoral or equivalent level, are designed primarily to lead to an advanced research qualification. Programmes at this ISCED level are devoted to advanced study and original research and are typically offered only by research-oriented tertiary educational institutions such as universities. Doctoral programmes exist in both academic and professional fields.

European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)

The EQF is a common reference framework of eight levels expressed as learning outcomes, serving as a translation device between different qualifications frameworks or systems and their levels. The purpose of the EQF is to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of people's qualifications ([200]).

Key concepts related to the EQF level descriptors are as follows:

- **Knowledge**: described as theoretical and/or factual.
- **Skills**: described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
- **Responsibility and autonomy**: described as the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility.

([200]) Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, OJ C 189, 15.6.2017.

The text that follows quotes various parts of the above recommendation.

The EQF learning outcomes for each level are as follows:

Level 1:

Knowledge: Basic general knowledge.

Skills: Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks.

Responsibility and autonomy: Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context.

Level 2:

Knowledge: Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study.

Skills: Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools.

Responsibility and autonomy: Work or study under supervision with some autonomy.

Level 3:

Knowledge: Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study.

Skills: A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information.

Responsibility and autonomy: Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems.

Level 4:

Knowledge: Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study.

Skills: A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study.

Responsibility and autonomy: Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities.

Level 5:

Knowledge: Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge.

Skills: A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems.

Responsibility and autonomy: Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others.

Level 6:

Knowledge: Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles.

Skills: Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study.

Responsibility and autonomy: Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups.

Level 7:

Knowledge: Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research; critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields.

Skills: Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields.

Responsibility and autonomy: Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams.

Level 8:

Knowledge: Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields.

Skills: The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.

Responsibility and autonomy: Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research.

Compatibility of the EQF level descriptors with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area provides descriptors for three cycles agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process. Each cycle descriptor offers a generic statement of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications that represent the end of that cycle. More specifically:

- The descriptor for the short cycle developed by the Joint Quality Initiative as part of the Bologna process, (within or linked to the first cycle), corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 5.
- The descriptor for the first cycle corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 6.
- The descriptor for the second cycle corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 7.
- The descriptor for the third cycle corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 8.

ANNEXES

Annex I: Strategic policy documents referring to adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications (issued in 2015-2020)

This annex presents an overview of strategic policy documents issued between 2015 and 2020 ([201]) that explicitly refer to access for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications to skills development or qualifications. A strategic policy document is an official policy document on an important policy area (usually issued by top-level authorities) that sets out specific objectives to be met and/or detailed steps or actions to be taken within a given time frame, in order to reach desired goals or targets. Countries were asked to select up to three relevant strategic policy documents issued by their top-level authorities between 2015 and 2020 ([202]).

In the table below, quantitative targets refer to numerical objectives set by top-level authorities regarding the education and training of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications.

In order to ensure that strategic commitments and goals are effectively realised, public authorities can allocate specific funding for their implementation. The table therefore also indicates whether any funding received is from national and/or European budgetary sources.

In the table, monitoring refers to the process of systematic data gathering, analysis and use of information by top-level authorities to inform policy; evaluation refers to assessment of the success of a strategic policy initiative against the predefined objectives.

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
BE fr	**Qualifying people in Brussels for employment. Training plan 2020 (*Qualifier les Bruxellois pour l'emploi. Plan Formation 2020*), 2016-2020** Plan to improve employment participation rates of Brussels citizens by improving their skills and qualification levels and providing access to lifelong learning. The objective was to develop the training provision gradually in order to reach 20 000 employment seekers per year by 2020. https://www.bruxellesformation.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Plan-Formation-2020-texte.pdf	●	●	●	●
BE fr	**Cooperation agreement regarding the validation of skills (*Accord de coopération relatif à la validation des compétences*), 2019-ongoing** Cooperation agreement concluded between the French Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission relating to the validation of skills. The purpose is to issue certificates of competence in order to certify the skills acquired by learners in a formal, non-formal and informal contexts. The targets set for 2019 were all surpassed. http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&table_name=loi&cn=2019032123	●	●	●	●
BE fr	**Get up Wallonia!, 2020-ongoing** Taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this policy document underlines the importance of vocational training and digital training; the development and updating of skills in connection with emerging and technical professions (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), professions of the future and in short supply, and essential professions such as those related to the health, social work and food sectors; re-qualification and re-skilling and skills improvement and upskilling. It also encourages self-employment. https://www.wallonie.be/sites/default/files/2020-04/note_du_gouvernement_de_wallonie_-_get_up_wallonia_.pdf		●	●	

([201]) The reference period for these documents extends until the end of 2020 in order to allow policy developments of key importance that took place in the second half of 2020 to be captured (for more details on the reference period used in the report, see 'Introduction').

([202]) Strategic policy documents issued between 2009 and 2014 can be consulted in the 2015 Eurydice report on adult education and training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
BE de	**Living in East Belgium 2025 – Regional development concept (*Ostbelgien leben 2025 – Regional Entwicklungskonzept*), 2019-2024** This strategic policy formulates a vision of the future for the German-speaking Community of Belgium in line with the European Commission's recommendations on lifelong learning. The concept aims to increase public awareness of continuing education and promote cooperation with external partners. Vocational training organisations should also benefit from increased support and the learning provision should be better coordinated. https://www.ostbelgienlive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/rek/Regionales_Entwicklungskonzept_Band_5_REK_III.pdf	●	●	●	●
BE nl	**Strategic literacy plan (*Strategisch Plan Geletterdheid*), 2017-2024** The strategic literacy plan includes five strategic goals to improve the literacy skills of the Flemish population: (1) significantly increase the number of young people leaving secondary education with adequate literacy skills; (2) increase literacy skills within families to stop the transmission of low levels of literacy from one generation to the next; (3) strengthen the literacy skills of jobseekers and employed people in the context of their training, job searching and employment to increase their chances of finding and keeping work; (4) strengthen the literacy skills of people in poverty in order to increase their participation in society; and (5) increase the digital literacy skills of young people and adults so they can fully participate in the digitalised society. https://www.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/strategisch-plan-geletterdheid-2017-2024	●	●		●
BE nl	**Concept note on adult education: Adult education as opportunity education. Opportunities to learn, integrate and qualify throughout life (*Conceptnota volwassenenonderwijs: Volwassenenonderwijs als kansenonderwijs. Kansen op leren, integreren en kwalificeren, een leven lang*), 2016-ongoing** This policy document aims to achieve higher participation rates for adults with low levels of basic skills in adult learning through the funding of adult education organisations and staff. Since September 2019, a new funding system for adult education has entered into force, providing open-ended funding to centres for basic adult education and teaching Dutch as a second language. https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Conceptnota%20volwassenenonderwijs%20-%20definitief.pdf				
BG	**Strategy for the development of professional education and training (*Strategiya za razvitie na profesionalnoto obrazovanie i obuchenie*), 2015-2020** The objectives of this strategy were to provide easily accessible and high-quality careers services for adults; increase adult participation in learning activities throughout life; provide internships and subsidised employment; and provide apprenticeships for unemployed young people with low educational levels and no qualifications, in accordance with the needs of the labour market. http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=934		●	●	●
CZ	**Digital literacy strategy (*Strategie digitální gramotnosti*), 2015-2020** The objective of this strategy was the development of people's digital literacy to enable them to use the potential of digital technologies for their personal development, employability and adaptability in the labour market, to improve their quality of life and social inclusion. Making digital technologies more accessible or supporting retraining programmes for unemployed people or those at risk of social exclusion were also highlighted in the strategy. https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/372765/Strategie_DG.pdf/46b094c8-609b-458d-cdcd-8c686ca87131				
DK	**Tripartite agreement (*Trepartsaftale*), 2018-2021** This agreement provides a framework for further cooperation with the aim of reaching adults with low levels of basic skills and qualifications to enhance their general and vocational competences. https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/2017/trepartsaftale-2017/		●		

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
DE	**General agreement on the national decade for literacy and basic education. Reducing functional illiteracy and raising the level of basic skills in Germany (*Grundsatzpapier zur Nationalen Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung. Den funktionalen Analphabetismus in Deutschland verringern und das Grundbildungsniveau erhöhen*), 2016-2026** At the level of the *Bund*, the aim is to reduce functional illiteracy and raise the level of basic skills in Germany. At the level of the *Länder*, the aims are to promote literacy and basic education supply structures; strengthen networks for literacy and basic education; attract participants for literacy and basic education programmes; strengthen specialist and coordination units; exchange examples of good practice; develop teacher training and qualifications for teaching staff; promote common learning opportunities for first and second language learners; implement joint public relations work; and produce regular reports. https://www.alphadekade.de/img/EN_General_Agreement_on_the_National_Decade_for_Literacy_and_Basic_Skills.pdf		●		●
DE	**National skills strategy (*Nationale Weiterbildungsstrategie*), 2019-ongoing** With this strategy, the *Bund*, the *Länder*, businesses, trade unions and the Federal Employment Agency are seeking to pool and advance their efforts to promote continuing education and skills development. The *Bund* and the *Länder* intend to better coordinate their policies on continuing education and training and to work together with other partners to make continuing education and training programmes and support options more transparent and easily accessible for all, and to expand them where necessary. The strategy partners also want to help to develop continuing education and training strategies, in particular in small and medium-sized enterprises without large human resources departments. https://www.bmbf.de/files/NWS_Strategiepapier_barrierefrei_DE.pdf				●
EE	**Adult education programme (*Täiskasvanuhariduse programm*), 2018-2021, 2020-2023** The aim of this programme is to bring back adult early leavers to formal education and support their graduation; slow down the decline in numbers of students in adult upper secondary schools; and increase the proportion of adult learners in VET. The following targets have been set: (1) number of adult learners in general education by 2023: > 5 075; (2) percentage of adult early leavers from general education by 2023: 30 %; (3) participation rate of 25- to 64-year-olds with a low level of education in adult lifelong learning by 2023: > 6.5 %. https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/9_taiskasvanuhariduse_programm_2018-2021.pdf; https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/7_taisk_progr_2020-23.pdf	●	●	●	●
EE	**Welfare development plan (*Heaolu arengukava*), 2016-2023** The plan aims to increase rates of employment and the quality of working life, reduce social inequalities and poverty, increase gender equality and provide greater social inclusion. Actions aimed at improving employees' qualifications include the development of counselling services, training and retraining opportunities and other labour market services (including financial incentives and support). https://www.sm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/eesmargid_ja_tegevused/welfare_development_plan_2016-2023.pdf		●	●	●
IE	**National further education and training (FET) strategy 2020-2024 – Future FET: Transforming learning** The strategy is a high-level document that sets out the role of FET in a more collaborative and cohesive tertiary education system in Ireland. It outlines the contribution that FET will make alongside higher education providers to serve school leavers, lifelong learners, employees looking to upskill and marginalised people who want to re-engage in education, while also supporting employers and communities. Priorities are set out across three core pillars: building skills, creating pathways and fostering inclusion. https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf				
IE	**Skills to advance, 2019-2021** This initiative enables targeted support to be provided to vulnerable groups in the Irish workforce, with a particular focus on those who have lower skills levels and who need more opportunities to advance in their working lives and careers, to sustain their employment and to avoid displacement or to avail of emerging job opportunities. The 2019 target for Skills to Advance was to have 5 000 employees with skills levels below level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications engaged in state-supported skills development. This target was surpassed, with 5 664 workers engaging in Skills to Advance throughout 2019. https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/69a799b4ff/skillstoadvance_scheme_2019-2021.pdf	●	●		●

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
IE	**Action plan for education 2016-2019** This action plan outlined a plan for the Irish education system as a whole, including further education and training (FET), with the aim of making the Irish education and training service the best in Europe by 2026. Regarding FET, the aims were to meet the specific needs of unemployed people and other groups impacted by disadvantage, and to support adults with basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs and workers with low and basic levels of skills. https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Action-Plan-for-Education-2016-2019/2016.html				●
EL	No strategic policy document was issued between 2015 and 2020 that referred to access for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications to skills development or qualifications	–	–	–	–
ES	**First strategic plan for vocational training in the education system (*I plan estratégico de formación profesional del sistema educativo*), 2019-2022** This plan is aimed at improving the quality and range of vocational training. There are three core aspects: the recognition and accreditation of skills acquired through work experience or non-formal pathways; improving the accessibility of vocational training and vocational guidance services; and incorporating digitalisation, innovation and entrepreneurship in the vocational training system. It includes a specific focus on adults with low levels of skills or qualifications. http://todofp.es/dam/jcr:163978c0-a214-471e-868d-82862b5a3aa3/plan-estrategico--enero-2020.pdf		●	●	●
FR	**Plan for investment in skills (*Plan d'investissement dans les compétences*), 2018-2022** The main objective of this plan is to increase employability through training one million low or unskilled jobseekers and 1 million young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/le-ministere-en-action/plan-d-investissement-dans-les-competences/	●	●		●
FR	**Digital school, a realistic utopia (*Grande école du numérique, une utopie réaliste*), 2015-ongoing** This initiative aims to promote social and professional integration through digital technologies while meeting the growing need for digital skills in the labour market. It uses innovative teaching methods and is aimed primarily at people who are far from the world of work, including young people with few or no qualifications, women who are neither in employment nor in training and residents of priority neighbourhoods. The *Grande école du numérique* aims to promote the social and professional integration of 10 000 people through digital technologies. http://www.economie.gouv.fr/files/files/PDF/rapport_grande-ecole-du-numerique_2015.pdf	●	●	●	●
HR	**National reform programme (*Nacionalni program reformi*), 2019 (updated annually)** This programme sets out the main objectives, reform priorities and measures of the economic policies, aligning education with labour market needs. In the area of adult education, the aim of this programme was to improve the quality and relevance of adult education programmes and increase the number of adult participants who have completed elementary education and training for low-skilled jobs from 10 531 to 11 100. Actions also included increasing the availability of lifelong learning for employed and unemployed people to reduce the differences between labour market needs and available skills of workers, i.e. respond to the challenges of dynamic labour market changes. https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/Vijesti/2019/04%20Travanj/30%20travnja/NRP%202019%20i%20Odluka%20Vlade/NRP%202019%20english/National%20reform%20programme%202019.pdf	●	●	●	●
HR	**Strategic plan of the Ministry of Science and Education (*Strateški plan Ministarstva znanosti i obrazovanja*), 2019-2021 (updated biannually)** The overall objectives of this strategic plan are to provide a high-quality education system; improve vocational and adult education; improve the quality, relevance, efficiency and accessibility of higher education; and provide an internationally competitive system of science. More specific goals include increasing the numbers of adults pursuing adult basic skills programmes and receiving grants for participation in basic skills or first qualification educational programmes, and increasing the percentage of adults participating in adult education in general. https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/PristupInformacijama/Strateski//Strate%C5%A1ki%20plan%20Ministarstva%20znanosti%20i%20obrazovanja%20za%20razdoblje%202019.%20-%202021..pdf	●	●	●	●

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
IT	**National skills guarantee plan for the adult population (*Piano nazionale di garanzia delle competenze della popolazione adulta*), 2018-2019** This plan aimed to transpose the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation. It focused on five main measures: promoting and supporting the participation of provincial centres for adult education (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*) in the construction and operation of networks for lifelong learning; promoting and supporting – in accordance with the 'Agenda 2030' and the 'New European skills agenda' (*Nuova Agenda europea delle competenze*) – the activation of 'Skills guarantee pathways' (*Percorsi di Garanzia delle Competenze*) for adults of working age, aimed at the acquisition of basic and transversal competences; strengthen and consolidate centres for research; promoting and supporting the implementation of flexible tools in adult education programmes, in particular distance learning; and promoting and supporting the activation of integrated education programmes aimed at the acquisition of qualifications that allow access to tertiary education. An update of the plan is underway. https://www.miur.gov.it/piano-di-garanzia-delle-competenze-della-popolazione-adulta	●	●	●	●
CY	**Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) strategic plan (updated annually)** All adults, including adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, can participate in the HRDA's activities. The HRDA sets numerical participation targets according to the corresponding expenditure for the year. https://www.anad.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/page/project/p_id/692/pc_id/124	●	●	●	●
LV	**Adult education governance model (*Par Pieaugušo izglītības pārvaldības modeļa ieviešanas plānu*), 2016-2020** This model sought to implement strategies for developing basic skills and competences, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship among adults without qualifications and skills, according to labour market needs. http://likumi.lv/ta/id/281992-par-pieauguso-izglitibas-parvaldibas-modela-ieviesanas-planu-2016-2020-gadam		●	●	
LT	**Development programme for non-formal and continuous adult learning (*Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo ir tęstinio mokymosi plėtros programa*), 2016-2023** The aims of this programme are to strengthen the motivation to learn, link lifelong learning with learners' choices and create a system of financial support; ensure the integrity of lifelong learning, especially through practice, internships and apprenticeships; create and start implementing a system to recognise competences obtained informally and from practice; and introduce an information and consultation system by appointing lifelong learning coordinators in the municipalities. The aim is to raise the level of participation in lifelong learning of those aged 25-64 (during the previous 4 weeks) from 5.2 % in 2012 to 8 % in 2018 and 12 % in 2023, and the percentage of students undertaking secondary education in VET schools from 28.4 % in 2013 to 33 % in 2018 and 35 % in 2023. https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/b7f45490007711e6bf4ee4a6d3cdb874?jfwid=f4nne5tdt	●			●
LT	**Action plan for the development of lifelong learning (*Mokymosi visą gyvenimą plėtros veiksmų planas*), 2017-2020** This action plan aimed to update the content of and training methods for VET, enabling VET schools to provide competitive skills for the 21st century. It also aimed to create effective conditions and incentives for lifelong learning. The aim was to raise the level of participation in lifelong learning of those aged 25-64 (during the last 4 weeks) from 5.8 % in 2016 to 9 % in 2020; the percentage of those aged 25-34 following formal education programmes from 10.2 % in 2016 to 14 % in 2020; and the number of recognised qualifications per 10 000 inhabitants from 3 % in 2016 to 14 % in 2020. https://www.kpmpc.lt/kpmpc/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/MVG-pletros-planas_2017-2020.pdf	●	●	●	●
LT	**Strategic action plan of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (*Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerija. Strateginis veiklos planas*), 2018-2020** This plan aimed to increase the skills and opportunities for employment of jobseekers; support the employment of target groups in social enterprises; organise information and consultations for jobseekers, including older people; implement the youth guarantee initiative and other youth employment programmes; and coordinate demand and supply to support the integration of unemployed people in the labour market. Various quantitative targets were set to increase the employment rate for young people, the number of people employed in social enterprises, the number of unemployed people participating in active labour market measures, etc. https://socmin.lrv.lt/uploads/socmin/documents/files/veikla/teises-aktai/isak/A1-654_sadm-strateginis-veiklos-planas_keitimas-A1-228_20180521.pdf	●	●	●	●
LU	No strategic policy document was issued between 2015 and 2020 that referred to access for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications to skills development or qualifications	–	–	–	–

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
HU	**Digital education strategy of Hungary (*Magyarország Digitális Oktatási Stratégiája*), 2016-ongoing** The mission statement of this strategy proposes preparing the education and training system for performing education, instruction and training tasks in line with the needs of the digital society and economy in terms of infrastructure, technology, content, work organisation and human resources. https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/download/0/4b/21000/The%20Digital%20Education%20Strategy%20of%20Hungary.pdf	●	●	●	●
MT	**Malta national lifelong learning strategy 2020, 2015-2020** Through the integration of formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences, this strategy addressed the development of lifelong learners. The five main objectives were (1) stimulate adults' participation in lifelong learning by creating a demand and a desire for learning; (2) place the learner at the centre of the process by means of innovative learning methods and environments beyond those defined by formal learning, and make learning flexible, personal, accessible and relevant; (3) improve skill sets that contribute to professional development, employment mobility and active citizenship; (4) develop support structures for adult learning; and (5) improve governance in the lifelong learning sector, exploring the available structural, institutional, fiscal, legal, political and administrative measures. https://medecms.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta%20National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%202020.pdf	●	●		
NL	**Joining forces for a higher skill level in the Netherlands: Follow-up approach to low literacy (*Samen aan de Slag voor een Vaardig Nederland: Vervolgaanpak Laaggeletterdheid*), 2020-2024** With regard to adults with low levels of basic sills, the following objectives have been identified: find new ways to reach more people (especially those with Dutch as a first language); reach agreements with the municipalities, providing extra money to carry out these agreements, such as for training language buddies or reaching people with low levels of basic skills; make additional investments in language training in the workplace; promote reading among families with low levels of literacy and prevent deficiencies in literacy skills; improve the quality of language hubs; set up a national expertise centre for basic skills; set up a national monitor for basic skills and improve the quality of training provision; and spend EUR 700 000 on developing new ideas and sharing knowledge and examples of good practice. In addition, this policy letter announces the 'Count on Skills' programme (*Tel mee met Taal*; 2020-2024), which aims to provide people with sufficient basic skills (reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills) to participate in society, both online and offline. https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2020/03/09/bijlage-1-kamerbrief-over-plan-om-aanpak-laaggeletterdheid-2020-2024	●	●		●
NL	**Policy letter for lifelong learning (*Kamerbrief Leven Lang Ontwikkelen*), 2019-2022** This policy letter elaborates the various policy measures that form part of the action programme on adult learning. The overall objective is the increased participation of adults (with low levels of qualifications) in adult learning. https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2018Z17039&did=2018D46296		●		●
AT	**Austrian initiative for adult education (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung. Länder-Bund-Initiative zur Förderung grundlegender Bildungsabschlüsse für Erwachsene inklusive Basisbildung*), 2018-2021** The initiative for adult education provides education courses free of charge to adults with low levels of basic skills and qualifications. The key aim is to ensure equal access opportunities in the programme areas of basic skills training and attainment of a lower secondary education certificate. From 2015 to 2017, the nationwide target for courses on developing basic skills was to reach 13 438 participants and the target for courses on preparing for the attainment of a lower secondary education certificate was to reach 5 831 participants. These objectives were easily reached. The equivalent targets for 2018–2021 are 4 483 and 1 945 participants, respectively. https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/PPD_2018-2021_Version_Mai_2019.pdf	●	●	●	●
AT	**National strategy for validating non-formal and informal learning in Austria (*Strategie zur Validierung nicht-formalen und informellen Lernens in Österreich*), 2017-ongoing** This strategy emphasises equality of access opportunities and validation of non-formal and informal learning. This includes improving access to second-chance education for adults from a low socio-economic background and/or adults with low levels of qualifications. https://www.qualifikationsregister.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Strategie_zur_Validierung_nicht-formalen_und_informellen_Lernens.pdf				

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
PL	**Strategy for responsible development for the period up to 2020 (including the perspective up to 2030) (*Strategia na rzecz odpowiedzialnego rozwoju do roku 2020 (z perspektywą do 2030)*)** The main objective of the strategy is to create the conditions needed to increase incomes and increase cohesion in the social, economic, environmental and territorial dimensions. One of the strategy's initiatives aims to promote lifelong learning in different forms, including taking a supra-ministerial approach to competences and skills training. This is centred on a new adult education model based on non-formal education that recognises the learning outcomes of non-formal education (non-formal and informal learning) and provides wider access to integrated services for citizens through educational provision, combined with services from other areas (promotion of entrepreneurship and employment, family support, participation in culture, social activity). The specific targets of the strategy include an increase to 71 % in the employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds, a reduction to 4.5 % in the proportion of early school leavers and an increase to 45 % in the proportion of people aged 30-34 who have achieved a higher education. https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony/informacje-o-strategii-na-rzecz-odpowiedzialnego-rozwoju	●	●	●	●
PL	**Human capital development strategy 2030 (*Strategia rozwoju kapitału ludzkiego 2030*), 2020-2030** The main goal of this strategy is to develop human capital by unlocking the potential of people in such a way that they can fully participate in social, political and economic life at all stages of life. In the area of adult education, the strategy aims to disseminate adult learning opportunities, especially in their most effective forms (learning at work and social engagement of employees, short-form courses), which requires recognition of learning outcomes achieved through non-formal and informal learning, and quick responses to address employees' needs to improve their qualifications. The strategy also seeks to develop a system to support adult education financially, which will ultimately allow the development of an internally coherent and comprehensive system of funding for adult education. On 14 December 2020, the Council of Ministers adopted an updated version of the human capital development strategy 2030. https://www.gov.pl/attachment/b2e1abd6-45a3-400b-8766-b9717fa32110		●	●	●
PL	**Integrated skills strategy (*Zintegrowana startegia umiejętności*), 2019-2030** This strategic document consists of two closely related parts. The general part contains conclusions and recommendations from an analysis of the mechanisms for skills development and use in Poland. Based on this, six priorities for skills development are defined: (1) raise the key skills levels of children, youth and adults; (2) develop and promote a culture of learning directed towards the active and continuous development of skills; (3) increase the involvement of employers in developing and better utilising skills; (4) build an effective system of diagnosing and informing about the current state and demand for skills; (5) develop effective and permanent mechanisms of interministerial and intersectoral cooperation for skills development; and (6) ensure equal opportunities in terms of access to the development and utilisation of skills. The more detailed part of the document operationalises the priorities and main areas of action presented in the general part. https://www.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/images/zsu.pdf; https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/zintegrowana-strategia-umiejetnosci-2030-czesc-szczegolowa--dokument-przyjety-przez-rade-ministrow		●	●	
PT	**Qualifica programme (*Programa Qualifica*), 2016-ongoing** This programme aims to increase the qualification levels of the adult population to a minimum level of upper secondary education. The target is to reach 600 000 adults over 2017-2020. https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/	●	●	●	●
RO	**National lifelong strategy (*Strategia nationala de invatare pe tot parcursul vietii*), 2015-2020** Targets set for 2020 included supporting the participation of 45 000 adults who have left school early with low levels of qualifications in the acquisition of basic or transversal skills; supporting participation in order to establish 125 000 apprenticeship contracts for people with low levels of qualifications; and providing financial incentives/grants for 100 000 employees with reduced skills to enable them to acquire transversal skills. https://edu.ro/strategia-na%C8%9Bional%C4%83-de-%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C5%A3are-pe-tot-parcursul-vie%C5%A3ii	●	●	●	●

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
SI	**Slovenian development strategy 2030 (*Strategija razvoja Slovenije 2030*), 2017-2030** The main goal of this strategy is to provide a high quality of life for all. Among the strategic orientations and goals, one is focused on increasing knowledge and skills to improve people's quality of life and work, in particular increasing adult lifelong learning participation and the proportion of the population completing tertiary education. Indicators include the proportion of citizens completing tertiary education: baseline value – 30.4 % (2016, Eurostat EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS)), target value for 2030 – 35 %; adult participation in learning (25-64 years): baseline value – 11.2 % (2016, Eurostat EU-LFS), target value – 19 %; average outcomes in mathematics, reading and natural sciences: initial value – ranked in the top quarter of EU countries, target value – maintain this ranking. https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne-sluzbe/SVRK/Strategija-razvoja-Slovenije-2030/Slovenian-Development-Strategy-2030.pdf	●	●	●	●
SI	**National strategy for the development of reading literacy (*Nacionalna strategija za razvoj bralne pismenosti*), 2019-2030** This strategy aims to develop literacy levels and motivate all generations, including adults, according to their initial literacy level, to read different types and genres of texts and develop critical reading skills, at all times of life. https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/Razvoj-solstva/Novice/Nacionalna_strategija_pismenost_-2019_30.doc				
SK	No strategic policy document issued between 2015 and 2020 referring to access of adults with low basic skills or qualifications to skills development or qualifications	–	–	–	–
FI	**Inclusive and competent Finland – A socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society, programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government (*Osallistava ja osaava Suomi – sosiaalisesti, taloudellisesti ja ekologisesti kestävä yhteiskunta, Pääministeri Sanna Marinin hallituksen ohjelma*), 2019-2023** Targets related to adults with low levels of basic skills and qualifications are expressed in a very general way in the government programme: to promote continuous learning, improve employees' employment protection, strengthen adults' missing basic skills and respond to the labour need of different areas and sectors; and to implement near-term measures to respond to the shortage of skills and to train adults with a low level of basic skills. http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161935		●		
SE	**The government's long-term strategy for reducing and counteracting segregation (*Regeringens långsiktiga strategi för att minska och motverka segregation*), 2018-2028** Among the priority areas highlighted in this strategy is education, in particular the need to create training opportunities for adults to increase participation in the labour market. The strategy was complemented with an action plan (finalised in 2020). Some of the actions related to adult education include the expansion of the 'Knowledge Boost' programme to provide more people with the opportunity to acquire relevant qualifications that lead to employment; investments in education combining vocational training with 'Swedish for immigrants'; investments in folk high school general and special courses; and investments in outreach activities. https://www.regeringen.se/49feff/contentassets/a29a07890ec24acd900f5156fbf45f08/regeringens-langsiktiga-strategi-for-att-minska-och-motverka-segregation.pdf; Action plan: https://www.regeringen.se/48fb96/contentassets/07a6da2f421f4dbb9b67a5b0dca4b7bf/handlingsplan-mot-segregation-201218.pdf		●		●
BA	No strategic policy document was issued between 2015 and 2020 that referred to access for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications to skills development or qualifications	–	–	–	–
CH	**Federal act on continuing education (*Bundesgesetz über die Weiterbildung / Loi fédérale sur la formation* continue), 2017-ongoing** This policy document defines general basic principles for funding and for research and explicitly regulates the promotion of basic competences for adults. It stipulates that providers of adult courses for the acquisition and maintenance of basic skills should ensure that the courses on offer are practical in that they offer relevant topics and that they include social, economic and legal issues in the teaching of basic skills to adults. https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/20141724/index.html		●		●

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
CH	**Making the best use of opportunities: Declaration 2019 on the common educational policy objectives for the Swiss education area (*Chancen optimal nutzen: Erklärung 2019 zu den gemeinsamen bildungspolitischen Zielen für den Bildungsraum Schweiz*), 2019-ongoing** The Confederation and the cantons support adults to enter and re-enter the labour market as well as adapt within the labour market with structures that are as flexible and accessible as possible and by providing vocational, study and career counselling. Adults have access to basic vocational education and further training. Existing skills and competences are taken into account. This includes both formally and non-formally acquired competences and those acquired informally. https://edudoc.ch/record/205824?ln=de				
IS	**Governmental policy action plan for the fourth industrial revolution (*Markáætlun á sviði vísinda, tækni og nýsköpunar byggð á aðgerðaáætlun um fjórðu iðnbyltinguna*), 2020-2023** This action plan has several target goals regarding adult learning: prioritise education for those with low levels of basic skills and streamline the current framework of cooperation between the social partners and the state to allow for better access; analyse and revise the educational structure/system for adults with low levels of qualifications (and/or adults with low levels of basic skills) to ensure better and broader access; and commence work to coordinate and better streamline the transition between the formal education system and the current system of adult education for people with low levels of basic skills. https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2020/05/20/Kynntu-aherslur-rikisstjornarinnar-i-nyskopun-og-visindum-/		●		
LI	No strategic policy document was issued between 2015 and 2020 that referred to access for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications to skills development or qualifications	–	–	–	–
ME	**Adult education strategy (*Strategija obrazovanja odraslih*), 2015-2025** This strategy defines the following goals: (1) increase the social inclusion of adults through lifelong learning and education activities; (2) improve the knowledge, skills and competences of adults to increase employability, labour market mobility and competitiveness; (3) increase the competences of employees in order to achieve faster economic growth; (4) establish a quality assurance system in adult education; and (5) provide a flexible and sustainable adult education system. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwi36JyQ9ojqAhVvxIsKHX3uCdUQFjABegQIAxAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cso.gov.me%2FResourceManager%2FFileDownload.aspx%3Frid%3D195514%26rType%3D2%26file%3DStrategija%2520obrazovanja%2520odraslih%25202015-2020%2520Vlada.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2weqr9qP7OyolPrvvbMrrS				●
ME	**Adult education plan (*Plan obrazovanja odraslih*), 2019-2022** The five priority goals defined by the adult education strategy (2015–2025) are operationalised in the adult education plan (2019–2022). They are (1) provide programmes and activities for lifelong education and learning; (2) improve the knowledge, skills and competences of unemployed people; (3) improve the competences of employees; (4) provide quality assurance in adult education; and (5) ensure a flexible and sustainable adult education system. The overall aim is to increase the social inclusion of adult citizens by a minimum of 0.5 % per year through activities, lifelong learning and education. https://www.google.rs/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjgx4zfh_buAhXS4lUKHUf9CFEQFjAAegQIARAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.me%2FResourceManager%2FFileDownload.aspx%3Frid%3D344507%26rType%3D2&usg=AOvVaw2babUlUAnQeE_T2pXav9ZZ	●	●	●	●
MK	**Education strategy (*Strategija za obrazovanieto*), 2018-2025** This strategy focuses on the overall education system in the country. Adult learning and education is one of the key strategic areas, which includes, as a priority, the need to improve the qualification levels of adults (knowledge, skills and competences). http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-ENG-WEB-1.pdf		●	●	●

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
MK	**Adult education strategy (*Strategija za obrazovanie na vozrasnite*), 2019-2023** The overall goal of this strategy is to improve the adult education system and learning and validation processes. More specific actions include increasing the quality of primary education for adults and providing support to adults for the completion of secondary education. http://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/strategija-za-obrazovanie-na-vozrasni-2019-2023-mk.pdf		●	●	
MK	**National action plan on employment (*Nacionalen akciski plan za vrabotuvanje*), 2018-2020** The objectives of this action plan were to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of employment policy, especially for vulnerable groups, by providing education that generates knowledge and skills in line with the needs of employers, and setting up a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/word/dokumenti/dokumenti%202018/Akciski%20plan%20vrabotuvanje%202018-2020%20%2010.09.2018.doc		●	●	
NO	**Skills reform - Learning throughout life (*Kompetansereformen - Lære hele livet*), 2018-ongoing** This initiative is aimed at working adults and has two main goals: (1) promote learning throughout life and (2) provide workers with updated skills. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-14-20192020/id2698284/		●		
NO	**Norwegian strategy for skills policy (*Nasjonal kompetansepolitisk strategi*), 2017–2021** This strategy aims to involve social partners in the development of adult skills and in making informed choices for individuals and society, promote learning in the workplace and the effective use of skills, and enhance skills among adults with a weak labour market attachment. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/3c84148f2f394539a3eefdfa27f7524d/strategi-kompetanse-eng.pdf				
RS	**Annual plan for adult education (*Godišnji plan obrazovanja odraslih*), 2020** Qualitative targets of this plan included further development of the system of career guidance and counselling for adults, further development of the system of recognition of prior learning, strengthening of cooperation between adult education institutions and social services at local level, improvement of the model of financing for vocational training within primary adult education (where the third cycle is based on training which are leading adults to the employment) and facilitation of access to primary adult education for specific target groups (migrants, people with disabilities, Roma population, etc.). The specific qualitative targets were as follows: in primary adult education (by the end of 2019/2020): 6 246 students, including 384 adult prisoners; in secondary adult education (for 2020): 1 304 adults older than 17; in pre-qualification and additional qualification programmes (by the end of 2020): 26 872 students in total; non-formal adult education (by the end of 2020): the implementation of 163 training programmes for more than 700 groups and for about 6 500 adults; in labour market training: unemployed people with disabilities – 500 adults, low-skilled people and people completing primary education – 200 unemployed adults, and other unemployed people – 500 unemployed people; and in training at the request of employers – 530 unemployed adults, of whom 30 are people with disabilities. http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/prilozi/prilozi.html&doctype=reg&abc=cba&eli=true&eliActId=430100&regactid=430100	●	●		
TR	No strategic policy document was issued between 2015 and 2020 that referred to access for adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications to skills development or qualifications	–	–	–	–
UK-ENG	**Industrial strategy, 2017-ongoing** The strategy aims, among others things, to promote people's skills, including through upskilling and reskilling, in order to strengthen the economy, widen prosperity and compete with the top international education systems. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730048/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-a4-version.pdf				
UK-ENG	**Review of post-18 education and funding, 2019-2021** The objective is to promote adult learning and to provide a joined-up system that 'is accessible to all, supported by a funding system that provides value for money and works for students and taxpayers, incentivises choice and competition across the sector and encourages the development of […] skills'. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805127/Review_of_post_18_education_and_funding.pdf				
UK-WLS	**Adult learning policy (*Dysgu oedolion datganiad polisi*), 2017-ongoing** This policy focuses on promoting essential skills, numeracy, digital literacy skills, English as a second or foreign language, older learners and social engagement and 'hook' courses. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/adult-learning-in-wales.pdf		●		●

Country code	Name and timeframe of the strategic policy document Main objectives Links	Quantitative targets	Funding source		Monitoring / Evaluation
			National	European	
UK-NIR	**Further education means success: The Northern Ireland strategy for further education, 2016-ongoing** The vision of this document is that further education colleges will be recognised locally, nationally and internationally for their high-quality and economically relevant education and training provision. It envisages a dual role for further education: the development of professional and technical skills and the provision of support for social inclusion. Ensuring high-quality learner education and training and developing the talents of those already in work are key to the strategy. https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/FE-Strategy%20-FE-Means-success.pdf				
UK-SCT	No strategic policy document issued between 2015 and 2020 referring to access of adults with low basic skills or qualifications to skills development or qualifications	–	–	–	–

Annex II: Major publicly subsidised upskilling and qualification-upgrading programmes open to adults

Scope

This annex includes information on major publicly subsidised educational and training programmes that may benefit adults with low levels of basic skills or adults with low or no qualifications. This includes:

- general and vocational programmes leading to recognised national qualifications at any level up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 ([203]);
- programmes not leading to recognised qualifications that target the development of basic skills in all or some of the following areas: literacy, numeracy, digital skills and local language skills for speakers of other languages (with or without reference to other skills).

The programmes included either target adults specifically or are adapted to their needs, life circumstances and time constraints (e.g. through flexible design and delivery options). The emphasis is on programmes allowing substantial progression towards upskilling and/or qualification upgrading. Such programmes would be expected to include a workload of at least 100 hours (or to comprise building blocks allowing the accumulation of the above workload).

The key concept used – 'education and training programme' – refers to a coherent set or sequence of educational activities designed and organised to achieve predetermined learning objectives or accomplish a specific set of educational tasks over a sustained period (see also 'Glossary') ([204]).

Alongside education and training programmes, this annex also includes information on programme groups. A programme group refers to a range of education and training programmes that are developed or provided under the same (top-level) programme umbrella. A programme umbrella is commonly presented in a top-level steering document, and it outlines the key characteristics of programmes that fall under its scope.

Only major institutionalised programmes and programme groups are included. These are understood as large-scale education and training services that operate throughout a whole country or in a significant geographical area rather than being restricted to a particular institution or geographical location. They are intended as long-term elements of the system, with resources in place to cover several consecutive years (as opposed to initiatives with short-term project-based funding).

Excluded from the scope are:

- programmes not complying with the above characteristics;
- programmes focusing on the social or professional integration of adults with low levels of skills or qualifications in which education and training is not a key dimension (or is only an optional dimension);
- hobby and leisure-oriented programmes (e.g. leisure-oriented study of foreign languages, music, crafts, fine arts);

([203]) Up to (and including) programmes providing direct access to tertiary education (i.e. ISCED educational attainment code 344 or 354). Provision at ISCED level 4 is included only if it refers to (second-chance or bridging) programmes leading to an upper secondary school leaving certificate or an equivalent qualification.

([204]) In some cases, programmes listed refer to institutions (e.g. DE, EL, CY and AT), for example when, at country level, one type of institution is closely associated with one type of programme. In this case, the name indicated follows the name used nationally.

- programmes covering only single professions (e.g. driving instructors) or single sectors (e.g. the health sector);
- direct access to final examinations (without education/training programmes) leading to various qualifications and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Organisation of the information

The table outlining the provision is divided into six columns.

- The **first column** lists countries (country codes) in their official/protocol order (see the order in 'Codes and abbreviations'). Each programme reported for a particular country has a separate entry under that country ([205]).
- The **second column** indicates the programme name in English and in an official language of the country. It also provides a short programme description (content and purpose) and specifies the governing bodies.
- The **third column** shows whether the programme was established more than five years ago or less than five years ago ([206]). When available, the exact year that the programme was established is specified in brackets.
- The **fourth column** provides information on funding sources, distinguishing between national funding (NF) ([207]), European funding (EF) and private funding (PF). All funding sources are listed, regardless of their importance.
- The **fifth column** specifies the qualification level of the programme. The code refers to the ISCED and/or the EQF level, depending on how the qualification level is described nationally. The number of ISCED digits depends on the information supplied by national data providers (countries were asked to provide the three-digit educational attainment codes if possible). If a programme does not lead to a recognised qualification, this is indicated by 'N/A'.
- The **sixth column** provides national participation data for the latest available year (specified in brackets). These are provided to evaluate the size of each programme. They should not be considered comparable.

([205]) Countries could report up to 12 programmes.

([206]) Programmes indicated as being established less than five years ago were set up in 2016 or later.

([207]) Includes national funding from central, regional and/or local sources.

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
BE fr	**Adult basic education (*Certificat d'études de base pour les adultes*)** Designed for learners aged 15 and above. It falls under the system of social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) and leads to an adult education certificate corresponding to the full-time basic education certificate. The provision is modular. French Community of Belgium.	> 5 years ago (2002)	NF, PF	ISCED 100	No data available
BE fr	**Upper secondary education for adults leading to a qualification certificate (*Enseignement secondaire supérieur de promotion sociale menant à un certificat de qualification*)** Designed for learners aged 15 and above. It falls under the system of social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) and leads to a qualification certificate. The provision is modular. French Community of Belgium.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 353	60 072, including the two pro-grammes below (2018/19)
BE fr	**Upper secondary education for adults leading to a full qualification via a qualification certificate (*Enseignement secondaire supérieur de promotion sociale menant à un certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur via un certificat de qualification)*** Designed for learners aged 15 and above. It falls under the system of social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) and leads to a qualification certificate and an upper secondary education certificate, which enables students to access higher education. The provision is modular. French Community of Belgium.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	Included in the above data
BE fr	**Upper secondary education for adults leading to a full qualification (*Enseignement secondaire supérieur de promotion sociale menant à un certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur)*** Designed for learners aged 15 and above. It falls under the system of social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) and leads to an upper secondary education certificate, which enables students to access higher education. The provision is modular. French Community of Belgium.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 344 or 354 / EQF 4	Included in the above data
BE de	The German-speaking Community of Belgium does not provide structured large-scale programmes falling under the scope of this annex. However, evening schools, which are institutions affiliated to secondary schools, and other recognised adult education providers provide a range of publicly subsidised courses that are open to adults.	–	–	–	–
BE nl	**Basic adult education (*Basiseducatie*)** Includes courses at primary level and the first stage of secondary level, such as Dutch as a second language, introduction to French and English, mathematics, social orientation (geography, history, biology and social studies at primary level) and ICT. Centres for basic education.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 1-2 / EQF 2	39 727 (2018/19)
BE nl	**Secondary adult education (*Secundair volwassenenonderwijs*)** Designed to give adults the opportunity to attain a degree or certificate of secondary education. It is available to all (at the lowest level). Both vocational and general orientation are provided. The majority of courses include between 300 and 800 teaching periods. Centres for adult education.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 2-3 / EQF 3-4	241 918 (2018/19)
BG	**Adapted curriculum for adults for acquiring competencies of the first stage of lower secondary education (*Adaptirani uchebni programi za obuchenie na vazrastni v kursovete za pridobivane na kompetentnosti za parvi etap na osnovnata stepen na obrazovanie*)** Programme designed for people over the age of 16 who are not in education or training. It includes several subject areas. Ministry of Education and Science.	< 5 years ago (2017)	NF, EF	ISCED 2	No recent data available

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
BG	**Adult literacy courses (*Uchebni programi za obuchenie na vazrastni v kursovete za ogramotiavane*)** Courses framed by the Employment Promotion Act. The courses include basic knowledge of Bulgarian language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences. Vocational training can be undertaken on completion of these courses. Ministry of Education and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	ISCED 101	No recent data available
BG	**Bulgarian as a foreign language for adults seeking or receiving international protection (*Uchebna programa po balgarski ezik kato chuzhd za vazrastni, tarseshti ili poluchili mezhdunarodna zakrila*)** Courses in Bulgarian as a foreign language for adults seeking or receiving international protection. The courses include speaking, listening, reading and writing (levels A1, A2, B1, B2). State Agency for Refugees and Ministry of Education and Science.	< 5 years ago	NF	N/A (language certificate)	No recent data available
BG	**Framework programmes for the acquisition of vocational qualifications (*Ramkovi programi za profesionalno obuchenie*)** Several programmes leading to a recognised vocational qualification (framework programmes). The evaluation of learning outcomes follows an official state examination procedure. The final qualification is awarded at different levels (adults with low levels of basic skills are mainly enrolled at EQF level 2). Ministry of Education and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	Mainly EQF 2	No recent data available
CZ	**Courses for the completion of basic education (*Kurzy pro získání základního vzdělání*)** Courses for people who have not completed their basic education (i.e. grade 9 of basic school (*základní škola*)). The content and examinations are set by schools in accordance with the framework education programme for basic education. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 2	236 (2019/20)
CZ	**Follow-up courses (*Nástavbové studium*)** Courses intended for graduates of three-year vocational upper secondary programmes that do not lead to a *maturita* examination (i.e. upper secondary school leaving examination). The final qualification provides access to higher education and is also required for some jobs. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	13 520 (2019/20)
CZ	**Retraining programmes (*Rekvalifikace*)** Courses for unemployed people or jobseekers registered at the Labour Office of the Czech Republic. Some retraining programmes lead to qualifications included in the National Register of Qualifications (*Národní soustava kvalifikací*). In such cases, the qualifications have a designated EQF level (mostly EQF 3). Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Labour Office of the Czech Republic (budgeted organisation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs). *Unemployed people or registered jobseekers are offered retraining courses for free under certain conditions (i.e. not automatically).	> 5 years ago	NF, EF, PF*	N/A for ISCED; EQF qualifica-tions possible (mainly EQF 3)	13 241 (2018)
DK	**Preparatory adult education (*Forberedende voksenundervisning*)** Aimed at adults aged 25 and over who do not have the qualifications needed to undertake higher level education and training or cope with the demands of working life. It provides single-subject courses at two to four levels encompassing the following disciplines: reading, spelling, writing, English, digital problem solving and mathematics. Ministry of Children and Education.	> 5 years ago (2001)	NF	ISCED 1 / EQF 1-2	Around 36 000 (2018)
DK	**General adult education (*Almen voksenuddannelsen*)** Aimed at adults aged 25 and over. The programme is equivalent (but not identical) to primary and lower secondary school (*folkeskole*) education and includes single-subject courses that can be taken separately or together, leading to a general adult preparatory examination that qualifies for admission to higher preparatory examination courses (upper secondary education). Ministry of Children and Education.	> 5 years ago (1989)	NF, PF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2-3	Around 28 000 (2018)
DK	**Single-subject courses leading to the higher preparatory examination at upper secondary level (*Højere forberedelseseksamen* (HF) *or HF-enkeltfag*)**	> 5 years	NF, PF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	31 333 (2018)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
	Single-subject courses at upper secondary level. Students can study individual subjects or combine a number of subjects, ultimately leading to a full higher preparatory examination. Depending on the number and combination of subjects studied, they may be able to apply for higher education courses. Ministry of Children and Education.	ago			
DK	**Adult vocational training (*Arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser* (AMU))** Short-term adult vocational training courses (from one to six weeks) designed to accommodate workers' needs. They cover specific job-related skills, general skills and labour management skills and are recognised at EQF levels 2-5. A collection of AMU modules can, in some cases, lead to a full secondary vocational education and training qualification. Ministry of Children and Education.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2-5	477 702 (2019)
DK	**Vocational education and training for adults (*Erhvervsuddannelser for voksne* (EUV))** Upper secondary education for adults aged 25 and over who want to specialise in one of more than 100 vocational fields. EUV builds on the experience and education of the participants and is adapted to individual needs. Ministry of Children and Education.	> 5 years ago (2015)	NF	ISCED 3 / EQF 3-5	38 351 (2019)
DE	**Evening classes leading to the acquisition of the *Hauptschulabschluss* (first lower secondary school leaving certificate) (*Abendhauptschule*)** Targeting those who have reached the age of 18 and do not possess the above qualification. *Länder*.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 3	973 (2018)
DE	**Evening classes leading to the acquisition of the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* (*Abendrealschule*)** Targets those who have reached the age of 18 and have successfully completed a *Hauptschule* programme or compulsory full-time schooling. *Länder*.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 3	16 326 (2018)
DE	**Evening classes for the acquisition of a higher education entrance qualification (*Abendgymnasium* and *Kolleg*)** Allows adults to obtain the *Hochschulreife* (higher education entrance qualification), usually over a three-year period. *Länder*.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 444 / EQF 4	*Abendgym-nasien*: 11 852 *Kollegs*: 13 181 (2018)
EE	**Basic education for adults in the non-stationary form of study (*Põhiharidus täiskasvanutele mittestatsionaarses õppevormis*)** Programme mainly intended for people aged 17 and above who have not completed lower secondary education or basic education (ISCED 2). It can be pursued in general education schools for adults (adult gymnasiums), specific departments established in schools for young people or vocational education and training centres. Ministry of Education and Research.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2	626 (2019/20)
EE	**Second-level vocational education and training (*2. taseme kutseõpe*)** Vocational lower secondary education programme intended for people aged 17 and above who have not completed basic education (ISCED 2). The programme leads to a vocational qualification and may be combined with 'basic education for adults' (see above). Ministry of Education and Research.	> 5 years ago (2013)	NF	ISCED 251 / EQF 2	104 (2019/20)
EE	**Third-level vocational education and training (*3. taseme kutseõpe*)** Vocational programme intended for people aged 17 and above who have completed basic education (ISCED 2). The programme leads to a vocational qualification corresponding to Estonian Qualifications Framework level 3. Ministry of Education and Research.	> 5 years ago (2013)	NF	ISCED 251 / EQF 3	952 (2019/20)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
EE	**General upper secondary education for adults in the non-stationary form of study (*Üldkeskharidus täiskasvanutele mittestatsionaarses õppevormis*)** Programme mainly intended for learners aged 17 and above who have not completed upper secondary education (ISCED 3). It can be followed in general upper secondary schools for adults (adult gymnasiums), specific departments established in schools for young people or vocational education and training centres. Ministry of Education and Research.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	4 950 (2019/20)
EE	**State-commissioned continuing education (*Täienduskoolituse riiklik koolitustellimus*)** Free courses that primarily target adults with lower levels of education and without vocational qualifications. The aim is to reach adults who need education most. Courses meet labour market needs, which are established through OSKA analyses (OSKA is a system that analyses the need for labour and skill necessary for Estonian's economic development over the next 10 years). This type of provision generally does not lead to a recognised qualification. Ministry of Education and Research.	> 5 years ago (2007)	NF, EF	N/A	14 328 (2019)
IE	**Youthreach programme** Programme providing two years of integrated education, training and work experience for unemployed early school leavers (aged 16-20) without any qualifications or vocational training. It has a strong emphasis on personal development and basic skills training, including the core skills of literacy/numeracy, communications and information technology and includes a choice of vocational options and a work experience programme. The Department of Education is responsible for devising policy and providing funding in the area of further education and training (including for people with low levels of skills/qualifications). SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, is responsible for allocating funding and planning and co-ordinating training and further education programmes. The education and training boards are responsible for organising the delivery of tuition at local level.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	EQF 2-3	9 234 (2019)
IE	**Vocational training opportunities scheme (VTOS)** VTOS targets the long-term unemployed and provides education and training opportunities to help prepare for the world of work. VTOS provides two years of integrated education, training and work experience. There is a strong emphasis on personal development and the core skills of literacy/numeracy, communications and information technology, along with a choice of vocational options and a work experience programme. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	EQF 2-5	5 852 (2019)
IE	**Bridging/foundation courses** Programmes aimed at individuals who are distant from the labour market and/or who wish to return to employment or education and training after a long period of unemployment. The courses may be short or long and are generally accredited at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level 3 or 4 (EQF 2 or 3). They provide training interventions that emphasise personal development, career planning, confidence building and basic occupational/vocational skills. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	EQF 2-3	590 (2019)
IE	**Community education** Refers to education and training available to adults, generally outside the formal education sector, that aims to enhance learning, empower individuals and contribute to civic society. Courses can be accredited and non-accredited, are delivered in a flexible format and include a range of supports to enable and encourage participation. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago	NF	EQF 2-4	No data
IE	**Local training initiatives** Programme focused on addressing the training needs of economically, socially, geographically or educationally disadvantaged unemployed learners. Learners are primarily between 18 and 35 years of age, with no formal qualifications or incomplete secondary level qualifications. The overall aim is to provide participants with specific vocational skills and work experience. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	EQF 3-4	3 179 (2019)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
IE	**'Skills for work'** Programme aimed at providing training opportunities to help employees deal with the basic skills demands of the workplace. All courses include literacy and numeracy elements integrated into a variety of subjects ranging from communication to computing, interpersonal skills, problem-solving and report writing. Programmes may be delivered on company premises or in education and training boards education centres. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago	NF	EQF 2-3	4 587 (2019)
IE	**'Skills to advance'** Targeted support for vulnerable groups in the Irish workforce, with a particular focus on those employees who have lower skills levels and who need more opportunities to advance in their working lives and careers, to sustain their employment and avoid displacement, or to avail of emerging job opportunities. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	< 5 years ago (2018)	NF, EF	EQF 4-5	5 664 (2019)
IE	**Specific skills training** Courses providing learners with a range of employability-related skills and formal vocational qualifications. They are aimed at those entering the labour market for the first time and those wishing to update their skills or acquire new skills. Designed to meet the needs of industry across a range of sectors. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	EQF 3-5	9 355 (2019)
IE	**Post Leaving Certificate** Full-time courses lasting one to two years providing a mixture of practical work, academic work and work experience. They are designed as a step towards skilled employment and, as such, they are closely linked to industry and its needs. The courses generally lead to major awards at NFQ 5 or 6 (EQF 4 or 5). Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	EQF 4-5	51 655 (2019)
IE	**Adult literacy** Courses for people who want to improve their communication skills in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy and information technology. The aim is to enhance learners' participation in personal, social and economic life. Programmes typically include 2-4 hours of tuition per week and are delivered on a group or on an individual basis. They are generally accredited at NFQ 1 or 2 (EQF 1). Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	EQF 1	38 194 (2019)
IE	**Traineeships** Traineeships take between 6 and 20 months to complete and combine learning in the classroom and learning in the workplace (at least 30 %). They are open to all (school leavers, older learners, those in employment and unemployed people) and are free of charge. They lead to certification at NFQ 4-6 (EQF 3-5) or from a recognised external accredited body. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	> 5 years ago (1995)	NF, EF	EQF 3-5	5 554 (2019)
IE	**The EXPLORE programme** In 2018, the nine regional skills fora managers developed the EXPLORE programme, which aims to increase transversal and digital skills for people aged over 35 years who are in employment. The programme is delivered over a six-week period and includes day-release classes, a work-based project, a personal project and some off-site visits. Governing body: see the first programme under IE.	< 5 years ago (2018)	NF	N/A	742 (2018-2019)
EL	**Second-chance schools (*Scholia Defteris Efkerias*)** A two-year programme for adults who have not obtained a compulsory education diploma (ISCED 2). General Secretariat for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth.	> 5 years ago (2000)	NF, EF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2	6 000 (2019)
EL	**Lower secondary education evening school (*Esperino Gymnasio*)** A three-year evening lower secondary education programme that leads to a compulsory education diploma. The target population is adults as well as minors in employment. Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2	4 431 (2019)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
EL	**Upper secondary general education evening school (*Geniko Esperino Lykeio*)** A three-year evening upper secondary education programme. The target population is adults as well as minors in employment. Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	3 200 (2019)
EL	**Upper vocational education evening school (*Esperino EPAL* and *Etos Mathiteias*)** A three-year evening vocational education programme (*Esperino EPAL*) with an optional extra apprenticeship year (*Etos Mathiteias*). The three-year programme leads to an ISCED level 3 / EQF 4 qualification, while the optional extra year leads to an ISCED level 4 / EQF 5 qualification. Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.	< 5 years ago (2016)	NF, EF	ISCED 3-4 / EQF 4-5	25 934 (2019)
EL	**OAED vocational apprenticeship schools (*EPAS Mathiteias*)** The Labour Employment Office (OAED) implements a dual apprenticeship system in 32 specialities at 50 vocational apprenticeship schools all over Greece. Apprenticeships combine two years of theoretical and practical education with on-the-job training in the workplace. OAED, supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.	> 5 years ago (1952)	NF, EF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	6 360 (2019)
ES	**Initial provision of basic education for adults in *Comunidad de Castilla y León*; initial training for adults in *Comunidad Autónoma de Aragón* (*Enseñanzas iniciales de educación básica para personas adultas* (*Comunidad de Castilla y León*); *Formación inicial para personas adultas* (*Comunidad Autónoma de Aragón*))*** Programme for adults comprising two levels: the first level focuses on basic skills in literacy and numeracy and the second level focuses on acquiring other skills, such as digital competences and communication in a second language. Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities. *Examples from two Autonomous Communities (comparable provision in other parts of Spain).	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 100 / EQF 1	3 517 in *Aragón*; 3 743 in *Castilla y León* (2019/20)
ES	**Programme for basic skills development and reinforcement in *Comunidad de Castilla y León* (*Programa para el desarrollo y refuerzo de competencias básicas* (*Comunidad de Castilla y León*))*** Programme including Spanish language as well as basic skills in other areas (e.g. numeracy, information literacy, social competence and citizenship). Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities. *Example from one Autonomous Community (comparable provision in other parts of Spain).	> 5 years ago (2012)	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 2	9 769 (2019/20)
ES	**Secondary education for adults in *Comunidad Autónoma de Aragón* and *Comunidad de Castilla y León* (*Educación secundaria para personas adultas* (*Comunidad Autónoma de Aragón; Comunidad de Castilla y León*))*** Programme for adults focusing on knowledge and skills related to the certificate of secondary education. Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities. *Examples from two Autonomous Communities (comparable provision in other parts of Spain).	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 2	1 780 in *Aragón*; 3 396 in *Castilla y León* (2019/20)
ES	**Programme for preparing for external examinations to obtain a certificate in mandatory secondary education in *Comunidad de Castilla y León* (*Programa para la preparación de las pruebas libres para la obtención del Graduado en ESO* (*Comunidad de Castilla y León*))*** Programme aimed at preparing students aged over 18 for the external examinations to obtain a certificate in mandatory secondary education. Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities. *Example from one Autonomous Community (comparable provision in other parts of Spain).	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 2	1 018 (2019/20)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
ES	**Access examinations for intermediate vocational training in *Comunidad de Castilla y León* (*Pruebas de acceso a Ciclos de Grado Medio* (*Comunidad de Castilla y León*))*** Programme aimed at preparing students to sit access examinations for intermediate vocational training (examinations organised annually). Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities. *Example from one Autonomous Community (comparable provision in other parts of Spain).	> 5 years ago (2012)	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 2	166 (2019/20)
ES	**Basic vocational training for adults in *Comunidad Autónoma de Extremadura* (*Formación profesional básica para personas adultas* (*Comunidad Autónoma de Extremadura*))*** Programme providing basic vocational training. Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities. *Example from one Autonomous Community (comparable provision in other parts of Spain).	> 5 years ago (2014)	NF, EF	ISCED 353	213 (2019/20)
ES	**General upper secondary education for adults in *Comunidad de Castilla y León* (*Bachillerato para personas adultas* (*Comunidad de Castilla y León*))*** Comprehensive education for adults covering knowledge and skills that are necessary for higher education, vocational education and training or active life. Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities. *Example from one Autonomous Community (comparable provision in other parts of Spain)	> 5 years ago (2008)	NF	ISCED 344 / EQF 3	2 743 (2019/20)
ES	**Spanish as a foreign language in *Comunidad Autónoma de Aragón* (*Español como lengua nueva* (*Comunidad Autónoma de Aragón*))*** Programme providing Spanish language courses for foreigners. Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities. *Example from one Autonomous Community (comparable provision in other parts of Spain).	> 5 years ago	NF	N/A	4 446 (2019/20)
FR	**Access to university studies diploma (*Diplôme d'accès aux études universitaires*)** A second-chance programme for those who left the school system before obtaining the baccalaureate (i.e. upper secondary school leaving certificate). Teaching takes place in the evenings or remotely. The programme widens access to higher education. Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.	> 5 years ago (1994)	NF, PF	ISCED 4 / EQF 4	4 360 (2018)
FR	France provides only one structured large-scale programme that falls within the scope of this annex (see above). Nevertheless, it has in place various strategies, action plans and financial and institutional frameworks that provide the basis for the delivery of publicly subsidised education and training programmes, including programmes for adults with low levels of low basic skills and those with low or no qualifications.	–	–	–	–
HR	**Basic education for adults (*Osnovna škola za odrasle*)** Programme for adults that is divided into six educational periods, each lasting 18 weeks. At the end of the programme, participants can also enrol in a training programme for elementary occupations lasting 150 hours. Ministry of Science and Education.	> 5 years ago (2007)	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2	902 (2019)
HR	**Vocational training (*Programi osposobljavanja*)** Programmes of at least 120 hours intended for professionals with at least lower secondary education who wish to expand their vocational knowledge in accordance with the needs of the labour market. Ministry of Science and Education and Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Family and Social Policy.	< 5 years ago (2016)	NF, EF, PF	EQF 2	10 491 (2017-2019)
HR	**Vocational development training (*Programi usavršavanja*)** Programmes intended for professionals who have completed upper secondary education and who wish to expand their vocational knowledge in accordance with the needs of the labour market. Ministry of Science and Education.	< 5 years ago (2016)	NF, EF, PF	EQF 2 or above	1 297 (2017-2019)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
IT	**First-level education courses – first teaching period (*Percorsi di istruzione di primo livello – primo periodo didattico*)** Courses aimed at obtaining the qualification awarded at the end of the first cycle of education, which covers primary and lower secondary education. They are organised by provincial centres for adult education (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*) – autonomous public institutions that are equivalent to schools. Ministry of Education. *PF refers to minor costs.	> 5 years ago (2014/15)	NF, EF, PF*	ISCED 244 / EQF 1	37 828 (2020)
IT	**First-level education courses – second teaching period (*Percorsi di istruzione di primo livello – secondo periodo didattico*)** Courses aimed at acquiring the qualification attesting to the acquisition of basic skills at the end of compulsory education. They are organised by provincial centres for adult education (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*) – autonomous public institutions that are equivalent to schools. Ministry of Education. *PF refers to minor costs.	> 5 years ago (2014/15)	NF, EF, PF*	EQF 2	10 770 (2020)
IT	**Second-level education courses (*Percorsi di istruzione di secondo livello*)** Courses aimed at obtaining an upper secondary qualification (ISCED 3). These courses are held at upper secondary schools over three periods. Ministry of Education. *PF refers to minor costs.	> 5 years ago (2014/15)	NF, EF, PF*	ISCED 344 or 354 / EQF 4	82 117 (2020)
CY	**Evening gymnasiums/lyceums for secondary general education (*Esperina Gymnasia-Lykeia Mesis Genikis Ekpaidefsis)*** Second-chance general education for adults divided into two levels (lower and upper secondary). The lower secondary level (gymnasium) corresponds to a two-year cycle and leads to a certificate (*apolytirio*). The upper secondary level (lyceum) leads to a qualification that is equivalent to that awarded by mainstream upper secondary schools. Department of Secondary General Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth.	> 5 years ago (1970)	NF	EQF 2 or 4	422 (2019/20)
CY	**Evening schools for technical and vocational education (*Esperines Scholes Technikis kai Epaggelmatikis Ekpaidefsis*)** Upper secondary technical and vocational education for adults who are early school leavers. The completion of the programme leads to the acquisition of a leaving certificate (*apolyterion*), which is equivalent to that awarded by mainstream upper secondary schools. Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth.	> 5 years ago (1999)	NF, EF	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	316 (2019/20)
CY	**Apprenticeship system for vocational education and training (*Systima Mathiteias Epaggelmatikis Ekpaidefsis kai Katartisis*)** An alternative pathway for education, training and development for young people who drop out of formal education. The programme lasts for three years and involves both training at school and practical training in enterprises. Graduates can continue their education at evening schools for technical and vocational education (see above). Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth.	> 5 years ago (1963)	NF, EF	ISCED 352 / EQF 3	129 (2019/20)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
CY	**Lifelong learning programmes in vocational education and training (three-year programmes) (*Programmata Dia Viou Epaggelmatikis Ekpaidefsis kai Katartisis (trieti programmata)*)** Continuing vocational education and training for employed or unemployed adults. Successful completion leads to the acquisition of a leaving certificate equivalent to that awarded to graduates of upper secondary education and training as far as the technical component is concerned. Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	ISCED 352	365 (2019/20)
CY	**Lifelong learning programmes in vocational education and training (one-year programmes) (*Programmata Dia Viou Epaggelmatikis Ekpaidefsis kai Katartisis (monoeti programmata)*)** Continuing vocational education and training for employed or unemployed adults. Successful completion leads to the acquisition of a certificate of completion. Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	N/A (certificate)	367 (2019/20)
LV	**Continuous vocational education programme (CVET) (*Profesionālās tālākizglītības programma*)** Includes three subprogrammes (levels): 1. CVET leading to a vocational qualification at EQF level 2. The length of this programme is at least 480 hours. 2. CVET leading to a vocational qualification at EQF level 3. The length of this programme is at least 480 hours for simple qualifications and 640 hours for more complex qualifications. Those enrolling on the programme must have completed lower secondary education. 3. CVET leading to a vocational qualification at EQF level 4. The length of this programme is at least 960 hours (six months). Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Welfare and sectoral ministries.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF, PF	EQF 2-4	No data available
LV	**In-service training programme (*Profesionālās pilnveides izglītības programma*)** In-service training programmes of at least 160 hours that do not lead to qualifications. In-service training programmes are used to acquire or improve vocational skills. They are licensed and accredited. Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Welfare and sectoral ministries.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF, PF	N/A	No data available
LT	**General lower secondary (basic) education programme for adults (*Suaugusiųjų pagrindinio ugdymo programa*)** Programme intended for learners aged 18 or above (or 16-17 if unable to continue in education for various reasons). The programme takes between two and six years to complete and provides adults with a general lower secondary (basic) education. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and local municipalities.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244	1 890 (2019/20)
LT	**General upper secondary education programme for adults (*Suaugusiųjų vidurinio ugdymo programa*)** Programme intended for learners aged 18 or above (or 16-17 if unable to continue in education for various reasons). The programme takes two years to complete and provides adults with a general upper secondary education. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and local municipalities.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 344	3 757 (2019/20)
LU	**Second-chance education: grade 5 (*2e voie de qualification: classes de 5e*)** Education for adults who have not reached the required lower secondary education level (ISCED 2). Adult Education Department in cooperation with secondary schools.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 1	300 (2018/19)
LU	**Access to higher education studies diploma (*Diplôme d'accès aux études supérieures*)** A one- or two-year programme (depending on the level of the participant) including six modules and leading to a diploma that is recognised as being equivalent to the Luxembourgish secondary school leaving diploma. National School for Adults.	< 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	107 (2017-2020)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
LU	**Basic skills and foreign language integration pathways (*Parcours d'instruction de base et d'intégration linguistique*)** Intensive courses aimed at the literacy of those who have never attended school or who are not familiar with the Latin alphabet. The literacy provision is in the French language. For those who are literate, French is taught as an integration language. The learning pathway is individualised. Adult Education Department.	< 5 years ago	NF	N/A	1 000 (2019/20)
HU	**Vocational bridging programme (*Szakképzési Hídprogram*)** Provides general competence development as well as vocational education and training for learners who have completed, at most, six grades of single-structure elementary school (i.e. ISCED 1 and ISCED 2) by the age of 15. The programme leads to an elementary school certificate and a state-recognised partial vocational qualification. As of 2020/21, this programme had been replaced by other types of provision (see the two programmes that follow). Ministry for Innovation and Technology.	< 5 years ago (2016; being phased out)	NF	ISCED 2 / ISCED 3	70 (2019/20)
HU	**Springboard class (*Dobbantó program*)** The springboard class, which has operated since September 2020, is a vocational education and training preparatory year. It is open to students who have reached the age of 16 and have not completed lower secondary education (ISCED 2). The programme gives students a second chance to find the best way to return to the school system or to the world of work. The school workshop (see below) builds on this programme. Ministry for Innovation and Technology.	< 5 years ago (2020)	NF, EF	Not yet established	382 (2020/21)
HU	**School workshop (*Műhelyiskola*)** The school workshop has operated since September 2020 and is open to those who have not completed lower secondary education (ISCED 2) but who have completed the springboard class (see above) or those who have completed lower secondary education and have reached the age of 16. The programme leads to a partial vocational qualification. Ministry for Innovation and Technology.	< 5 years ago (2020)	NF, EF	Not yet established	117 (2020/21)
HU	**General primary school level (grades 1-4) (adult literacy course) (*Általános iskola 1-4. évfolyam (felnőttoktatás)*)** Adult literacy course. Students receive a school report with their final grades, which allows them to continue their education. Ministry of Human Capacities.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 100 (not linked to the EQF)	279 (2019/20)
HU	**General lower secondary school level (grades 5-8) (adult education) (*Általános iskola 5-8., gimnázium 5-8. évfolyamai (felnőttoktatás)*)** Programme leading to the following qualification: 'Completed eight grades of general (elementary) education'. Ministry of Human Capacities.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 2	2 932 (2019/20)
HU	**Upper secondary vocational grammar school (grades 9-12) (adult education) (*Szakgimnázium 9-12. évfolyam (felnőttoktatás)*)** An upper secondary vocational programme that leads to a certificate of completion and the *matura* examination (upper secondary school leaving examination). Ministry of Human Capacities and Ministry for Innovation and Technology.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	490 (2019/20)
HU	**Upper secondary vocational school (grades 12-13) (adult education) (*Szakközépiskola 12-13. évfolyam (felnőttoktatás)*)** The school itself is vocational but the programme is general. It leads to the *matura* examination (upper secondary school leaving examination). Ministry of Human Capacities and Ministry for Innovation and Technology.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 344 / EQF 4	15 355 (2019/20)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
HU	**Vocational and secondary vocational education (adult education) (*Szakközépiskolai és szakiskolai oktatás, képzés (felnőttoktatás)*)** Programmes leading to a vocational qualification. To enrol, learners must have completed elementary education (ISCED 2). Ministry of Human Capacities and Ministry for Innovation and Technology.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 353 / EQF 3	9 711 (2019/20)
HU	**Upper secondary general school (grades 9-12) (adult education) (*Gimnázium 9-12. évfolyam (felnőttoktatás)*)** Programmes leading to the *matura* examination (upper secondary school leaving examination). Ministry of Human Capacities.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 344 / EQF 4	28 185 (2019/20)
HU	**'Actively for knowledge' (*Aktívan a tudásért*)** Programme that includes training for people with low levels of educational attainment or disadvantaged people. It aims to support the completion of elementary school, the development of basic skills and competences, and vocational learning. Ministry of Interior.	< 5 years ago (2017-2021)	NF, EF	N/A (non-formal certificate)	19 434 (2017-2020)
MT	In Malta, the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability within the Ministry for Education and Employment provides more than 450 courses in 77 different subjects, including vocational subjects. The courses are held at the eight lifelong learning centres, 27 local councils and 17 non-governmental organisations. Moreover, at the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology, adults can take formal and non-formal courses and receive guidance services. Because of this diversity of provision, no single programme is described according to the structure of this annex.	–	–	–	–
NL	**Junior general secondary education for adults (*Voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs – Middelbaar algemeen voortgezet onderwijs* (VAVO-MAVO niveau))** These part-time (second-chance) programmes lead to the same qualification as the equivalent full-time (initial education) programmes. They are open to young students who have failed their examinations and to adults who have not previously obtained a secondary-level qualification. VMBO-tl (*Voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs – theoretische leerweg*; previously MAVO) is pre-vocational education, which provides access to upper secondary vocational education. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 244	2 702 (2018/19)
NL	**Senior general secondary education for adults (*Voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs – Hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs* (VAVO-HAVO))** These part-time (second-chance) programmes lead to the same qualification as the equivalent full-time (initial education) programmes. They are open to young students who have failed their examinations and to adults who have not previously obtained an upper secondary qualification. The qualification awarded on completion provides access to higher vocational education. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 344	10 042 (2018/19)
NL	**Senior general secondary education for adults (*Voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs – Voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs* (VAVO-VWO))** These part-time (second-chance) programmes lead to the same qualification as the equivalent full-time (initial education) programmes. They are open to young students who have failed their examinations and to adults who have not previously obtained an upper secondary qualification. The qualification awarded on completion provides access to university. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 344	4 395 (2018/19)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
NL	**Vocational education and training (*Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*)** These programmes are open to both young people and adults. There are two pathways – a school-based pathway and a work-based pathway – and four different levels. Depending on the level, a vocational education and training programme takes between one and four years to complete. The duration also depends on the extent of the validation of prior learning. *Data refer to adult participants (aged around 25 and above) at the four levels combined. The total number of participants (young people and adults; the four levels combined) was 507 100 in 2020. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 254, 353, 354, 454 / EQF 1-4	62 807* (2020)
NL	**Dutch as a second language (*Nederlands als tweede taal I en II*)** Courses I and II in Dutch as a second language prepare students for the state examination in this subject. This examination is for people whose first language is not Dutch. The purpose of the examination is to show that their proficiency in Dutch is good enough to work or study in the Netherlands. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.	> 5 years ago (1992)	NF, PF	N/A	20 799 (2017)
NL	**Dutch and arithmetic (*Nederlandse taal en rekenen*) and digital skills (*Digitale vaardigheden*)** Courses aimed at adults who want to boost their literacy, numeracy or digital skills. Target groups include illiterate adults and adults who want to improve their basic skills in order to enrol in vocational education and training. They are also aimed at adults for whom Dutch is a second language. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and municipalities (the latter receive a nationally allocated budget for this type of provision in their region).	> 5 years ago	NF	N/A (qualification in some cases)	No data
AT	**Courses for the development of basic skills (*Basisbildungskurse*)** Courses framed by the 'Initiative for adult education', which specifies different competence areas in basic education: (a) study competences (how to 'learn'), (b) German, (c) basic skills in a second language, (d) mathematics and (e) digital competences. Ministry of Education, Science and Research.	> 5 years ago (2012)	NF, EF	N/A	23 901 (2015-2017)
AT	**Lower secondary school leaving certificate courses (*Vorbereitungskurse auf den Pflichtschulabschluss*)** The 'Initiative for adult education' enables adults with low levels of qualifications to participate in courses to prepare for the attainment of a lower secondary school leaving certificate (ISCED 2) free of charge. The curriculum includes the four compulsory competence areas – German, English, mathematics and vocational guidance – and a choice of at least two elective modules. Ministry of Education, Science and Research.	> 5 years ago (2012)	NF, EF	N/A for the programme (but ISCED 2 after the exa-mination)	7 252 (2015-2017)
AT	**Schools for employed people (*Schulen für Berufstätige*)** Upper-secondary education (general and vocational) tailored specifically to the needs of adults / employed people aged 17 and over. Ministry of Education, Science and Research.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 3 (ISCED 5 for certain schools)	13 003 (2017/18)
AT	**Preparatory courses for the vocational matriculation examination (*Vorbereitungskurse zur Berufsreifeprüfung*)** Preparatory courses for the vocational matriculation examination, which can be completed as an external examination in accredited adult education institutions. The examination covers four different subject areas, which constitute the core modules of the curriculum for preparatory courses: German, mathematics, a foreign language and a specialist subject (*Fachbereich*). Ministry of Education, Science and Research.	> 5 years ago (1997)	NF, EF, PF	N/A for the programme (but ISCED 4 after the exa-mination)	23 000 (2015)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
AT	**Apprenticeship-intensive courses (*FacharbeiterInnen-Intensivausbildung*)** Includes a variety of different apprenticeships that enable adults with low levels of qualifications and work experience to complete a recognised vocational qualification (*Lehrabschluss*) within a shorter period than a regular apprenticeship programme. Public Employment Service.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 352	17 630 (other programmes included in data) (2018)
AT	**'Competence with a system' (*Kompetenz mit System*)** Modular programme for a variety of different apprenticeships. It enables adults with low levels of qualifications (particularly women) to improve their competences and progress towards a formally recognised vocational qualification (*Lehrabschluss*). The programme comprises three modules, which build on each other. Public Employment Service.	> 5 years ago (2009)	NF	N/A for the programme (but ISCED 353 after optional examination)	1 197 (2018)
PL	**Primary schools for adults (*Szkoły podstawowe dla dorosłych*)** Schools intended for learners aged 18 and above. Programmes are closely linked to single-structure education (ISCED 1 and 2) in the initial education system. Ministry of Education and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2	3 394 (2018/19)
PL	**General upper secondary schools for adults (*Licea ogólnokształcące dla dorosłych*)** Schools where learners aged 18 and above who have finished lower secondary education can complete upper secondary education and obtain a school leaving certificate, or maturity certificate, on passing the maturity examination (the latter provides access to higher education). Ministry of Education and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	131 419 (2018/19)
PL	**Post-secondary schools for adults (post-secondary non-tertiary education) (*Szkoły policealne dla dorosłych*)** Schools intended for adults holding an upper secondary qualification (however, the maturity certificate, i.e. the upper secondary school leaving qualification opening access to higher education, is not required for admission). Learners obtain a vocational diploma if they pass the vocational examinations for a given occupation. *This provision falls only partly within the scope of this annex (i.e. some programmes are situated at EQF level 4; others at higher levels). Ministry of Education and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 4 / EQF 4-5*	195 881 (2018/19)
PL	**Vocational qualification course (*Kwalifikacyjny kurs zawodowy*)** A form of continuing education in non-school settings that is open to all those aged 18 and over who have completed single-structure primary school education (i.e. ISCED 1 and 2). It is based on the curriculum for vocational education and prepares learners for the vocational examination. After the examination, learners receive a certificate confirming their qualification in a given occupation. Ministry of Education and Science. *Free of charge for learners in public education institutions but generally fee-paying in non-public schools and/or in non-school settings.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF, PF*	ISCED 3 / EQF 2-5	87 856 (2018/19)
PL	**Vocational skills course (*Kurs umiejętności zawodowych*)** A short form of vocational education. It is based on the core curriculum for vocational education and training, but it covers only part of the learning outcomes (either specific learning outcomes identified within a qualification or learning outcomes corresponding to additional vocational skills). The course does not directly entitle learners to take the vocational examination. Ministry of Education and Science. *Fee-paying in public education institutions, but the fee cannot exceed the cost of the course. Exemptions and reductions are available to learners on low incomes or in difficult financial situations.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF, PF*	N/A	17 450 (2018/19)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
PL	**General competence course (*Kurs kompetencji ogólnych*)** Course based on selected parts of the general education curriculum (e.g. Polish language, mathematics, history, biology). A single course does not lead to a qualification. However, if learners follow a selection of courses and take related external examinations, they can complete upper secondary education. Ministry of Education and Science. *Fee-paying in public education institutions, but the fee cannot exceed the cost of the course. Exemptions and reductions are available to learners on low incomes or in difficult financial situations.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF, PF*	N/A	13 037 (2018/19)
PT	**Adult education and training courses (*Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos*)** These courses aim to raise the education and qualification levels of the Portuguese adult population. There are different types of courses corresponding to four, six, nine and twelve years of schooling and the qualification obtained depends on the course taken. Institute for Employment and Vocational Training.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 1-3 / EQF 2-4	28 124 (2015-2019)
PT	**'Active life' (*Vida Ativa*)** Shorter term training (generally at least 200 hours) for unemployed people aged 18 and over who are registered at the employment services of the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training. This programme also includes a training strategy called *Vida Ativa - QUALIFICA+*, which is aimed at unemployed people with very low levels of qualifications. There are various outputs: vocational education and training certificates, diplomas, and registration of competences in the 'Qualifica passport' (the last is an online tool to record competences and qualifications). Institute for Employment and Vocational Training.	> 5 years ago	NF	Varies (see the description)	No data available
PT	**Modular training (*Formação Modular*)** Certified modular training (up to 600 hours, depending on the module) that aims to update and improve the theoretical and practical knowledge and competences of the adult population, as well as raise their educational attainment and vocational qualification levels. Institute for Employment and Vocational Training.	> 5 years ago	NF	EQF 2-4	384 160 (2015-2019)
PT	**'Qualifica programme' (*Programa Qualifica*)** Programme designed to raise individuals' qualification levels and employability. It is combined with the recognition of prior learning (*reconhecimento, validacao e certificacao de competencias*). The 'Qualifica passport' (an online tool to record competences and qualifications) supports the process. The programme is implemented in dedicated 'Qualifica centres' that also provide face-to-face guidance and support. National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training.	< 5 years ago (2016-2017)	NF, EF	ISCED 1-3 / EQF 1-4	567 632 (2017-2020)
RO	**Level 1 qualification programmes (*Programe de calificare de nivel 1*)** Level 1 qualification programmes are organised in areas related to the 30 elementary occupations specified in the Order of the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice No 2495/2018. The workload is 160 hours. *National funding combined with EU funding is the most common funding mode. Private funding is only involved in some highly requested courses (e.g. home care for elderly people) ensured by private providers. Ministry of Labour and Social Justice.	< 5 years ago (2018)	NF, EF, PF*	EQF 1	No data available
RO	**Second-chance programme (*Programul 'A doua sansă'*)** The aim of the programme is to support young people and adults who have not completed compulsory education. Graduates have the right to continue their studies at a higher educational level, i.e. lower secondary or upper secondary level. It is also possible to undertake a practical training of 720 hours, with successful learners awarded a certificate of vocational qualification level 3. Ministry of National Education.	> 5 years ago (2007)	NF, EF	ISCED 1-3 / EQF 3	No data available

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
RO	**Romanian language courses within the social integration programme for foreigners who have a right of residence in Romania (*Cursuri de limba română în cadrul Programului de integrare socială a străinilor care au un drept de ședere în România*)** Language courses organised by the Ministry of National Education in collaboration with the General Inspectorate for Immigration. They are an integral part of a programme to familiarise foreigners with Romanian cultural traditions, customs and values, and to provide practical information about Romanian society. General Inspectorate for Immigration.	> 5 years ago (2007)	NF	N/A (language certificate)	No data available
SI	**Basic school for adults (*Osnovna šola za odrasle*)** This programme targets adults who have failed to complete regular basic school. At the end of the programme, successful learners receive an officially recognised qualification. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2	1 103 (2019/20)
SI	***Matura* examination course (*Maturitetni tečaj*)** A one-year programme/course preparing learners for the *matura* examination (i.e. final upper secondary education examination). Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and National Examinations Centre.	> 5 years ago	NF	N/A for the programme (qualification after the exa-mination)	272 (2019/20)
SI	**Vocational examination course (*Poklicni tečaj*)** A one-year vocational programme/course for vocational *matura* candidates. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and National Examinations Centre.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	165 (2019/20)
SI	**Adult literacy programmes – several life performance training programmes (*Pismenost odraslih – več programov 'Usposabljanje za življenjsko uspešnost'*)** Programmes developed by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. The programmes aim to enhance adult literacy and basic skills. They take into consideration the different needs and life situations of adults, for example parents helping children with their schoolwork. The workload is around 120 hours. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.	> 5 years ago (2003-2006, renewed in 2014)	NF, EF	N/A	2 677 (2019)
SI	**Initial integration of immigrants (*Začetna integracija priseljencev*)** A free programme to enable immigrants to learn the Slovenian language and obtain information about Slovenian society. Courses include around 180 hours of tuition. Ministry of the Interior.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	N/A	6 574 (2012-2017)
SI	**Slovenian as a second or foreign language (*Slovenščina kot drugi in tuji jezik*)** Courses intended for those whose first language is not Slovenian (levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced; courses last for between 60 and 220 hours). Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.	> 5 years ago (2015)	NF, PF	N/A	863 (2018)
SK	**'F' study programmes (lower secondary vocational education) (*Učebné odbory F*)** Vocational two-year programmes at ISCED level 2 with strong practical components (open to both young people and adults). Completion does not provide direct access to upper secondary education, but successful participants receive a certificate of final examination and a vocational certificate. After completing an additional (optional) course, by which participants formally complete lower secondary education, it is possible to undertake vocational upper secondary studies. Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 252	4 170 (2018/19)
SK	**REPAS(+) (requalification courses)** Programme aimed at registered jobseekers that includes requalification courses (excluding the development of communicational, digital, managerial, social and entrepreneurial skills and language competences). Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.	> 5 years ago (2014)	NF, EF	Mostly EQF 3-4	45 000 (2015-2017)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
SK	**KOMPAS+** Programme aimed at registered jobseekers. It includes courses for developing communication skills (including social competences), personal skills (including managerial and entrepreneurial skills), digital skills and language competences. It generally involves between 25 and 150 hours of tuition. Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.	< 5 years ago	NF, EF	N/A	No data available
SK	**Follow-up courses (*Nadstavbové štúdium*)** Courses intended for graduates of three-year upper secondary vocational programmes that are not completed with a *maturita* examination (i.e. upper secondary school leaving examination). The final qualification opens access to higher education and is also required for some jobs. Participants are both young people and adults. Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	Around 7 500 (2018/19)
FI	**Basic education for adults (*Aikuisten perusopetus*)** Intended for learners completing their basic education after compulsory school age. It is part of the general education system, the adult education system and the integration training system for adult migrants. It provides an opportunity for learners to improve their basic skills and obtain competences and qualifications required for upper secondary education. Finnish National Agency for Education (responsible for the national core curriculum).	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244 / EQF 2	3 700 (2018)
FI	**Preparatory education and training for vocational education and training (*Ammatilliseen koulutukseen valmentava koulutus*)** Training course intended for young people and adults with limited prior formal learning achievements, unemployed jobseekers, people with outdated or inadequate vocational skills, learners needing special support and immigrants not in education or training. The purpose is to improve learners' basic skills and prepare them for vocational education and training. Each student follows an individual study plan (6-12 months). The programme includes language skills, ICT skills, mathematics or natural sciences, and learning and life skills. It also provides exposure to different occupations. Finnish National Agency for Education (responsible for the national qualification requirements).	> 5 years ago (2015)	NF	EQF 3	9 281 (2019)
FI	**General upper secondary education for adults (*Aikuislukio*)** Mainly intended for people aged over 18. Provides students with extensive general knowledge and prepares them to study at university. On completion of general upper secondary school studies, students take the Finnish national matriculation examination. Finnish National Agency for Education (responsible for the national core curriculum).	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 344 / EQF 4	6 400 (2018)
FI	**Vocational upper secondary education (*Ammatillinen peruskoulutus*)** Provides learners with the vocational skills they need for entry-level jobs. Designed for young people who may not have any work experience and for adults who, for example, have no formal qualifications or who want to change their profession. Finnish National Agency for Education (responsible for the national qualification requirements).	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	102 000 (2018)
FI	**Further vocational qualification (*Ammattitutkinto*)** Develops specialised competences and often requires labour market experience. Mainly undertaken by adult employees who already have an initial vocational education and training qualification, although it is not a precondition for enrolment. It provides 120, 150 or 180 competence points (ECVET equivalent). Finnish National Agency for Education (responsible for the national qualification requirements). *Moderate fees may be applicable.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF*	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	44 600 (2018)
FI	**Language training as part of integration training for migrants (*Maahanmuuttajien kielikoulutus*)** The target group is migrants who have passed the compulsory school age. The training consists of instruction in Finnish or Swedish and, if necessary, reading and writing skills, and other instruction that promotes access to the labour market and further education. The training may also include the recognition of prior learning, recognition of degrees, and vocational planning and career guidance. Public employment services, liberal adult education institutions and the Finnish National Agency for Education (the agency has approved the curriculum guidelines for literacy training in liberal adult education).	> 5 years ago	NF	N/A	No data available

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
SE	**Basic adult education (*Komvux grundläggande nivå*)** Courses in municipal adult education at basic level. Each course has a syllabus. The courses correspond to the education provided during compulsory schooling (years 1-9), but the content and study programme are adapted for adults. Implementing responsibility lies with the municipalities.	> 5 years ago (1968)	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 2	75 705 (2019; second semester)
SE	**Upper secondary adult education – general courses (*Komvux gymnasial nivå – studieförberedande*)** Courses in municipal adult education at upper secondary level. Each course has a syllabus. The courses correspond to the education provided at upper secondary level, but the content and study programme are adapted for adults. Implementing responsibility lies with the municipalities.	> 5 years ago (1968)	NF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	215 706 (2019; second semester; general plus vocational courses)
SE	**Upper secondary adult education – vocational courses (*Komvux gymnasial nivå – yrkeskurser*)** Courses in municipal adult education at upper secondary level. Each course has a syllabus. The courses correspond to the education provided at upper secondary level, but the content and study programme are adapted for adults. Implementing responsibility lies with the municipalities.	> 5 years ago (1968)	NF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	See above
SE	**Swedish for immigrants (*Svenskundervisning för invandrare*) (*komvux*))** Swedish for immigrants is a qualifying language course that aims to provide adult immigrants with a basic knowledge of the Swedish language. Implementing responsibility lies with the municipalities.	> 5 years ago (1965)	NF	ISCED 1 / EQF 2	153 003 (2019; second semester)
SE	**Folk high school – general courses (*Folkhögskola allmänna kurser*)** An alternative to municipal adult education (*komvux*). These courses are comparable to and enable adults to access further education opportunities in the same way as secondary school education does. After the completion of each course, students receive a study assessment (*studieomdöme*). Folk high schools.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 2-3 / EQF 3-4	30 901 (2019)
SE	**Apprenticeship for adults (komvux) (*Lärlingsutbildning för vuxna (komvux)*)** Apprenticeships for adults can be arranged as part of municipal adult education. The knowledge requirements are the same as for the equivalent education conducted in a school environment or in upper secondary schools. Students can attend courses (at least 70 %), or parts of courses, in one or more workplaces. Implementing responsibility lies with the municipalities.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	No data available
BA	**Primary education programme for adults (*Program osnovnog obrazovanja odraslih*)** This programme is intended for learners aged over 15 who have not completed single-structure primary education (i.e. ISCED 1 and 2). Competent ministries of education of Bosnia and Herzegovina.	> 5 years ago (2000)	NF	ISCED 2	120 in Republiky Srpska (2010-2020)
BA	**Secondary vocational education, retraining and additional training programmes (*Programi srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja, prekvalifikacije i dokvalifikacije*)** Secondary vocational programmes for adults who wish to achieve an upper secondary qualification, retrain or undertake additional training. The programmes last for three or four years. Competent ministries of education of Bosnia and Herzegovina.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 3 / EQF 4	10 259 in Republiky Srpska (2010-2020)
CH	**Shortened vocational education and training programme (*Apprentissage raccourci / Verkürzte berufliche Grundbildung*)** Adults who already have a first degree or previous knowledge of a specific profession can complete a shortened apprenticeship in order to obtain a federal vocational education and training certificate. Confederation, cantons and organisations of the world of work.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 353 or 354	See below

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
CH	**Vocational education and training programme for adults (*Certification professionnelle pour adultes / Berufsabschluss für Erwachsene*)** Adults can complete two, three or four years of basic vocational training. They must find a company in which to complete the apprenticeship and set up an apprenticeship contract. Adults attend regular classes at vocational schools and must pass the qualification procedure. Confederation, cantons and organisations of the world of work.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 353 or 354	4 152 diplomas (2017; including the above)
CH	**Baccalaureate for adults (*Maturité gymnasiale pour adultes / Gymnasiale Maturität für Erwachsene*)** Programme to enable adults to take the baccalaureate. Learners who pass the examinations can obtain direct access to study at Swiss universities and universities of teacher education and, with appropriate professional experience, universities of applied sciences. Programmes are provided on a full-time or part-time basis. Confederation and cantons.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 344	No data available
CH	**Vocational baccalaureate 2 (*Maturité professionnelle 2 / Berufsmaturität 2*)** The vocational baccalaureate 2 supplements basic vocational training with an extended general education. It provides access to universities of applied sciences. This baccalaureate is taken after basic vocational training and is not only (but also) for adults who wish to gain access to tertiary education (universities of applied sciences). Confederation and cantons.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 344	No data available
IS	**Basic adult education (*Grunnmenntaskólinn*)** This 300-hour programme is aimed at adults (aged 18+) with low levels of basic skills. Up to 24 upper secondary school credits may be achieved if the programme is completed. Completion often leads to acceptance onto a fast-track programme for adults who have not completed upper secondary studies (see below). In autumn 2021, this programme will be replaced by a new type of provision of a similar nature (*Grunnmennt*). Ministry of Education and Education and Training Service Centre.	> 5 years ago (being phased out)	NF, PF	N/A	34 (2019)
IS	**Educational foundation (*Menntastoðir*)** Fast-track programme designed for adults who have not completed upper secondary studies. It includes around 1000 hours of tuition (50 credits). Ministry of Education and Education and Training Service Centre.	> 5 years ago (2011)	NF, PF	ISCED 3	315 (2019)
LI	**Vocational education and training degree for adults (*Berufsabschluss für Erwachsene*)** Vocational education and training qualification corresponding to that awarded in the system of initial vocational education and training. It can be obtained in four ways: by direct access to the examination (with five years of professional experience); through full validation of non-formal and informal learning; through a shortened programme (combined with validation of work experience); and through a regular full programme (three-four years). Office for Vocational Education and Training and Career Counselling.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	6 (2018/19)
LI	**Baccalaureate for adults (*Erwachsenenmatura*)** General upper secondary qualification that can be completed after obtaining a vocational education and training qualification and that provides access to academic higher education programmes. The programme is offered in Switzerland. A representative from the Liechtenstein-Office of Education is a member of the steering board.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 344	4 (2018/19)
ME	**Adjusted primary school programme for adults (*Prilagođeni program osnovne škole za odrasle*)** Programme that aims to provide at least a single-structure primary education (i.e. ISCED 1 and 2) and a first qualification. National Council for Education.	< 5 years ago (2018)	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 1	270 (2019)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
ME	**Programmes leading to the acquisition of vocational qualifications (*Programi koji vode ka sticanju profesionalnih kvalifikacija*)** Modular and credit-based programmes that have been in place since 2012. By the end of 2017, the National Council for Education had adopted 119 of these programmes. National Council for Education. *These programmes are publicly funded mainly for unemployed people. Other learners generally bear the costs of the training themselves.	> 5 years ago (2012)	NF, EF, PF*	Different levels (mainly EQF 2-4)	No overall data
MK	**Primary education for adults (*Osnovno obrazovanie na vozrasni*)** Programme provided by the institution for the primary education of adults, 'AS Makarenko', which operates in 10 educational centres countrywide as well as in other types of educational institutions. The programme includes two types of provision: full-time for those aged 15-24 (around 1000 hours) and part-time for adults over 24 years of age (around 400 hours). Ministry of Education and Science.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 100 and 244	378 (2019/20)
MK	**Completion of secondary vocational education for adults (*Oformuvanje na sredno stručno obrazovanie na vozrasni*)** Programme supporting the completion of formal secondary vocational education and training (EQF 3 and 4) in municipalities with higher rates of adults with low levels of qualifications. Ministry of Education and Science.	> 5 years ago (2010)	NF	EQF 3-4	2 950 completed, 790 still in process (2010-2019)
MK	**Training for occupations in demand (*Obuka za pobaruvani zanimanja*)** Training programmes corresponding to identified labour market needs. They are conducted by selected and verified training providers. Both the providers and the candidates are recruited via public calls. Employment Agency Service.	> 5 years ago	NF, EF	EQF 3	Around 3 800 (2010-2019)
NO	**Compulsory education diploma for adults (*Grunnskoleopplæring for voksne*)** This provision refers to primary and lower secondary education for adults. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for the curricula, examinations and inspections of primary and lower secondary education providers, while the implementing responsibility lies with the municipalities.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 200	10 574 (2019/20)
NO	**Upper secondary education – general programmes (*Videregående opplæring, studieforberedende utdanningsprogram*)** Those aged 23 years or above with at least five years' professional experience can participate in upper secondary adult education. This lasts for one year rather than three years, as in the initial education system. The programme consists of six subjects that are common to general education (Norwegian, English, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences and history). Governing bodies: see the first programme under NO.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 344	5 304 (2018)
NO	**Upper secondary education – vocational programmes (*Videregående opplæring, yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogram*)** Participants can choose between different vocational programmes (e.g. construction, electronics, hairdressing, health and growth, handicrafts, design and product development, information technology and media). Most adults take part in programmes that are especially designed for adults. Others participate in 'ordinary' classes together with young people undertaking initial vocational education and training. Governing bodies: see the first programme under NO.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 353	22 609 (2018)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
NO	**On-the-job trade certificate (*Fagbrev på jobb*)** Employees without a formal education relevant to their work can obtain a trade certificate while in paid employment. Participants are exempt from the common core subjects of the national (upper secondary) curriculum. The competence requirements in the apprenticeship subject area are, however, the same as for other apprenticeships. The training is adapted to individual needs and includes the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Cooperation between the participant, the employer and the county administration is a key factor in this model. Governing bodies: see the first programme under NO.	< 5 years ago (2018)	NF	ISCED 353	Included in the above data
NO	**Introduction scheme and training in Norwegian and social studies for new immigrants (*Introduksjonsordning og opplæring i norsk og samfunnskunnskap for nyankomne innvandrere*)** The purpose of this programme is the integration of new immigrants. Apart from the language component, the curriculum also includes a basic literacy module for participants who cannot read or write in their mother tongue. The social studies curriculum comprises seven topics: new immigrants in Norway; history, geography and lifestyle; children and family; health; education and skills; working life; and democracy and the welfare state. The Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills is responsible for the curricula and the final tests. The municipalities are responsible for tuition.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 241	31 064 (2019)
NO	**Sectoral (trade) programme (*Bransjeprogrammet*)** The Norwegian government has established several programmes for lifelong learning to strengthen different competences in the chosen sectors (travel; hairdressing; retail/specialist retail; electrical, automation, renewable and power industries; food and beverage industry; construction industries; and public health and welfare). The instruction is provided online and the courses are short, but they may lead to an apprenticeship certificate or a vocational college certificate (*fagskole*). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government provided additional funding for the programme in 2020. Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills.	> 5 years ago (2006)	NF	ISCED 354 / EQF 4	No data available
NO	**SkillsPlus (previously 'Basic competence in working life') (*KompetansePluss* (previously *Basiskompetanse i arbeidslivet*))** Programme concentrating on reading, writing and numeracy, and digital and oral skills. Originally, the target group of the programme was employees, but civil society has since been included in the programme. Any private or public enterprise in Norway, as well as voluntary organisations, can apply for funding from the programme. Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills.	> 5 years ago (2006)	NF	ISCED 251 / EQF 2	93 939 (2006-2018)
RS	**Functional elementary education for adults (*Funkcionalno osnovno obrazovanje odraslih*)** Formal education programme organised in three cycles, which last from three to five years in total (the content covers eight grades of single-structure primary education). The third cycle may be combined with basic vocational training. Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.	> 5 years ago (2014)	NF	ISCED 2 / EQF 1 or 2 (depending on whether combined with VET)	Around 6 000 enrolments per year
RS	**Secondary education (*Srednje obrazovanje*)** This provision can be general or vocational and is delivered by regular schools (for young people). Some vocational education and training schools are specially licensed by the ministry to provide programmes to adults. There are part-time programmes, retraining programmes and additional training programmes for those who would like to achieve a full qualification after finishing partial programmes. Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF	ISCED 3 / EQF 3 or 4 (depending on the programme)	No data available
TR	**Open lower secondary education (*AçıkÖğretim Ortaokulu*)** Programme based on the same curriculum as initial lower secondary education. The programme is delivered using distance learning methods and techniques. Ministry of National Education.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 244	191 202 (2017/18)

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
TR	**Open high school (*Açıköğretim Lisesi*)** Programme that can be undertaken by anyone who holds a primary/secondary school completion certificate. The programme is delivered using distance learning methods and techniques. Ministry of National Education.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 344	1 090 830 (2017/18)
TR	**Open vocational high school (*Mesleki Açıköğretim Lisesi*)** Programme that can be undertaken by anyone who holds a primary/secondary school completion certificate. General education tuition is provided through distance learning, while vocational lessons are provided in workshops and/or laboratories. Ministry of National Education.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 354	192 094 (2017/18)
TR	**Imam and preacher open high school (*Açıköğretim İmam Hatip Lisesi*)** Programme that can be undertaken by anyone who holds a primary/secondary school completion certificate. General education tuition is provided through distance learning, while vocational lessons are provided through both distance learning and face-to-face education in schools. Ministry of National Education.	> 5 years ago	NF	ISCED 354	112 697 (2017/18)
UK-ENG	**Functional Skills** Functional Skills courses aim to equip learners with the basic skills required in everyday life, education and the workplace. They act as stepping stones to General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs) in English and mathematics. Learners can enrol on Functional Skills courses via accredited learning centres. Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. *The courses are provided free of change for learners who meet specific conditions regarding their age (19+), attainment level (the focus is on adults with low levels of qualifications) and residence.	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 1	No data available
UK-ENG	**General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)** GCSEs are single-subject qualifications that are available in over 40 subjects. They are the main qualifications taken at school at age 15 or 16 but can be taken at any age. GCSEs are graded from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade. Five or more qualifications at grades from 9 to 4, including in English and mathematics, are often a requirement to pursue post-16 qualifications. Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. *Learners aged over 16 who have left school are generally not expected to pay for GCSEs in English and mathematics (EQF 2 and 3). The programme providers are subsidised to deliver these courses. However, learners many be expected to pay fees for other courses. If fees are involved, learners may be eligible for financial support.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF*	EQF 2-3	No data available
UK-ENG	**General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level)** A levels are single-subject qualifications. They are the most common qualifications required for entry to higher education for young people. They are usually taken at age 18 or 19 at school or college at the end of full-time secondary education but can be taken at any age. Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. *Leaners aged under 24 and studying for their first qualification equivalent to A level (EQF 4) may not have to pay for tuition. In this instance, courses are subsidised by the government. Fees are generally paid by those over the age of 24; however, they may be eligible for financial support.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF*	EQF 4	No data available
UK-ENG	**Intermediate apprenticeships (level 2 apprenticeships)** Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes that are designed around the needs of employers. Apprenticeships are available to anyone over the age of 16 and not in full-time education. An apprenticeship includes the following components: a knowledge-based element; a competence-based element; and transferable / functional skills / essential skills. National Apprenticeship Service and Skills Funding Agency. *Apprenticeships are paid for by employers. Employers are eligible for a government grant for every apprentice they take on.	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 3	No data available

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
UK-ENG	**Advanced apprenticeships (level 3 apprenticeships)** Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes that are designed around the needs of employers. Apprenticeships are open to anyone aged 16 and over and not in full-time education. An apprenticeship includes the following components: a knowledge-based element; a competence-based element; and transferable / functional skills / essential skills. National Apprenticeship Service and Skills Funding Agency. *Funding arrangements are the same as for intermediate apprenticeships (see above).	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 4	No data available
UK-WLS	**Essential Skills Wales** The Essential Skills suite of programmes aims to equip learners with the basic skills required in everyday life, education and the workplace and acts as a stepping stone to GCSEs in English and mathematics. Qualifications Wales. *Courses falling under this initiative are usually fully funded by the Welsh Government.	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 1	No data available
UK-WLS	**General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)** GCSEs are single-subject qualifications that are available in over 40 subjects. They are the main qualifications taken at school at age 15 or 16 but can be taken at any age. GCSEs are graded from A* to G, with A* being the highest grade. Five or more A*-C grades, including in English and mathematics, are often a requirement to pursue post-16 qualifications. Qualifications Wales. *GCSEs are paid for by individual learners; however, they may be eligible for a Welsh government learning grant for further education, which can help with the costs. Anyone over the age of 19 can apply.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF*	EQF 2-3	No data available
UK-WLS	**General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level)** A levels are single subject qualifications. They are the most common qualification for entry to higher education for young people. They are usually taken at age 18 or 19 at school or college at the end of full-time secondary education but can be taken by learners of any age. Qualifications Wales. *A levels are paid for by individual learners; however, they may be eligible for a Welsh government learning grant for further education, which can help with the costs. Anyone over the age of 19 can apply.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF*	EQF 4	No data available
UK-WLS	**Intermediate apprenticeships (level 2 apprenticeships)** Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes that are designed around the needs of employers. Apprenticeships are open to anyone aged 16 and over and not in full-time education. An apprenticeship includes the following components: a knowledge-based element; a competence-based element; and transferable / functional skills / essential skills. Careers Wales. *Intermediate apprenticeships in Wales are funded in much the same way as apprenticeships in England (see above).	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 3	No data available
UK-WLS	**Advanced apprenticeships (level 3 apprenticeships)** Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes that are designed around the needs of employers. Apprenticeships are open to anyone aged 16 and over and not in full-time education. An apprenticeship includes the following components: a knowledge-based element; a competence-based element; and transferable / functional skills / essential skills. Careers Wales. *Advanced apprenticeships in Wales are funded in much the same way as apprenticeships in England (see above).	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 4	No data available

Country code	Programme name in English (and in an official language of the country) Short description Governing body	When established	Funding sources	Qualification level	Participation data
UK-NIR	**Essential Skills** Essential Skills programmes aim is to equip learners with the basic skills required in everyday life, education and the workplace and act as a stepping stone to GCSEs in English and mathematics. Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. *The Essential Skills suite of programmes for Northern Ireland is free for learners. The programmes are fully funded by the Northern Ireland government.	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 1	No data available
UK-NIR	**General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)** GCSEs are single-subject qualifications that are available in over 40 subjects. They are the main qualifications taken at school at age 15 or 16 but can be taken at any age. GCSEs are graded from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade. Five or more qualifications at grades from 9 to 4 grades, including English and mathematics, are often a requirement to pursue post-16 qualifications. Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. *Leaners studying for the first qualification equivalent to GCSE may not have to pay for tuition as the Northern Ireland government funds courses in certain cases. In particular, learners are eligible for free tuition if they are enrolled on a course that leads to their first full level 2 qualification, or if they are 25 or under and enrolled on a course that leads to their first full level 3 qualification.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF*	EQF 2-3	No data available
UK-NIR	**General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level)** A levels are single-subject qualifications. They are the most common qualifications required for entry to higher education for young people. They are usually taken at age 18 or 19 at school or college at the end of full-time secondary education but can be taken at any age. Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. *Leaners studying for the first qualification equivalent to A levels may not have to pay for tuition as the Northern Ireland government funds courses in certain cases.	> 5 years ago	NF, PF*	EQF 4	No data available
UK-NIR	**Intermediate apprenticeships (level 2 apprenticeships)** Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes that are designed around the needs of employers. Apprenticeships are open to all people aged 16 and over and not in full-time education. An apprenticeship includes the following components: a knowledge-based element; a competence-based element; and transferable / functional skills / essential skills. Department for the Economy. *Intermediate apprenticeships in Northern Ireland are funded in much the same way as apprenticeships in England (see above).	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 3	No data available
UK-NIR	**Advanced apprenticeships (level 3 apprenticeships)** Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes that are designed around the needs of employers. Apprenticeships are open to all people aged 16 and over and not in full-time education. An apprenticeship includes the following components: a knowledge-based element; a competence-based element; and transferable / functional skills / essential skills. Department for the Economy. *Advanced apprenticeships in Northern Ireland are funded in much the same way as apprenticeships in England (see above).	> 5 years ago	NF*	EQF 4	No data available
UK-SCT	The United Kingdom (Scotland) does not provide structured large-scale programmes falling under the scope of this annex. Programmes that previously received large amounts of funding in order to implement particular strategies are now embedded within the system in a variety of ways. The largest programme is English for Speakers of Other Languages, which receives around GBP 15 million per year. In addition, a number of small programmes are available to assist adults with developing literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Decision-making for these programmes is carried out in a range of ways by a variety of partners and often at local level. There is no formal reporting process regarding these programmes.	–	–	–	–

Annex III: Providers of publicly subsidised adult education and training programmes

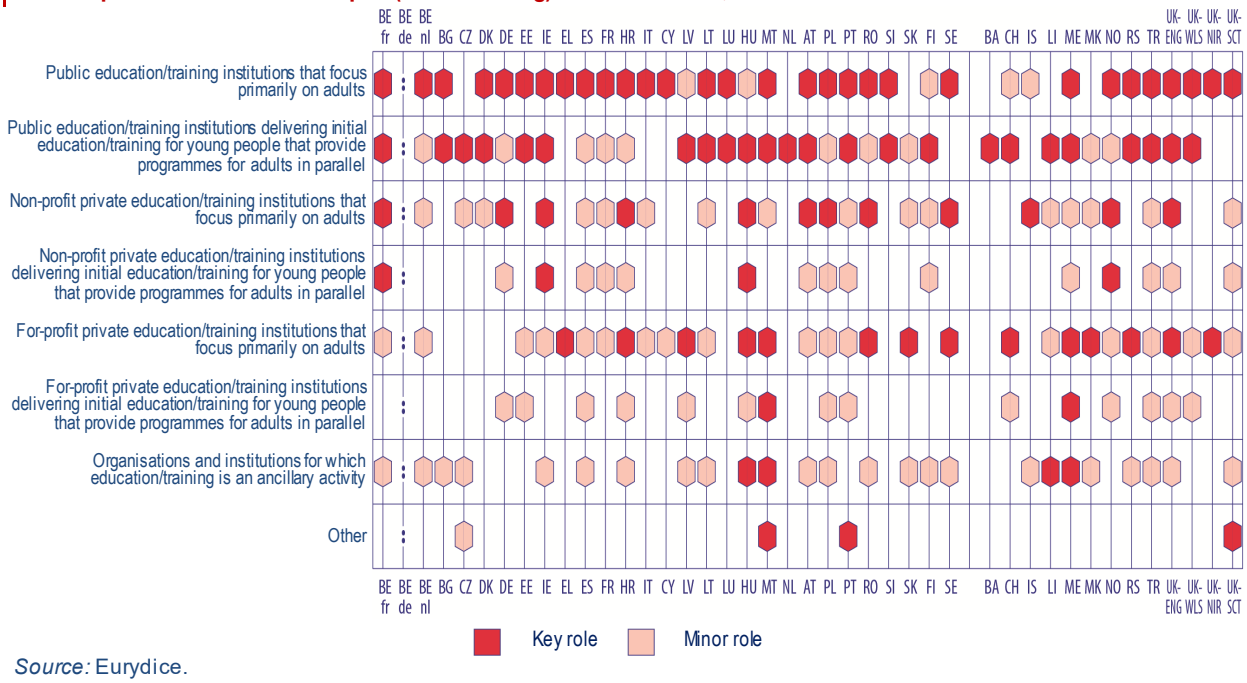
This annex presents information on providers of publicly subsidised education and training programmes that are open to adults. The focus is on providers of programmes that:

- lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 (i.e. completed upper secondary education or equivalent); or
- target the development of basic skills and do not lead to qualifications.

The annex is divided into two parts. In Part 1, Figures A1 and A2 present an overview of these providers. Part 2 presents details of public education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults.

Part 1: Overview of providers

Figure A1: Providers of publicly subsidised education and training programmes open to adults that lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4, 2019/20

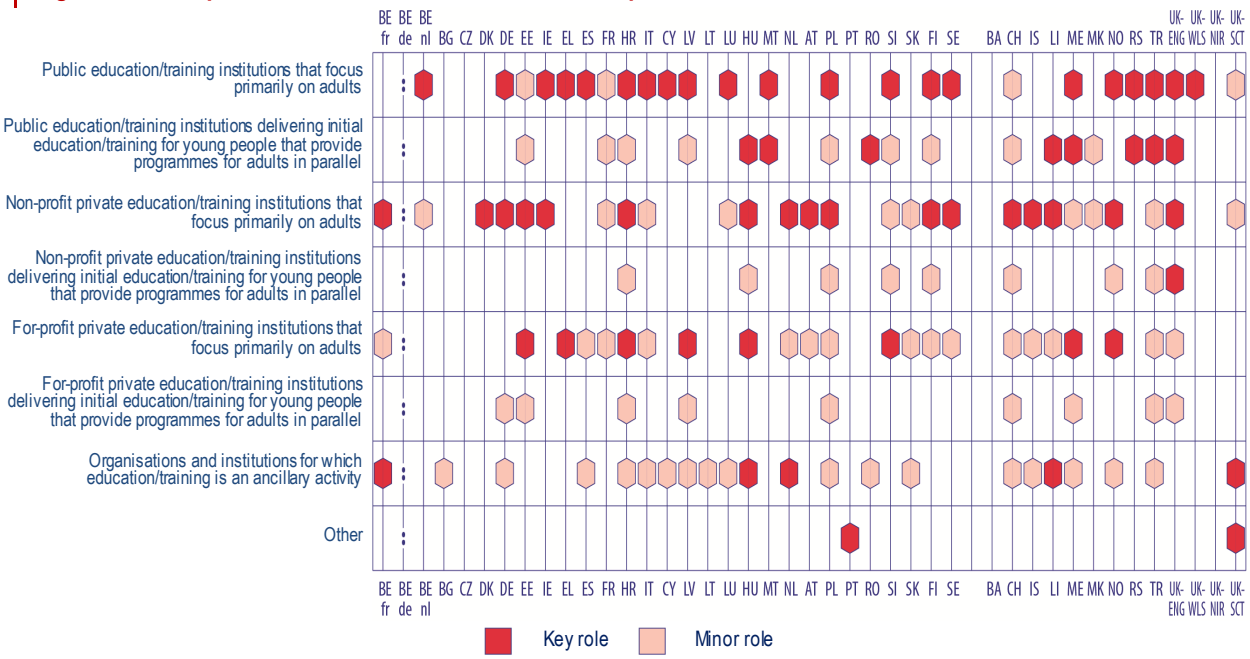


Source: Eurydice.

Country-specific notes

Czechia: 'Other' refers to the fact that any accredited provider can deliver programmes leading to recognised qualifications.
Malta: 'Other' refers to 'Jobsplus', i.e. Malta's public employment service (PES).
Portugal: 'Other' refers to the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), which is the Portugal's PES.
United Kingdom (SCT): 'Other' refers to local authorities, third sector organisations and the Scottish Union Learning (this organisation supports trade unions in accessing skills and lifelong learning opportunities).

Figure A2: Providers of publicly subsidised education and training programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and do not lead to qualifications, 2019/20



Source: Eurydice.

Country-specific notes

Portugal and **United Kingdom (SCT)**: See Figure A1 for the definition of 'other'.

Part 2: Public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults

Following on from the above overview, Part 2 provides details of public education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults (i.e. the first category in Figures A1 and A2).

It should be noted that:

- education and training institutions are understood to be institutions that provide education/training as their main activity/purpose (see 'Glossary');
- public education and training institutions are understood to be institutions that are controlled and managed either directly by a public education authority or agency of the country where they are located, or by a governing body (council, committee, etc.), most of whose members are either appointed by a public authority of the country where they are located or elected by public franchise (see 'Glossary').

The table below details institutions reported by countries under the category of 'public education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults'. If such institutions are not involved in the provision of publicly subsidised education and training programmes (see the first category in Figures A1 and A2), this is indicated by 'N/A' and the key providers that deliver the relevant learning provision are outlined. If such institutions play only a minor role (as depicted in Figures A1 and A2), the text specifies other providers that deliver the relevant learning provision. When public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults exist and play a key role, only these institutions are listed.

The focus is on institutions providing learning opportunities for adults in the age range commonly associated with labour market participation. Institutions concentrating on senior citizens (e.g. universities of the third age) are not included.

Country code	Public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults and providing: Programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4	Public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults and providing: Programmes targeting the development of basic skills that do not lead to qualifications
BE fr	Around 160 **institutions for social advancement education** provide the social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*). **Bruxelles Formation** is the French-speaking public service in charge of vocational training in the Brussels-Capital Region. This institution is also in charge of regulating French-speaking training provision and validation services in the Brussels-Capital Region. There are also 32 **vocational education and training (VET) centres** (*centres de formation professionnelle*) and 24 **competence centres** (*centres de compétence*) falling under Le Forem, which is the public service for employment and vocational training in the Walloon Region.	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by non-profit private providers and organisations for which education and training is an ancillary activity.)
BE de	Information not available.	Information not available.
BE nl	48 **adult education centres** (*Centra voor Volwassenenonderwijs*) provide a wide range of courses in secondary adult education and/or higher vocational education. Adult education centres cater exclusively for adult learners and they are separate and independent from compulsory education institutions.	13 **centres for basic education** (*Centra voor Basiseducatie*) provide courses for adults at lower secondary school level. After successful completion of a course, students receive a certificate per learning area / subject (Dutch, mathematics, languages, ICT, basic geography, biology and history). This is a non-formal certificate (i.e. not an 'official' diploma of lower secondary education).
BG	**Evening secondary schools** enable people over the age of 16 to complete primary and secondary education. The **Bulgarian-German Vocational Training Centre State Enterprise**, which includes five centres, provides vocational training for both unemployed people and employed people over the age of 16. The provision comprises programmes leading to vocational qualifications (full or partial), training in key competences and vocational guidance.	N/A (Limited provision of publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications.)
CZ	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 are mainly delivered by institutions providing initial education/training for young people that provide programmes for adults in parallel. They may also be delivered by any accredited – public or private – provider.)	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications may be delivered by various – public or private – providers. Overall, this type of provision is not well developed, and is not centrally coordinated or monitored.)
DK	**Adult education centres** provide general adult education programmes (preparatory adult education, general adult education and single-subject courses; see Annex II). There are 29 adult education centres with a large number of regional satellite departments spread throughout the country.	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are delivered by various providers, including folk high schools and evening schools. Folk high schools are self-governing non-profit institutions, while evening schools are organised as associations.)
DE	Several types of institutions provide adult education and training (public *Abendschulen*). ***Abendhauptschulen*** provide a one-year course (two semesters; evening classes) to allow adults to obtain the *Hauptschulabschluss* (i.e. first lower secondary school leaving certificate). ***Abendrealschulen*** prepare adults for the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* (four semesters; evening classes). ***Abendgymnasien*** allow adults to obtain the *Hochschulreife* (higher education entry qualification), usually over three years (evening classes). ***Kollegs*** are full-time schools where adults can obtain the *Hochschulreife*.	***Volkshochschulen*** are adult education centres managed by local governments. They provide programmes in a wide range of (mainly non-vocational) subjects, including languages and general and cultural education. The courses are intended to meet the most diverse social requirements and individual needs.
EE	**Adult upper secondary schools** are publicly funded schools that provide general upper secondary education (non-stationary/part-time courses). There are 14 such institutions. In addition to adult upper secondary schools, non-stationary/part-time upper secondary courses are also provided in special departments established in schools for young people or VET institutions.	In addition to (formal) general education courses, some **adult upper secondary schools** provide elective basic skills courses. These are available to students who follow an upper secondary programme at the same school as well as to those who wish to take a single course. However, non-profit and for-profit private education and training institutions play a more substantial role in this area than public institutions.

	Public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults and providing:	
Country code	Programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4	Programmes targeting the development of basic skills that do not lead to qualifications
IE	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, which is the Further Education and Training Authority. FET provision includes both labour market-focused programmes and programmes with a strong social inclusion dimension.	FET provision (see the previous column) includes labour market-focused programmes and programmes with a strong social inclusion dimension, including literacy and numeracy provision. Thus, the providers are the same as for programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 (see the previous column).
EL	**Second-chance schools** (*Scholia Defteris Efkerias*) are institutions for adults who have not obtained a compulsory education diploma. There are 75 such schools. In the context of public employment services, the Labour Employment Office operates an extensive VET system, which includes 50 **vocational apprenticeship schools** (*EPAS Mathiteias*) providing programmes leading to qualifications at levels ISCED 3 / EQF 4.	**Lifelong learning centres in municipalities** (*Kentra dia viou mathisis*) provide short-term programmes for adults, including basic skills, key competences and Greek lessons for migrants.
ES	The provision is mainly delivered by institutions known (in most Autonomous Communities) as ***centros de educación de personas adultas***. These institutions are regulated either by the Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities or by the municipal governments.	***Centros de educación de personas adultas*** (see the previous column) deliver, among other programmes, basic skills programmes providing literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
FR	**GRETA**, the *groupement d'établissements*, is a network of 136 education and training establishments for adults that are connected to public secondary schools under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education (around 500 000 adult participants per year). The **National Agency for Adult Professional Training (AFPA)** is a public institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour (the institution trains around 143 000 adults per year, including 85 000 unemployed people). The ***Conservatoire national des arts et métiers*** **(CNAM)** is a public institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (73 700 enrolments in 2018, including 9 200 unemployed people). Although CNAM is a higher education institution, its learning provision includes programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4. These types of institutions are located all over France and are generally found in every city with more than 20 000 inhabitants.	There is no public institution with a key role in this area. The provision is delivered by a range of providers, including public and private (for-profit and non-profit) institutions focusing primarily on adults as well as institutions delivering initial education and training for young people that provide programmes for adults in parallel.
HR	**Public open universities** (*pučka otvorena učilišta*) provide various formal education programmes, including primary and secondary education for adults (ISCED 1-3) and training, retraining and vocational development courses. Around 40 open universities are governed by public authorities (around another 50 are privately owned).	Apart from formal education, **public open universities** (see the previous column) provide a wide range of non-formal courses such as foreign languages, art, crafts and ICT.
IT	**Provincial centres for adult education** (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti* (CPIAs)) are structures that are organised in territorial service networks, generally at provincial level (with a headquarters and various providers). They have their own staff as well as teaching and administrative autonomy. In 2020, there were 130 CPIAs.	**Provincial centres for adult education** (see the previous column) also deliver basic skills courses, including literacy courses for foreigners aimed at the acquisition of language competences.
CY	**Evening schools for technical and vocational education and evening gymnasiums/lyceums for secondary general education** are second-chance schools. The former provide upper secondary programmes while the latter provide lower and upper secondary programmes.	**Adult education centres** provide around 100 different courses, including literacy and digital skills courses.
LV	**Adult education and lifelong learning centres**, which are commonly attached to vocational or higher education institutions, play a role (although minor) in the delivery of qualifying programmes open to adults at levels up to (and including) level ISCED 3 / EQF 4. This type of provision is mainly delivered by public education and training institutions that provide initial education and training to young people and by for-profit private education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults.	**Municipal adult education centres** allow adults to acquire vocational skills for work purposes as well as various soft skills for personal development.

	Public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults and providing:	
Country code	Programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4	Programmes targeting the development of basic skills that do not lead to qualifications
LT	**Adult education schools** provide formal education for adults at ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 (lower and upper secondary education). There are also five **labour market training centres** founded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports that provide programmes up to EQF 3. These are located in major cities, with branches in smaller towns.	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by organisations and institutions for which education/training is an ancillary activity, e.g. public libraries.)
LU	The **National School for Adults** (*École nationale pour adultes* (ENAD)) is an integral part of the public school system. It is open to anyone above the age of 16. The ENAD provides classical secondary education, general secondary education and VET from the 5th grade upwards. The ENAD also provides on-the-job training courses leading to an upper secondary social education worker's diploma, a general secondary school leaving diploma and a diploma providing access to higher studies.	The **Adult Education Department** (*Service de la formation des adultes*) is a ministerial department that provides various adult education courses. It is the main provider of programmes targeting the development of basic skills, including literacy (German and French), numeracy and basic digital skills.
HU	Public education/training institutions that focus primarily on adults exist but they do not play a key role in the delivery of programmes leading to qualifications at levels ISCED 3 / EQF 4. According to 2019 public education statistics, 75 public education institutions exclusively provide adult education. Out of these, 19 are maintained by the state. Among the state institutions, most (10) are VET institutions maintained by the Ministry for Innovation and Technology. They provide part-time (lower and upper) secondary vocational programmes.	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by public education/training institutions that provide initial education/training for young people, non-profit and for-profit private organisations, and organisations and institutions for which education/training is an ancillary activity.)
MT	The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability within the Ministry for Education and Employment provides more than 450 courses in 77 different subjects, including vocational subjects. The courses are held at eight **lifelong learning centres**, 27 local councils and 17 non-governmental organisations. The **Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology** provides formal and non-formal courses and guidance services for adults. Moreover, it partly recognises prior learning, in particular prior non-formal learning.	See the previous column.
NL	N/A (Various types of public VET colleges generally provide education and training to both young people and adults. However, most adults preparing for qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 attend for-profit private education/training institutions that focus primarily on adults. The latter providers are not included in Figure A1 because public funding mainly involves demand-side co-funding measures.)	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by non-profit private education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults, and organisations and institutions for which education and training is an ancillary activity, such as public libraries or social welfare organisations. These providers may receive public subsidies, generally via municipalities that organise tendering procedures.)
AT	**Schools for employed people** (*Schulen für Berufstätige*) play a crucial role in the provision of second-chance education for adults at upper secondary level (ISCED 3). These schools exist for both general and vocational education pathways, including academic secondary schools (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schulen*), colleges of engineering, arts and crafts (*Höhere Technische Lehranstalten*), colleges of business administration (*Handelsakademien*) and schools of intermediate vocational education (*Berufsbildende Mittlere Schulen*). Around 13 000 pupils attended a school for employed people at ISCED 3 level during 2017/18.	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by non-profit private providers.)

	Public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults and providing:	
Country code	Programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4	Programmes targeting the development of basic skills that do not lead to qualifications
PL	**Primary schools for adults** (*szkoły podstawowe dla dorosłych*) are intended for learners aged 18 and above. **General upper secondary schools for adults** (*licea ogólnokształcące dla dorosłych*) are public institutions where learners aged 18 and above who have completed lower education (ISCED 2) can obtain a school leaving certificate (provides access to post-secondary schools) or maturity certificate (opens access to higher education). **Post-secondary schools for adults** (*szkoły policealne dla dorosłych*) are schools intended for adults holding a school leaving certificate (a maturity certificate is not required for admission). Programmes lead to a vocational diploma if learners pass vocational examinations for a given occupation. There are also public institutions focusing on continuing education for adults, namely **continuing education centres**, **vocational training centres** and **vocational and continuing education centres**. These deliver formal and non-formal programmes (see also the next column).	**Continuing education centres** (*centra kształcenia ustawicznego*) provide continuing education in non-school settings and in schools for adults. This includes vocational qualification courses, vocational skills courses and general competences courses, and guidance services. **Vocational training centres** (*centra kształcenia zawodowego*) are practical training institutions. They provide vocational qualification courses and vocational skills courses and general competences courses, and practical vocational training based on a curriculum for a given occupation. **Vocational and continuing education centres** (*centra kształcenia zawodowego i ustawicznego*) comprise at least one vocational school and at least one vocational training institution. They provide vocational qualification courses, vocational skills courses and general competences courses, and guidance services.
PT	**'Qualifica centres'** are establishments focusing on enabling adults to attain qualifications. They are affiliated to various public and private entities, namely basic and secondary schools, vocational training centres in the network of the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (the Portuguese public employment service), private companies, associations and other entities.	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training. One of its main roles is to provide vocational training, including basic skills courses.)
RO	**Training centres subordinated to the National Employment Agency** deliver training programmes for unemployed people. These programmes commonly lead to formal qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4.	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by public education institutions that provide education and training for both young people and adults.)
SI	**Adult education centres** established by municipalities deliver various types of provision, including the basic school for adults programme, upper secondary education programmes for adults and non-formal education programmes, and provide guidance on adult education.	See the previous column.
SK	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 are mainly delivered by for-profit private education/training institutions that focus primarily on adults.)	N/A (Limited provision of publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications. Some provision is delivered by non-profit and for-profit education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults and by organisations and institutions for which education/training is an ancillary activity.)
FI	**General upper secondary schools for adults** are institutions mainly intended for employed people who wish to complete basic education or general upper secondary education programmes or parts of these. They play a role (although minor) in this area. The key providers of publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 are public education and training institutions that deliver education and training to both young people and adults. The trend over the last 20 years has been to develop the education provider network in a more age-neutral direction. For example, in the past, there was a clear group of **adult vocational education centres** (around 40 institutions). These have been merged into other and larger vocational institutions, which offer VET to young learners and adults. Currently, there are only a few adult vocational education centres.	Basic education for adults is provided in **liberal adult education institutions** and in **general upper secondary schools for adults**. Liberal adult education institutions provide non-formal courses, i.e. learning opportunities without qualification- or occupation-specific aims. Educational institutions providing liberal adult education are **folk high schools**, **adult education centres**, **learning centres**, **summer universities** and **sports training centres**. Approximately half of the owners of liberal adult education institutions are municipalities, one third are associations and one tenth are foundations. Other owners are joint municipal authorities, limited companies and regional councils.
SE	Municipal adult education (*komvux*) is available at the basic level, upper secondary level and as Swedish for immigrants. Municipalities can choose to deliver this type of provision themselves or to outsource it. In adult education at basic and upper secondary levels, half of the participants studied within an external organiser in 2018.	Municipal adult education (*komvux*) organises orientation courses (*orienteringskurser*). An orientation course can contribute to well-founded decisions about study or vocational choices; provide enhanced technical skills; or serve as an introduction to courses in different areas of knowledge.

Country code	Public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults and providing: Programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4	Programmes targeting the development of basic skills that do not lead to qualifications
BA	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 are mainly provided by public education and training institutions that deliver initial education/training for young people and that provide programmes for adults in parallel.)	N/A (Limited systematic public support for adult learning programmes targeting the development of basic skills that do not lead to qualifications.)
CH	A few public institutions focusing on adult education provide general upper secondary programmes (*Maturitätsschulen für Erwachsene*) and even fewer provide general lower secondary education programmes. Private institutions deliver the main part of general education for adults. VET for adults is mainly provided by public institutions that deliver education for young people.	Very few public institutions focusing on adult education for basic skills. Most providers are non-profit organisations.
IS	Higher education institutions (e.g. Bifröst University, Keilir Academy and Reykjavik University) play a role (although minor) in this area. They serve a minority of the adults seeking to complete education at levels ISCED 3 / EQF 4 and focus primarily on those pursuing higher education. Programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 are mainly delivered by non-profit private education/training institutions that focus primarily on adults and by organisations and institutions for which education/training is an ancillary activity.	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by non-profit private providers.)
LI	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 are mainly provided by public education/training institutions delivering initial education and training for young people that provide programmes for adults in parallel.)	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly provided by institutions delivering initial education and training for young people, non-profit private providers, and organisations for which education/training is an ancillary activity.)
ME	Some schools delivering initial education and training have special (independent) organisational units that deal only with adult education. The programmes intended for adults include non-formal courses (e.g. functional adult literacy, foreign language and computer courses) and shorter programmes enabling the acquisition of vocational (labour market) qualifications.	See the previous column.
MK	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that lead to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4 are mainly delivered by for-profit private education and training institutions that focus primarily on adults.)	N/A (Publicly subsidised programmes open to adults that target the development of basic skills and that do not lead to qualifications are mainly delivered by institutions providing initial education and training for young people and non-profit private providers.)
NO	There are **adult education centres** in municipalities whose main responsibility is the provision of formal education for adults at primary and lower secondary levels. The responsibility for the adult upper secondary education lies with the counties. In some counties, there are adult education centres providing upper secondary education.	**Adult education centres** in municipalities provide adult primary and lower secondary education. Basic skills are embedded in this type of provision.
RS	**Primary schools for adults** provide programmes divided into three cycles: (1) functional literacy; (2) basics of general primary education; and (3) general education with basic vocational training. Completing the third cycle (i.e. general education with basic vocational training) leads to the first formal qualification for elementary occupations (ISCED / EQF 2). **Public universities** (*narodni univerziteti*) provide programmes supporting adults in their participation in the labour market. Programmes can be vocational (e.g. massage therapy) or related to the development of key competencies needed in the labour market (e.g. digital skills).	See the previous column.
TR	**Open education schools** provide qualifications up to level ISCED 3 for people aged 18 and above. The provision is delivered through distance learning. There are three types of open education schools: – general secondary open education schools, – technical-vocational open secondary schools, – religious open secondary schools.	**Public education centres** and **maturation institutions** provide courses (vocational and non-vocational), extracurricular activities and the recognition of prior learning.

	Public education and training institutions focusing primarily on adults and providing:	
Country code	Programmes leading to qualifications at levels up to (and including) ISCED 3 / EQF 4	Programmes targeting the development of basic skills that do not lead to qualifications
UK-ENG	**Further education colleges** are major providers of formal education and training for adult returners. However, they also deliver full- and part-time courses for 16- to 19-year-olds.	Most publicly subsidised basic skills programmes are linked to qualifications; however, some funding is available for organisations to deliver community learning, some of which is linked to mathematics, English and digital skills. **Further education colleges** are one of the key providers in this context.
UK-WLS	**Further education colleges** are major providers of formal education and training for adult returners. However, they also deliver full- and part-time courses for 16- to 19-year-olds.	Most publicly subsidised basic skills programmes are linked to qualifications; however, some funding is available for organisations to deliver community learning, some of which is linked to mathematics, English and digital skills. **Further education colleges** are one of the key providers in this context.
UK-NIR	**Further education colleges** are major providers of formal education and training for adult returners. However, they also deliver full- and part-time courses for 16- to 19-year-olds.	N/A (Most publicly subsidised basic skills provision is linked to a qualification.)
UK-SCT	**Colleges** are major providers of formal education and training for adult returners. However, they also deliver full- and part-time courses for 16- to 19-year-olds.	**Colleges** are one of the providers, but play a minor role. Third sector organisations and local authorities play a key role.

Annex IV: Financial support measures targeting or privileging the education and training of low-qualified adults

This annex complements Chapter 4, Figures 4.3 and 4.4, by providing further details of demand-side financial support measures targeting or privileging the education and training of low-qualified adults. It includes the countries in Figures 4.3 and 4.4 that are shown as having such financial support measures in place. The information is provided in two tables. The first table complements Figure 4.3 (i.e. the support recipient is the learner), while the second table provides further details relating to Figure 4.4 (i.e. the support recipient is the employer).

	Financial support measures targeting or privileging the education and training of low-qualified adults and where the support recipient is the learner	
Country code	**Type of measure (including its name, if available)**	**Description**
BE nl	Fee reimbursement	Learners who obtain their first secondary education diploma through adult education are eligible for fee reimbursement.
	Training voucher (*Opleidingscheques*)	Employees can pay the fees for certain training courses using training vouchers. These cover 50 % or 100 % of the course fees and the amount of the subsidy depends on the level of education of the learner. For learners who have not completed upper secondary education, 100 % of the training costs are covered.
DK	Danish State Educational Support for Adults (SVU); grant or paid training leave	Directed at adults (as a rule, those aged 25 and above) on leave from their jobs who have little or no formal education (i.e. below ISCED 3).
FR	Personal training account (*Compte personnel de formation* (CPF))	The least qualified individuals (i.e. those with qualifications below ISCED 3) receive funding of EUR 800 per year for their training activities instead of EUR 500 given to other individuals, with a limit of EUR 8 000 instead of EUR 5 000. In addition, the CPF allows for the financing of support for the validation of acquired experience (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*).
HR	Transport allowance	Support targeting unemployed people taking part in basic education for adults (*osnovna škola za odrasle*; see Annex II). The measure operates as follows: the Ministry of Science and Education bears the costs of the programme in question; it submits a list of people enrolled in the programme to the Croatian Employment Service (CES); and the CES, in turn, bears the transport costs for all registered unemployed participants.
SI	Co-funding of school fees to attain a higher level of education; fee reimbursement	Co-funding of school fees (from the national budget and European Social Fund) was agreed from 2017 to 2022. It reimburses the cost of ISCED level 3 programmes (upper secondary education) for adults who complete a programme. The priority groups are adults with only basic school education (ISCED 2) and/or adults aged over 45.
SE	Grant/loan	Adults who need education/training at levels ISCED 1-3 can receive a higher amount of grant with a share of 67 % of the total support (for other learners, the share is 30 %). The rest is covered by the loan of student's choice.
	Study start-up support (*Studiestartstöd*), grant	Support targeting unemployed adults who have not completed basic education (ISCED 2) or upper secondary education (ISCED 3). This support measure was introduced in 2017. For full-time studies, the support can be granted for 50 weeks (SEK 2 246 per week). The aim is to support people with a limited educational background, thereby increasing their opportunities in the labour market.

	Financial support measures targeting or privileging the education and training of low-qualified adults and where the support recipient is the employer	
Country code	**Type of measure (including its name, if available)**	**Description**
DK	Danish State Educational Support for Adults (SVU); wage or salary compensation	Directed at adults with little or no education (i.e. below ISCED 3). If an employee is paid his or her full salary, their employer can receive the SVU as salary compensation.
LU	Co-funding of company training	Private sector companies can obtain training support worth 15 % (taxable) of their annual training investment. The co-financing amount is increased by 20 % for the wage costs of participants meeting one of the following criteria: (1) no qualifications recognised by public authorities and less than 10 years' service or (2) over 45 years of age.
AT	Qualification support for employees (*Qualifizierungsförderung für Beschäftigte*); programme fees and personnel absence costs	The scheme supports the education and training of three target groups: (1) employees with low levels of qualifications, i.e. individuals who have not completed a level of education above lower secondary level (ISCED 2), (2) female employees who have completed apprenticeship training or a three-year school of intermediate vocational education (*Berufsbildende Mittlere Schule*) and (3) employees with higher levels of qualifications if they are at least 45 years old. The scheme provides financial support to employers, covering 50 % of the participants' programme fees and 50 % of the personnel absence costs up to a maximum of EUR 10 000 per person and application.
SE	Grant for apprenticeship	A government grant that aims to increase adult participation in apprenticeship programmes at upper secondary level. The grant consists of several parts, including financial compensation for the workplace and for training supervisors. The scheme falls under the system of municipal adult education (*komvux*). If more adults apply than a municipality has space for, preference must be given to those with low levels of or no qualifications.
NO	SkillsPlus (*KompetansePluss*)	The SkillsPlus programme (*KompetansePluss*) is a government-subsidised scheme open to businesses (*KompetansePluss Arbeid*) and voluntary organisations (*KompetansePluss Frivillighet*) that covers several areas. It provides subsidies for training people who need to boost their basic skills and also for workers who need an apprenticeship certificate combined with basic skills. Regarding apprenticeship training (*Fagbrev på jobb*), eligible candidates are employees with little formal education (below ISCED 3). The scheme allows them to accomplish upper secondary education while staying in their jobs.
UK-ENG	Adult Education Budget	The Adult Education Budget (created in 2015) is a government-funded programme that can be used as a resource by employers (as well as other education and training providers) to fund adult education and training actions. The programme subsidises the education and training of various vulnerable groups, including adults with low levels of qualifications. The focus is on: – adults aged between 19-23 preparing for their first level 2 or 3 qualification (refers to the national qualifications framework levels); – adults with low wages aged over 24 preparing for their first level 2 or 3 qualification; – unemployed adults following any course or qualification up to level 2; – individuals with low wages whose first language is not English (to improve their language skills up to level 2).

Annex V: Approaches to systematic embedding of individualisation in adult learning provision

This annex expands on information provided in Figure 5.6 in Chapter 5. It includes countries that reported that, in their context, individualisation – i.e. tailoring to the needs of each adult (e.g. following a skills assessment) – is systematically embedded in adult learning provision. The table below outlines the approaches reported by these countries.

Country code	Approaches to systematic embedding of individualisation in adult learning provision
BE fr	The system of social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*; see Annex II) includes day, evening and weekend courses. A modular system is in place. The validation of non-formal and informal learning leads to the shortening of studies.
BE nl	Systematic initial guidance is provided to all students in basic adult education, students of Dutch as a second language and those in general adult secondary education. Moreover, students can obtain exemptions at the module level. It is also possible to organise 'open modules' that provide competences according to individual needs, especially with a view to remedial action. Another option is 'tailor-made basic education', which refers to provision designed for specific target groups.
DK	According to the Consolidation Act on Municipal Provision, all young people leaving lower secondary education and up to the age of 25 years must have an education plan in place detailing their educational activities until they have finished upper secondary education or have regular employment. Adults who want to participate in general adult education must consult a counsellor at the institution where they want to study to receive guidance on the most appropriate level of study.
DE	Germany uses a four-stage model for the integration of jobseekers into the job market. This includes 'required actions', which are determined for each person individually and may include continuing vocational training. Vocational training measures are subsidised through training vouchers. In the voucher system, adults can choose training programmes according to their needs, following certain official rules and criteria.
EE	In upper secondary schools for adults and vocational education institutions, it is possible to undertake validation of non-formal and informal learning. This can potentially lead to the shortening of courses. Moreover, adult upper secondary schools use flexible approaches, including individual learning plans and schedules, full-time or part-time studies, external study, studying of single subjects and e-learning. In the area of training for the labour market, individuals can use training cards (i.e. a voucher system) to select training programmes.
IE	The individualisation of learning following a skills assessment has become embedded in further education and training provision and particularly in programmes and initiatives targeted at those with low levels of basic skills, such as the adult literacy programme, the 'Skills to advance' initiative and the EXPLORE programme (see Annex II for details).
EL	Lifelong learning centres that operate under the Labour Employment Office tailor their vocational education and training provision to the needs of individuals and to local demand. Basic skills constitute a separate module, which is incorporated in training provision when needed.
ES	According to the 2006 Organic Law of Education and its subsequent modifications, adult education is characterised by flexibility. It involves face-to-face provision, distance learning and complete or partial enrolment; it is structured in levels and organised by training units; and it includes the possibility of undertaking non-formal learning if this is best suited to learners' specific needs. Adults who (re-)enter the education system undergo an initial assessment, which allows them to be placed at the most appropriate level.
IT	Before starting a course in a provincial centre for adult education (*centro provinciale per l'istruzione degli adulti* (CPIA)), an individual 'learning path' (*patti formativi*) is established for each learner. This takes into account a person's skills and defines new learning outcomes. Each CPIA head/leader also defines the most relevant professional and basic skills needs in their own community, such as foreign languages, specific professional skills or courses for early school leavers.
CY	Most technical and vocational education and training programmes are provided in the form of curriculum modules. Some programmes provide additional flexibility (e.g. the apprenticeship system). Within the system of vocational qualifications of the Human Resource Development Authority, candidates undergo an initial evaluation of learning outcomes gained through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Based on this evaluation, they are advised to choose a specific qualification standard.
LT	Public adult education schools use various approaches to individualisation, including individual schedules, full-time or part-time studies, distance learning and individual learning plans. Yet, individual learning plans are used only in specific cases (e.g. for gifted/talented learners or those with special learning needs or temporary learning problems).
LU	The Department of Adult Education (*Service de la formation des adultes*) provides 'learning workshops' (*ateliers d'apprentissage*) that cover basic skills, mathematics and languages. These tailored programmes are based on an initial assessment and their content takes into account identified learning needs.

Country code	Approaches to systematic embedding of individualisation in adult learning provision
MT	The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) works with entities within local industry sectors to develop tailor-made training programmes mirroring their needs. This measure provides adults with low levels of qualifications with opportunities for upskilling. MCAST also runs a recognition of prior learning process, whereby adults can demonstrate their competences through a process of portfolio analysis against programme learning outcomes.
NL	Individualisation of learning takes place at the entry to programmes and includes an assessment of prior learning. This can lead to programme or examination exemptions.
AT	Tailoring programmes to the needs of individual learners is at the very core of Austria's Lifelong learning strategy. The strategy specifies 'placing learners at the centre' and 'competence orientation' as two of its five guidelines, which all lifelong learning actions and measures should be based on. For courses offered through the Initiative for adult education (see Annex I), the aim of tailoring learning to learners' individual needs is systematically embedded in the principles and guidelines of the programmes.
PL	The system of continuing education in non-school settings is characterised by greater flexibility than is present in the school education system. This means that adults following a vocational qualification course (*kwalifikacyjny kurs zawodowy*; see Annex II) can acquire a qualification more quickly than in former vocational schools for adults. Moreover, since 2012, new types of vocational and continuing training courses have been introduced that are modular and credit based.
SI	In upper secondary vocational and technical education for adults, various approaches are used to enhance individualisation: self-directed learning, tailored study duration, modules, initial interviews, individual learning plans, etc. Moreover, according to the Matura Act, adults can sit the *matura* examination (i.e. the upper secondary school leaving examination) in two parts: they can take one set of subjects in spring and the remaining subjects in autumn.
FI	Individualisation is a basic principle of the whole education system, including adult education. Upper secondary programmes (general and vocational) consist of modules. In vocational education, an individual learning path is designed for each learner. In general upper secondary education, students can to some extent choose which courses to study.
SE	According to the 2010 Education Act, school principals are responsible for preparing an individual study plan for each student. Moreover, many organisers of adult education provide flexible solutions, such as distance learning, flexible start dates and self-paced learning.
CH	Three main approaches are used to individualise upper secondary vocational education and training: (1) the duration of apprenticeships can be shortened based on prior experiential learning; (2) qualifications can be awarded based on the validation of prior learning only (without attending courses); and (3) in some fields, it is possible to take part-time courses.
IS	The Education and Training Service Centre (*Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins*), which is funded by the state budget, supports the development of adult education, basic skills and second-chance education, and coordinates actions to individualise adult learning. Individualisation commonly includes prior learning assessment, validation of prior learning, provision of guidance services and delivery of tailor-made education and training programmes.
LI	Catch-up upper secondary vocational education and training programmes for adults may involve assessments and the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning.
ME	Programmes implemented by licensed organisers of adult education are adapted to the previous education and work experience of candidates. In practice, this means that candidates' skills portfolios are assessed and the duration and content of their education/training programmes are adapted to the knowledge and skills they already possess.
NO	According to the Education Act (Section 4A-8), adults in primary and lower secondary education have the right to have their skills mapped to ensure that any training undertaken is tailored to their needs. Moreover, individualisation is an underlying principle in the curricula of the pilot adult preparatory education system (*forberedende voksenopplæring*; see Chapter 5 for details).
RS	The Law on Adult Education (Article 21) refers to individualised adjustments for adults attending adult education programmes. Moreover, the Law on Secondary Education refers to individual education plans.
UK-ENG	In most instances, learners will complete some kind of skills assessment. However, as there are no prescribed rules for such skills assessments, their quality will differ depending on the level of the course, the provider, etc.
UK-WLS	Both Essential Skills Wales and English for Speakers of Other Languages involve skills assessments as part of their training programmes. They encourage learners to meet set targets.
UK-NIR	Apprentices undergo robust assessments of their skills and abilities and individual training plans are drawn up with details of their target qualifications.

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