



BLUESS

Basic skills development

Good practice examples from abroad

Authors: Mgr. Marina Vitiz

Ing. Lucia Mojžišová, PhD.

Mgr. Klaudius Šilhár, PhD.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of good practices concerning the current developments in the area of basic skills of adults (i.e. upskilling and reskilling of the adult population in literacy, numeracy and digital skills) in selected countries - Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

More specifically, an international perspective will provide an insight into the ongoing practices concerning the upskilling of the adults having at best lower secondary education attained (ISCED 0-2),¹ in relation to the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative. In other words, the report will encompass practices and policy initiatives in basic skills development concerning adults with primary, less than primary, and lower secondary education in the selected countries.

The report moreover depicts a civil society perspective on adult learning. Due to the crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic, the adult education sector experienced a period of significant changes resulting in adjustments, or a complete discontinuation of practices. More learners are at risk of exclusion, particularly disadvantaged adults who may not have access to digital tools. Digitalisation of learning has deepened the digital divide, emphasising the necessity for support of low-skilled individuals, as well as the importance of basic skills acquisition on individual and societal levels. Upskilling of the adult population is hence pivotal in preventing exclusion, and overcoming societal and digital transitions.

In the following section, readers will learn about initiatives and developments related to adult education. Tools and methodologies applied by various providers aiming to support upskilling of the low-skilled adult population are listed, hence providing an insight into the developments, practices and outlooks of various providers concerning support and learning opportunities targeting the low-skilled adult population in selected European countries.

¹ OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2015-en>

2. IMPROVING BASIC SKILLS IN ADULTHOOD:

Analysis of national approaches and tools for skills assessment in selected countries.

The following section comprises literature review and good practice analysis aimed at basic skills development among the low-skilled adult population.

The analysis in this report is complemented by study findings aimed at basic skills assessment (literacy, numeracy, digital skills). Quantitative findings from available data sources focusing on adult participation in education, particularly the low-skilled adult population are likewise incorporated, providing an insight into the various contexts of the countries in question.

2.1 AUSTRIA

According to PIAAC (Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) study findings from 2012,² the average proficiency score concerning basic skills among the Austrian population aged 16-65 was below the average of the participating OECD countries. However, in the numeracy skills domain, the aforementioned population group scored slightly above average and around average in problem solving in technology-rich environments. The findings moreover indicated that the younger adult population (25-34 year-olds) scored higher in numeracy and literacy than the older participants. In addition, the survey revealed that almost 14% of the adult population reported having no prior experience with computers or lacked very basic computer skills.

In terms of the adult participation in lifelong learning, 2019 data findings from Statistics Austria show that 14.7% of adults aged between 25 and 64 participated in learning, which is slightly above the EU average (10.8%).³

In Austria, various steps have been taken in support of low-skilled adults and lifelong learning since the adoption of the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy in 2011 by the Council of Ministers.⁴

However, some space for improvement remains, particularly in the area of ensuring internet access for everyone, as the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted adult education organisations financially, and deepened the digital divide in society. The organisations in the sector hence find it is necessary to prioritise inclusion and investment in the digital infrastructure.⁵

² OECD, Education GPS. Austria - Adult Skills (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC, 2012). Accessed February 2021 <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=AUT&treshold=10&topic=AS>

³ Statistics Austria. Participation in Continuing education. Accessed March 2021 https://www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/PeopleSociety/education/adult_education_further_training_lifelong_learning/participation_in_continuing_education/index.html

⁴ Eurydice. Lifelong Learning Strategy, Austria. Date published 29 August 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/lifelong-learning-strategy-1_en

⁵ Eurydice. Lifelong Learning Strategy, Austria. Date published 29 August 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/lifelong-learning-strategy-1_en

The following section lists some of the initiatives and programmes implemented in support of basic skills development in the population.

Initiative for Adult Education

The Austrian Adult Education Initiative (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung) was introduced in 2012⁶ and it entails two programme areas:

- **Basic education** (German language skills, basic skills in another language, mathematical skills, digital skills, and learning skills)
- **School-leaving qualification** (Pflichtschulabschluss) is usually obtained upon completion of compulsory schooling in Austria and it may lead to qualifications in higher and further education. It concerns the teaching of skills in the 6 examination areas. Moreover, services such as coaching and guidance concerning employment and education are incorporated in the programme.⁷

The initiative is implemented by the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs in cooperation with Austrian federal states.⁸

The aims of the Initiative for Adult Education are⁹:

- to guarantee access to advanced training in the area of basic skills and lower secondary education
- to offer comprehensive and regionally balanced education programmes
- to ensure the provision of high-quality education tailored to the needs of the target groups
- to align educational offers in terms of lifelong learning opportunities and subsequent trainings
- to work towards social equality

Example of the realised project within the Initiative for Adult Education:

Volkshochschule (VHS) Tirol (Adult Education Centre, Tyrol)¹⁰: **Basisbildung (Basic Skills Programme)** offers the curriculum of the basic skills, aiming to meet the needs of learners and to improve the quality of learners' everyday life.

Prior to the start of the course, learners' skills are evaluated during an interview.

⁶ Initiative Erwachsenenbildung. The Austrian Initiative for Adult Education. Available at https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/Austrian_Initiative_for_Adult_Education_2016.pdf

⁷ Federal Ministry, Republic of Austria, "Adult Education Initiative", Accessed February 2021 https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/adult_education_austria/adult_education_initiative.html

⁸ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Initiative for Adult Education, Austria. Date published 4 May 2016 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/initiative-adult-education-austria>

⁹ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Initiative for Adult Education, Austria. Date published 4 May 2016 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/initiative-adult-education-austria>

¹⁰ Volkshochschule Tirol. Basic education. Reading, writing, arithmetic for adults. Accessed February 2021 <https://www.vhs-tirol.at/grundbildung/>

The courses offered include reading, writing, and numeracy skills, and each consist of three levels¹¹:

1. The first level of the course aims to equip learners with basic competences such as writing and spelling, reading short phonemic words and working with money.
2. The second level is directed towards learners with low German language skills. Course participants learn to read, write and comprehend short texts. They also familiarise with reading and using maps, as well as making calculations associated with everyday-life situations.
3. The third level is designed for people who can already understand and read text, but might require assistance concerning grammar. Working life skills, such as writing progress reports or calculating driving and working times, are taught at this level.

Following the initial assessment, participants are integrated into small learning groups, and individually work on achieving their objectives.

During the first Initiative for Adult Education programme period (2012-2014), about 9 000 people participated in basic education courses and about 4 700 attended adult programmes to complete compulsory schooling (Pflichtschulabschluss).¹² In addition, the second programme period ran from January 1st, 2015 to December 31st, 2017, while the third programme period started on January 1st, 2018 and runs until December 31st, 2021.¹³

Basic education curriculum in adult education

In May 2019, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research published the "Basic Education Curriculum in Adult Education".¹⁴ As of 1 September, 2019, the basic education curriculum in the adult education initiative is regarded as the basis for the educational offers in the area of basic education.¹⁵

The target group are individuals above 15 years of age, as well as low-skilled adults.

Learning offers are required to meet the needs of learners. The contents of the educational offer cover¹⁶:

- learning skills (autonomous learning, learning to learn)
- skills in the German language (speaking, reading, writing)

¹¹ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Initiative for Adult Education, Austria. Date published 4 May 2016 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/initiative-adult-education-austria>

¹² Cedefop. Austria-evaluation of the adult education initiative. Date published 5 August 2015 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/austria-evaluation-adult-education-initiative>

¹³ Initiative Erwachsenenbildung. Adult education initiative. Accessed February 2021 <https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/initiative-erwachsenenbildung/was-ist-das/>

¹⁴ Basisbildung und Alphabetisierung. What is basic education. Accessed February 2021 <https://www.alphabetisierung.at/zentrale-beratungsstelle/definitionen/>

¹⁵ Initiative Erwachsenenbildung. Basic education. Accessed February 2021 <https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/foerderbare-programmbereiche/basisbildung/>

¹⁶ Initiative Erwachsenenbildung. Basic education. Accessed February 2021 <https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/foerderbare-programmbereiche/basisbildung/>

- basic skills in another language (speaking, reading, writing)
- numerical skills
- digital skills

ALFATELEFON Österreich offers free information and advice on basic education courses in Austria¹⁷, while the Central Advice Centre for Basic Education operates as a hub for the promotion of basic education and literacy at various levels.¹⁸

Initiatives supporting basic skills development

Provision of access to education for everyone is considered pivotal for all adult education providers in Austria. The provision of services consists of educational counselling, guidance and information, provision of basic education and basic skills and the opportunity to acquire qualifications at various levels. Therefore, adult education providers aim to enable various offers for learners, and to encourage participation in lifelong learning and flexible transitions within the different levels of education, as well as transitions between work and education.¹⁹

Various adult education institutions receiving funding from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung) offer courses leading to certification within the “Second Chance Education” initiative.

The education providers supporting low-skilled adults in Austria include the following²⁰:

- Adult Education Centres (Volkshochschulen)
- Vocational Training Institutes (Berufsförderungsinstitute)
- Institutes for Economic Promotion of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitute)
- Austrian Bildungshäuser
- confessional institutions
- regional non-profit adult education institutions

Free information and advice about Adult Education is available from education counselling, guidance and information centres in all federal provinces. However, it is noted that in the context of Austria, provision of adult education opportunities still tends to encompass those who can afford the education and have access to it, while access for disadvantaged adults is rather limited.²¹

¹⁷ Federal Ministry Republic of Austria. Adult Education Initiative. Accessed February 2021
https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/adult_education_austria/adult_education_initiative.html

¹⁸ Basisbildung und Alphabetisierung. Central advice centre for basic education. Accessed February 2021
<https://www.alphabetisierung.at/zentrale-beratungsstelle/>

¹⁹ The Austrian Education System. Adult education. Accessed February 2021
<https://www.bildungssystem.at/en/adult-education>

²⁰ The Austrian Education System. Adult Education. Accessed February 2021
<https://www.bildungssystem.at/en/adult-education>

²¹ The Austrian Education System. Adult Education. Accessed February 2021
<https://www.bildungssystem.at/en/adult-education>

Integration centres for asylum seekers have been implemented in recent years, providing integration counselling services and German language courses. As the country regards itself as monolingual, learning German is necessary for the purposes of integration and assimilation in the society.²² Moreover, the Austrian Public Employment Service offers 'competence checks' for asylum seekers, i.e. the validation of knowledge and skills acquired through education or work.²³

In addressing and encouraging the civic and democratic participation of adults in Austria, the Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres (Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen, VÖV) launched a **Democracy MOOC** (massive open online course) in 2019 aiming to deliver information on political issues as well as providing support and opportunities to reflect on behaviours, values, skills and attitudes relating to democracy and civil society. Moreover, the demographic scope of the participants tends to be diverse as everyone can enroll and participation is free of charge.²⁴

Particular focus has been placed on enhancement of digital skills, thus initiatives tackling digital literacy emerged. One such initiative is the '**Digital Competence Framework for Austria - DigComp 2.2 AT**' - a complex project involving schools, open youth work and adult education,²⁵ based on the 'DigComp' reference framework of the European Commission.²⁶

As of 2019, all citizens have the opportunity to conduct a free online test at **fit4internet.at** to assess their own digital competence. Furthermore, Fit4Internet provides courses to spread basic digital skills for employees above 45 years old. The main instrument used is the issuing of digital competence certificates as the courses focus on the basic skills of older employees and workers.²⁷

2.2 BELGIUM

Eurostat data from 2016²⁸ show there is a slight increase in participation in education and training among individuals aged 25 to 64 with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education attainment (20.3%) compared to data from 2011 (15.2%). However, participation in education among adults with completed tertiary education was found to be significantly higher (65.2%), indicating that higher educated adults are more likely to participate in education.

²² Heinemann, A.M. B. (2017). "The making of 'good citizens': German courses for migrants and refugees", *Studies in the Education of Adults*, vol. 49, no.2., 177-195, DOI: [10.1080/02660830.2018.1453115](https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2018.1453115)

²³ Validation for Inclusion of New Citizens of Europe (VINCE). Validation in Austria. Accessed March 2021 <https://vince.eucen.eu/validation-in-austria/>

²⁴ EPAL. Democracy MOOC: Education for democratic citizenship of adults. Date published 11 July 2019 <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/democracy-mooc-education-democratic-citizenship-adults>

²⁵ Federal Ministry Republic of Austria. Digital literacy. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/en/Topics/Digitalisation/For-citizens/Digital-literacy.html>

²⁶ European Commission. The Digital Competence Framework 2.0. Accessed March 2021 <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/digital-competence-framework>

²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2019-32/country_report_-_austria_-_final_2019_0D3204BD-9F89-F6DD-1A7E1A4E2A02FA42_61227.pdf

²⁸ Eurostat database. Participation rate in education and training by educational attainment level: Belgium. Accessed March 2021 <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

In addition, it is important to note that 60% of adults with low education attainment in Belgium do not participate in learning, despite them recognising the need to upskill for work purposes. Such findings indicate there is a need to address the low levels of participation in education and training among low-skilled individuals.²⁹

Literacy provision and policies in Belgium differs regionally. It is noted, however, that such fragmentation enables the possibility to address diverse regional needs.³⁰ Further challenges concerning literacy education in Belgium are the fact that opportunities mostly focus on employability, while the need for development of numeracy and digital literacy skills prevails.³¹

Due to Belgium's complex institutional organisation and lack of cohesion in governmental structures, the following section provides insights into policy developments and practices in three separate sections, in relation to the three communities in Belgium. The country consists of three regions, and the Federal State and has three linguistic communities (Flemish, French, and German-speaking community).³²

1. Flemish-speaking community

Results of the PIAAC study from 2012 show that 12.4% of adults in Flanders (aged 16-65) had highest levels of proficiency in literacy (Level 4 or 5), slightly higher than the average of the remaining participating countries (11.8%). In addition, in the domain of problem solving in technologically-rich environments, 10.9% of adults in Flanders (compared with 14.2% of adults in all participating countries) indicated they had no prior experience with computers or lacked very basic computer skills, while 44.7% of the participants scored at or below Level 1 in problem solving in technology-rich environment. In other words, a significant proportion of the study participants could only use email or a browser.³³ In addition, findings from 2010 revealed that only 3.1% of low-educated adults in Flanders participated in education.³⁴

As part of the Flemish lifelong learning strategy, financial incentives have been introduced for adult learners, such as vouchers, reimbursement of enrolment fees, and an entitlement for workers to ask for a paid leave for study reasons.³⁵

²⁹ Van Nieuwenhove, L. & De Wever, B. (2021). Why are low-educated adults underrepresented in adult education? Studying the role of educational background in expressing learning needs and barriers. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2020.1865299>

³⁰ EAEA, Country reports. Recent developments in Belgium (French-speaking). Date published 9 January 2020 [https://countryreport.eaea.org/belgium/belgium-reports-2019/Recent%20developments%20in%20Belgium%20\(French%20speaking\)%202019](https://countryreport.eaea.org/belgium/belgium-reports-2019/Recent%20developments%20in%20Belgium%20(French%20speaking)%202019)

³¹ EAEA, Country reports. Challenges and recommendations in Belgium (French-speaking). Date published 9 January 2020 view. <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

³² belgium.be. The Communities. Accessed March 2021 https://www.belgium.be/en/about_belgium/government/communities

³³ OECD. Survey of Adult Skills, Flanders: country note. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Country%20note%20-%20Flanders.pdf>

³⁴ Vrije Universiteit Brussels, Socially inclusive ICT-based learning. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.vub.be/en/research/socially-inclusive-ict-based-adult-learning-0>

³⁵ Eurydice. Lifelong Learning Strategy, Belgium, Flemish Community. Date published 22 May 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/lifelong-learning-strategy-3_es

Adult education (volwassenenonderwijs) encompasses all programmes of adult basic education (basiseducatie), secondary adult education (secundair volwassenenonderwijs) and (adult) higher vocational education (hoger beroepsonderwijs). Moreover, the specific teacher training programme is organised in adult education.³⁶

Adult training in Flanders is defined as a broader concept than adult education and provides, next to the programmes of formal learning, all forms of non-formal and informal learning for adults.³⁷

In Flanders, adult education is provided by the **Centres for Adult Education (Volwassenenonderwijs - CVOs)** and **Centra Basiseducatie (CBEs)**.³⁸ The centres offer a variety of learner guidance and orientation services, including study support and career counselling. In addition, initiatives regarding lifelong guidance projects and activities are pursued by various socio-cultural organisations.³⁹

Adult basic education (basiseducatie) is offered to low-educated adults (from the age of 18 years upwards). The Centres for Adult Basic Education (CBE) have a broad and varied course offer, ranging from reading, writing and arithmetic classes, social orientation and ICT, Dutch for non-native Dutch-speakers, step-up English, and step-up French, covering basic skills at the level of primary education and the first stage of secondary education.⁴⁰ Upon passing a module in a study programme, participants receive a partial certificate recognised by the Flemish government, while upon completion of all modules of the study programme, participants receive a certificate.⁴¹

Since 2012, changes have been introduced concerning the attainment targets in the ICT modules at CBEs.⁴² In addition, it is noted that certain CVOs have introduced blended learning courses in cooperation with employers. However, as learners' profiles tend to be diverse, meeting the needs of disadvantaged adults is particularly important, in order to address some of the challenges in adult education, such as dropout.⁴³

An example of an ICT course designed for enhancing employability is “**ICT to work**” provided by Brusseler, during which participants learn how to use keyboard, fill out digital forms, use email, search for vacancies online, or prepare a resume.⁴⁴

³⁶ Eurydice. Adult education and training in Flanders. Date published 8 May, 2018. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-3_en

³⁷ Eurydice. Adult education and training in Flanders. Date published 8 May, 2018. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-3_en

³⁸ National Guidance Systems. Guidance system in Belgium (Flanders). Accessed March 2021 <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-system-in-belgium-flanders>

³⁹ National Guidance Systems. Guidance system in Belgium (Flanders). Accessed March 2021 <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-system-in-belgium-flanders>

⁴⁰ Vlaanderen. Basic education. Accessed March 2021 <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/basiseducatie>

⁴¹ Vlaanderen. Basic education. Accessed March 2021 <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/basiseducatie>

⁴² European Schoolnet (2017). Country report on ICT in Education: Belgium-Flanders. Available at <http://www.eun.org/documents/411753/839549/Country+Report+Flanders+2017.pdf/5dd41869-0b28-4ef5-89c9-c3d4518d5cc4>

⁴³ Vrije Universiteit Brussels. Socially inclusive ICT based learning. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.vub.be/en/research/socially-inclusive-ict-based-adult-learning-0>

⁴⁴ Brusseler. ICT to work. Accessed March 2021

Adults interested in pursuing **secondary education (secundair volwassenenonderwijs)** are offered two paths to choose from:

- they may follow a course in the field of general education at the level of the Algemeen secundair onderwijs (ASO), the former second chance education
- follow a diploma-oriented training, in combination with a supplementary general education training

In each of the Flemish provinces adults can receive advice and guidance on learning opportunities in a **Leerwinkel ('learning shop')**. Furthermore, in the province of East-Flanders, young people and adults may find guidance regarding education and training at De Stap - a partnership between the CLB centres in the city of Ghent.⁴⁵

Concerning job-seekers and employees, **ESF Flanders**⁴⁶ acquires and shares knowledge in order to help organisations in working out solutions for overcoming challenges of the labour market and supporting a sustainable future, consisting of two operational services: the Job-seekers service is responsible for the calls for proposals in which job-seekers constitute the final target group. The Employees service is responsible for the calls for proposals in which employees as well as employers constitute the final target group.⁴⁷

In July 2015, the concept for an integrated framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning (EVC, Erkennen van verworven competenties / recognition of acquired competences) in Flanders was approved by the Flemish Government.⁴⁸

2. French-speaking community

Education for social advancement (enseignement de promotion sociale - EPS) providers offer flexible courses resulting in certification, and participants may proceed towards vocational continuing education. The courses aim to enhance an individual's personal and professional competences. It is also referred to as 'Second chance education'.⁴⁹

Lire et écrire⁵⁰ is a non-profit organisation, founded in 1983, initiating literacy education for low-educated and illiterate adults, and supports the implementation of the Upskilling

⁴⁵ National Guidance Systems. Guidance system in Belgium (Flanders) Accessed March 2021 <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-system-in-belgium-flanders>

⁴⁶ ESF-Vlaanderen. Mission statement. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.esf-vlaanderen.be/en/mission-statement>

⁴⁷ ESF-Vlaanderen. Mission statement. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.esf-vlaanderen.be/en/mission-statement>

⁴⁸ Zaidi, A. & Curth, A. (2019). Implementácia Ciest zvyšovania úrovne zručností - Workshopy vzájomného učenia sa na Slovensku a v Belgicku [Upskilling Pathways implementation-Mutual learning workshops in Slovakia and Belgium]: synthesis report. Available at https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

⁴⁹ be.brussels. Social Advancement course. Accessed March 2021 <https://be.brussels/education-and-training/continuing-education/social-advancement-course>

⁵⁰ Lire et Écrire Accessed March 2021 <https://www.lire-et-ecrire.be/?lang=fr>

Pathways initiative.⁵¹ The organisation is supported and funded by the Ministry of Culture and Popular Education (French-speaking Community), the Walloon Region, the Brussels Region and the European Union. Their activities include the following: political lobbying at Federal and Community levels, raising awareness campaigns, developing joint research and educational methods, proposing orientation services and pedagogical advice, among others.⁵²

Lire et écrire aims to⁵³:

- raise awareness among the general population about illiteracy issue, address its causes and seek solutions
- promote the right to quality literacy education for adults
- develop literacy to encourage social change towards equality

The necessity for digital skills enhancement among adults is addressed by Lire et écrire in their '**Les oubliés du numérique**' (**The left behind by the digital transformation**) campaign. The campaign aims to raise awareness among the general public regarding the difficulties illiterate adults face in their daily lives, particularly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The organisation asks for resolving the digital divide in society, provision of a low-cost phone service for the most disadvantaged, and enablement of access to all public services for illiterate individuals.⁵⁴

The organisation moreover developed nine educational '**Bienvenue en Belgique**' (**Welcome to Belgium**) kits based on intercultural pedagogy for newcomers to Belgium, particularly, illiterate or low-educated individuals. The aim is to enhance critical, analytical thinking skills, and encourage active participation in society.⁵⁵

'**Comprendre et parler**' (**Understand and Speak**) is a methodology developed for learning to speak French and French as a foreign language, targeting comprehension and verbal expression, without addressing reading and writing. The methodology allows learners to follow structured procedures, self-assess, make use of audio and visual media, among others. It is designed to encourage active engagement of the participants.⁵⁶

Since 2013, VET actors in the French-speaking part of Belgium have focused on soft skills⁵⁷, such being Erasmus+ **Step4 project**⁵⁸, implemented by Forem.

⁵¹ EAEA (2019). Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, country reports, p.13. Available at <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

⁵² EBSN. Members/Lire et Écrire. Accessed March 2021 <https://basicskills.eu/current-members/lire-et-ecrire/>

⁵³ Lire et Écrire. Accessed March 2021 <https://lire-et-ecrire.be/Le-mouvement-Lire-et-Ecrire?lang=fr>

⁵⁴ Lire et Écrire. "Les oubliés du numérique" [The left behind by the digital transformation] campaign. Date published 8 September 2020

⁵⁵ Lire et Écrire. Bienvenue en Belgique [Welcome to Belgium]. Accessed March 2021 <https://lire-et-ecrire.be/Bienvenue-en-Belgique-Neuf-mallettes-pedagogiques?lang=fr>

⁵⁶ Lire et écrire. Comprendre et parler [Understand and speak]. Accessed March 2021 <https://lire-et-ecrire.be/Comprendre-et-parler?lang=fr>

⁵⁷ Zaidi, A.&Curth, A. (2019). Implementácia Ciest zvyšovania úrovne zručností - Workshopy vzájomného učenia sa na Slovensku a v Belgicku [Upskilling pathways implementation-Mutual learning workshops in Slovakia and Belgium], synthesis report, p.17 Available at https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

⁵⁸ Step4SFC. Accessed March 2021 Step4 <https://step4-sfc.eu/Project-overview>

The project developed the following tools:

- methodology to work on the professional behaviours it is delivered in form of a massive open online course (MOOC)⁵⁹, aimed at creating a training methodology and tools to enhance work-related behavioural skills.
- SFC radar Visio4-sfc to make it possible to objectify the progression of behavioural skills acquired.⁶⁰

Le Forem in Wallonia provide network of 24 competence centres⁶¹ providing training, information and awareness-raising for workers, job seekers, students, teachers, business leaders and executives, and contribute to support for business competitiveness.

In the Wallon region, Forem offers training courses for adults in different sectors, including courses on developing and improving digital skills. In addition, **Technofutur TIC** offers a wide range of in-person and remote training, summer internships and ICT-related events, while Technobel is a skills centre offering training in information and communications technologies (ICT) professions. These courses are aimed at job-seekers, employees, personnel managers, teachers and students.⁶²

TOSA DigComp⁶³ is a comprehensive test of the digital skills described in the DigComp framework as defined by the European Union, and it includes multiple-choice questions, interactive activities, and true software and operating system manipulations in "real-life" situations. In Walloon Region it was launched by Bruxelles Formation in 2018, as it was available/similar in French, Dutch and English and could reliably and rapidly assess and certify the level of unemployed people and trainees. As of 2019, it's also used by Actiris⁶⁴ for assessment of unemployed interviewees and can be used to identify the applicant's skills that could be improved and/or formally recognised.⁶⁵

The skills validation system was set up in the context of policies promoting lifelong learning at the Federal level in the early 2000s.⁶⁶

There are now two types of **validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL)** in Belgium:

⁵⁹ A massive open online course (MOOC) is a free Web-based distance learning program that is designed for the participation of large numbers of geographically dispersed students

⁶⁰ Step4 SFC. Accessed March 2021 <https://step4-sfc.eu/Visio4-SFC-un-pas-plus-loin-dans-l-observation-evaluation-des-SFC>

⁶¹ Le Forem. Network of competence centres. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.leforem.be/centres-de-competence.html>

⁶² economie. Digital skills training. Accessed March 2021 <https://economie.fgov.be/en/themes/online/online-games/digital-duel/digital-skills/digital-skills-training>

⁶³ TOSA DigComp-assessment and certification on digital skills Accessed March 2021 <https://www.isograd.com/EN/tosadigital.php>

⁶⁴ Actiris. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.actiris.be/>

⁶⁵ Zaidi, A. & Curth, A. (2019) Implementácia Ciest zvyšovania úrovne zručností - Workshopy vzájomného učenia sa na Slovensku a v Belgicku [Upskilling Pathways implementation-Munutal learning workshops in Slovakia and Belgium]:synthesis report, p.24 https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

⁶⁶ Mathou, C.(2016). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2016 update: Belgium-French Available at https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

- the validation of competences (VDC) in the continuous vocational education and training (CVET) sector, resulting in certification
- validation of prior experience (VAE=valorisation des acquis de l'expérience) in adult education and higher education leads to validation.

However, there is some space for improvement in enhancing the value of the skills certificate on the labour market, and thus encouraging more individuals to participate.⁶⁷

Recognition of prior learning (Reconnaissance des acquis de formation or “RAF”) has been provided in Belgium since 2011. Public sector training providers such as Bruxelles formation, Forem, IPAFME, and Sfpme offer **Skills Certificates** based on the learners' results.⁶⁸

Concerning the recognition of Skills Certificates on labour market, the Federal Government introduced a right of the worker to a 'skills audit' (bilan de compétences)⁶⁹ which has been in force since 2004.⁷⁰

Policy makers have taken steps in supporting unemployed adults in receiving appropriate training and enhancing their chances of employability, by developing two skills assessment tools hosted on the **DOCIMO online platform**.

1. Test on literacy and numeracy competences⁷¹ seeks to estimate the job seeker's ability to be successful in learning the skills of particular vocational training programmes. Should the individual not pass the test, they may undertake an individual training programme to improve their reading, writing, and numeracy skills
2. Online screening of the knowledge and the cognitive skills that are necessary for a specific occupation is available. The assessment consists of approximately 30-60 multiple choice questions covering 50 occupations. This screening aims to support unemployed individuals. Upon completion, the applicant may proceed to have an interview with a vocational trainer or counsellor during which further steps in improving one's skills are determined. However, the disadvantage of online screening is that job seekers who lack digital skills may be hesitant or unable to take tests on online platforms.⁷²

⁶⁷ Mathou, C. (2016). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2016 update: Belgium-French, p.7 Available at https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ The law grants every worker a right to be assessed to identify and validate skills gained outside the formal education system.

⁷⁰ Mathou, C. (2016). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2016 update: Belgium-French Available at https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

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

⁷² Zaidi, A. & Curth, A. (2019) Implementácia Ciest zvyšovania úrovne zručností - Workshopy vzájomného učenia sa na Slovensku a v Belgicku [Upskilling Pathways implementation-Mutual learning workshops in Slovakia and Belgium], synthesis report, p.19 https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/sk_synthesisreport.pdf

Specialised service providers such as ONEM (Office National de l'Emploi),⁷³ ACTIRIS (Office Régional Bruxellois de l'Emploi),⁷⁴ FOREM (Service Public Wallon de l'Emploi et de la Formation),⁷⁵ provide information to adults interested in skills audits,⁷⁶ while Bruxelles Formation,⁷⁷ the local employment office in the Brussels region supports jobseekers to elaborate a professional project. Cités des Métiers (CDM)⁷⁸ in French-speaking Belgium provides job offers, brochures, documents and other works related to the major themes of professional life. Furthermore, CDM provides individual counselling sessions for jobseekers, workshops and information sessions, as well as company visits.⁷⁹

3. German-speaking community

As of 2014, the Department of Adult Education, including formal and non-formal adult education, is located in the Department of Education and teaching organisations.⁸⁰

Learning opportunities for adults wishing to improve their basic skills are provided in various forms. Evening schools, which are affiliated to secondary schools offer courses on basic skills, such as:⁸¹

- language instruction
- computer science
- household courses
- certificate-oriented second chance education

This type of provision is implemented by the Education Department of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community. Everyone who is past the compulsory school age is eligible to participate, however some levels of education are accessible to participants only upon the provision of proof of required knowledge. In addition, a council decides on the admission of the learner.⁸²

Adults in the German-speaking Community may acquire **certification in primary and secondary education in schools**, and externally, following a curriculum comparable to the one of initial education. More specifically, all qualifications up to upper secondary education

⁷³ ONEM. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.onem.be/>

⁷⁴ Actiris. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.actiris.be/>

⁷⁵ Le Forem. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.leforem.be/>

⁷⁶ Mathou, C. (2016). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2016 update: Belgium-French Available at https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_BE_FR.pdf

⁷⁷ Bruxelles Formation. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.bruxellesformation.be/>

⁷⁸ Cité des Métiers. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.citedesmetiers.brussels/fr-BE/Page/Index/51>

⁷⁹ Cité des Métiers in Francophone Belgium. Date published 27 July 2017 <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/fr/blog/les-cites-des-metiers-cdm-en-belgique-francophone>

⁸⁰ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/belgien-deutschsprachige-gemeinschaft/developments-and-current-policy-priorities_en

⁸¹ Eurydice. Belgium-German speaking community overview. Accessed March 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/belgium-german-speaking-community_en

⁸² Eurydice. Belgium-German-speaking community, Main types of provision. Date published 13 August, 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/belgien-deutschsprachige-gemeinschaft/main-types-provision_en

may be obtained through a system of external examinations.⁸³ The duration of the course depends on the provider, as well as the qualification the learner wishes to obtain.⁸⁴

Non-formal education courses in literacy, numeracy, and ICT are offered by 13 subsidised adult education institutions (Erwachsenenbildungseinrichtungen). These courses, however, usually do not lead to certificate or qualification.⁸⁵

The Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium has been working on a project aiming to develop the validation of non-formal and informal learning in cooperation with diverse partners present in the area.⁸⁶

With the project “**Shaping Future Paths**”,⁸⁷ the aim is to support the professional development of the active population. The project’s focus is on the low-skilled job seekers and workers who:

- seek a career change
- want to secure their jobs
- are searching for jobs
- want to recognise and improve their skills

Furthermore, professional training advisors are available for low-skilled job-seekers and people who wish to recognise and develop their skills. Besides, adults wishing to clarify their career paths may participate in **ProfilPASS** workshops which are offered in a form of an individual consultation.

Recognition of professional skills concerns adults without a vocational qualification who have acquired skills from their previous professional experience. They can demonstrate their professional skills in a centre for training and further education for small and medium-sized businesses (ZAWM) and have them recognized in the form of certificates of competence.⁸⁸

⁸³Eurydice. Belgium-German-speaking community, Main types of provision. Date published 13 August, 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/belgien-deutschsprachige-gemeinschaft/main-types-provision_en

⁸⁴European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015). Adult Education and Training in Europe: Programmes to Raise Achievement in Basic Skills. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 7 Available at https://www.erasmusplus.sk/uploads/publikacie/2015_AEducation_BasicSkillsRise_EurydiceReport_en.pdf

⁸⁵ Eurydice. Belgium -German-speaking community, Main types of provision. Date published 13 August, 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/belgien-deutschsprachige-gemeinschaft/main-types-provision_en

⁸⁶ Eurydice. Belgium-German speaking community, Main Types of Provision. Date published 13 August 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-7_sk?2nd-language=bs

⁸⁷ The educational portal of the German- speaking Community of Belgium Ostbelgienbildung Ostenbildung. Accessed March 2021 http://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-5981/10188_read-54632/

⁸⁸ Ostbelgienbildung. Accessed March 2021 http://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-5981/10188_read-54632/

2.3 CROATIA

Findings from 2015⁸⁹ indicate that low digital skills among the adult population prevail, i.e. 21.7% of adults reported lack of experience in using computers, while 26% reported they rarely or have never used the internet. However, the prevalence of low education attainment is lower in comparison to other European countries.

Data findings concerning literacy, numeracy, problem solving skills in technology-rich environments are not available for Croatia,⁹⁰ as the country did not take part in the first cycle of the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). However, it is noted that younger groups of adults (aged 16-24) have the highest digital skills in Europe - 97% have basic or above basic digital skills.⁹¹

Adult participation in learning in Croatia reached 3.50% in December 2019, showing an increase compared to findings from 2003 (1.80%).⁹²

However, adult education providers in Croatia posit that space for improvement remains in the area of basic skills provision, increasing learning offers and adult participation in education, as well as validation of informal and non-formal learning.⁹³

In 2004, the Croatian government introduced the Strategy for Adult Education, alongside the Adult Education Law, and established the Agency for Adult Education.⁹⁴

The Strategy on Education, Science, and Technology,⁹⁵ adopted in 2014, perceives lifelong learning as a foundation of education that encourages individuals from different age groups to study through the different learning forms and with the continuous access to education. The Strategy sets several goals related to adult education:⁹⁶

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

⁸⁹ Cedefop (2019). Adult population in potential need for upskilling: Country factsheet, Croatia. Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/factsheet_hr.pdf

⁹⁰ Cedefop (2019). Adult population in potential need for upskilling: Country factsheet: Croatia. Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/factsheet_hr.pdf

⁹¹ Eurostat. Do young people in the EU have digital skills? Date published 15 July 2020 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20200715-1>

⁹² Trading economics. Adult participation in learning, Croatia. Accessed March 2021 <https://tradingeconomics.com/croatia/adult-participation-in-learning-eurostat-data.html>

⁹³ EAEA Country reports. Croatia. Accessed March 2021 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/croatia>

⁹⁴ Smoljić, M., Stoic, A. & Martinović, M. (2011). Lifelong learning in Republic of Croatia, 3rd International Scientific and Expert Conference TEAM 2011, p.320. Available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334560734>

⁹⁵ Government of the Republic of Croatia. Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – Nove boje znanja [New colours of knowledge] Accessed March 2021 <https://vlada.gov.hr/highlights-15141/archives/strategy-of-education-science-and-technology-nove-boje-znanja/17784>

⁹⁶ EAEA (2019). Adult Education in Europe 2019 - A civil society view. Country reports: Croatia. Available at <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

More recently, in 2019, the **Curriculum for Basic Adult Digital Skills, Numeracy, and Literacy Development**⁹⁷ was developed.

The curriculum particularly targets low-skilled adults, i.e. adults whose skills levels are below Level 1, in accordance with PIAAC proficiency levels for literacy⁹⁸. In other words, adults who have attained compulsory education but are nevertheless regarded as functionally illiterate. Therefore, the aim is the acquisition of basic skills, such as communication in their mother tongue, reading skills, basic numeracy, digital competencies, and competencies for problem solving in technology-rich environments. Furthermore, the implementation of the curriculum would support the development of learning to learn competencies.

The curriculum will be implemented within the programmes for basic vocational skills development, however it may likewise be implemented in other education programmes concerning skills development. The curriculum adjustment is therefore possible in relation to vocational programmes and learners. Moreover, it is possible to adjust the curriculum to both formal and non-formal education. The curriculum is developed in a form of three modules (digital skills, literacy, numeracy), thus the implementation of the curriculum may be realised in accordance to the needs of the group of learners, i.e. independently or combined with vocational programmes.

The curriculum is based on the following principles:

- inclusion of all target groups, particularly marginalised groups of adults
- practices based on the contemporary andragogical approaches, as well as andragogical approaches used in Croatia
- adjustment to learners' needs and their circumstances
- assurance that the learner's needs are met
- successful implementation of the expected outcomes
- reasonable allocation of financial and human resources
- reliability of the organisations responsible for the curriculum implementation

The overall goal of the curriculum is to enhance learners' skills and therefore improve their quality of life on personal, social, and professional levels.

It is noted that individuals whose profile would match the target group of the curriculum may not consider they need to develop their skills, indicating the need for addressing perceptions around learning as well as other challenges that the potential learners might be facing. These challenges were taken into consideration in the process of curriculum development.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ministry of Science and Education, Croatia (2019). Kurikulum za razvoj temeljnih digitalnih, matematičkih, i čitalačkih vještina odraslih [Curriculum for adult basic digital skills, numeracy, and literacy development]. Available at https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/ObrazovanjeOdraslih/Publikacije/kurikulum_temeljne_vjestine_funkcionalne_pismenosti.pdf

⁹⁸ National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES). PIAAC proficiency levels for literacy. Accessed March 2021 <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/litproficiencylevel.asp>

⁹⁹ Ministry of Science and Education, Croatia (2019). Kurikulum za razvoj temeljnih digitalnih, matematičkih, i čitalačkih vještina odraslih [Curriculum for adult basic digital skills, numeracy, and literacy development]. Available at

Opportunities for upskilling

In Croatia, adults aged between 15 and 65 who haven't obtained formal education, may participate in the **primary education for adults programme** (Osnovnoškolsko obrazovanje odraslih). The programme aims to enhance the participants' employability¹⁰⁰ and is offered by various providers - public institutions providing education for adults, and it is also offered by private profit-making or non-profit organisations.

The programme is corresponding with the initial education programme (primary and lower secondary education) and is free of charge.¹⁰¹

Various local actors foster adult education in the country by implementing EU projects, particularly Erasmus+ projects.¹⁰²

Among realised projects that support low skilled adults, one example was **“New Knowledge and Skills - a Multiplier of Success” (Nova znanja i vještine - multiplikator uspjeha)**¹⁰³ coordinated by the College Modus (Učilište Modus), an adult education institution promoting lifelong learning and supporting adults in their personal and professional development. The main goal of the project was upskilling unemployed adults and preparing them for participation in the programme “Carer of the elderly and vulnerable” (Njegovatelj/ica starijih i nemoćnih osoba). Target group were low-skilled adults, adults aged 15 to 34 with completed compulsory education at most, and long-term unemployed adults over 34 years of age.

Dante¹⁰⁴ is an adult education institution founded in 1991, offering adult education courses, workshops, programmes for foreign language learning, transferrable skills training, entrepreneurship and management training, and language vocational courses for migrants. The institution collaborates closely with the state institutions, and it also participated in various European projects, such as **“English as a medium of instruction for applicants for job and asylum”**¹⁰⁵, and **“DiGiS – Teaching Digital Competences to Seniors”**.¹⁰⁶

https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/ObrazovanjeOdraslih/Publikacije/kurikulum_temeljne_vjestine_funkcionalne_pismenosti.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Središnji državni portal [Central state portal]. Primary education for adults programme in Croatia. Last updated 19 February 2021 <https://gov.hr/moja-uprava/obrazovanje/osnovnoskolski-odgoj-i-obrazovanje/osnovnoskolsko-obrazovanje-odraslih/1682>

¹⁰¹ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015). Adult Education and Training in Europe: Programmes to Raise Achievement in Basic Skills. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at

https://www.erasmusplus.sk/uploads/publikacie/2015_AEducation_BasicSkillsRise_EurydiceReport_en.pdf

¹⁰² EAEA Country reports. Recent developments in Croatia. Date published 9 January 2020

<https://countryreport.eaea.org/croatia/croatia-reports-2019/Recent%20developments%20in%20Croatia%202019>

¹⁰³ College Modus [Učilište Modus]. New Knowledge and Skills-a Multiplier of Success [Nova znanja i vještine - multiplikator uspjeha]. Accessed March 2021 <https://uciliste-modus.hr/projekt-nova-znanja-i-vjestine-multiplikator-uspjeha/>

¹⁰⁴ Dante Ustanova za obrazovanje odraslih [Dante Adult education institution] Accessed March 2021

<http://www.dante-ri.hr/kontakt/>

¹⁰⁵ Dante. MAFLE – Methods of more attractive foreign language education, excluding English as a medium of instruction for applicants for job and asylum Accessed March 2021 <http://www.dante-ri.hr/eu-projekti/aktivni/mafle/>

¹⁰⁶ Dante. DiGiS – Teaching Digital Competences to Seniors <http://www.dante-ri.hr/eu-projekti/aktivni/digis/>

2.4 DENMARK

The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) findings from 2012¹⁰⁷ reveal that in literacy, Denmark scored slightly less than the international average, while the mean proficiency in numeracy was above the international average. Likewise, Denmark scored above average in digital literacy. Findings from 2015 show that 19% of adults in Denmark aged between 25 and 64 obtained less than primary, primary, or lower secondary education (ISCED 0-2).¹⁰⁸ However, adult participation in education in Denmark is among the highest in Europe.¹⁰⁹

Even though participation in adult education in Denmark is high, adult education providers consider it is necessary to provide more support in upskilling the low-skilled adults.¹¹⁰

Initiatives supporting basic skills development

The Three-partite agreement for Adult Vocational Education and CVET (2018-2021) addresses the PIAAC results, prioritising upskilling of general basic skills - general adult education (AVU), Preparatory Adult Education (FVU), Dyslexia education (OBU) and vocational skills (AMU) and VET. In addition, development of tools for documentation of validation of prior learning is prioritised at regional and local levels.¹¹¹

In March 2021, as part of the Finance Act agreement on Stimuli and Green Recovery from December 2020, a grant was allocated¹¹² with aim to support people with dyslexia and the low-skilled adults in acquiring basic skills and hence improve their employability. Eligible applicants are municipalities, private and public companies, unemployment insurance funds, professional organisations, educational institutions and industry organisations.

The main objectives of the project are to:

- encourage individuals in the target group to participate in order to strengthen attain basic skills
- support and retain the unemployed and employed during their promotion of basic competencies
- raise awareness among employees who work with reading, writing, and arithmetic about the benefits of raising basic skills.

¹⁰⁷ SFI-The Danish National Centre for Social Research (2014). Survey of Adult Skills - Denmark. Summary of Danish PIAAC results. Available at <https://www.uvm.dk/-/media/filer/uvm/udd/voksne/pdf14/marts/140317-english-summary-of-danish-piaac-results.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ European Commission. Adult skills:Denmark. Accessed March 2021 <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=17759&langId=en>

¹⁰⁹ Danish Consortium for Academic Craftsmanship. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.dcac.dk/thedanisheducationmodel>

¹¹⁰ EAEA Country reports. Denmark. Accessed March 2021 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/denmark>

¹¹¹ Husted, B. (2019). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Denmark. Available at http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Denmark.pdf

¹¹² Styrelsen for Arbejdsmarked og Rekruttering [The Danish Agency for Labor Market and Recruitment]. Opslag: Pulje for ordblinde og læse- og skrivesvage. Accessed March 2021 <https://star.dk/puljer/2021/pulje-for-ordblind-og-laese-og-skrivesvage/>

- increase the competencies among employees who work with basic skills, so they can provide guidance to the target group about the opportunities and benefits of developing basic competencies.
- spread experiences and good practices to other companies, municipalities and unemployment insurance funds (continuously and towards the end of the project).

The initiative is administered by the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (STAR) under the Ministry of Employment. The initiative is welcomed as it will significantly contribute to enhancing skills acquisition and employability among the illiterate group of adults.¹¹³

Adult education in Denmark focuses on strengthening democracy through participation in free and open competence development, to ensure personal development and quality of life for the citizens, equality through education, with emphasis on participation of the low-skilled and development of professional competence and flexibility in labour market changes.¹¹⁴

Adult education and continuing training in Denmark comprises the following programmes:¹¹⁵

1. preparatory adult education (FVU)
2. general adult education (AVU)
3. higher preparatory single-subject courses (HF enkeltfag)-general education at upper secondary level
4. short vocational training programmes (AMU) - programmes designed according to the labour market needs focus on upskilling and reskilling of workforce
5. vocational education and training for Adults (EUV) - upon the initial assessment and recognition, learners older than 25 may enroll in programmes resulting at the same level of qualification as ordinary VET programmes
6. Academy Profession programmes (akademiuddannelse) - diploma programmes, and master programmes correspond with the level of qualification as ordinary education programmes.

Individuals interested in developing their basic skills may participate in the **preparatory adult education programme (forberedende voksenundervisning-FVU)**.¹¹⁶

The programme targets adults who want to acquire basic skills and functional skills in reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, digital problem solving and English.

FVU aims to equip adults with basic literacy and numeracy skills in order to enhance their participation in society and support them in further education. Eligible participants are adults over the age of 25, and the programme is likewise available to employed individuals. In

¹¹³ Danish Adult Education Association. Pulje til at styrke indsatsen for ordblinde og læse- og skrivesvage. Date published 9 March 2021 <https://dfs.dk/nyheder/nyheder/pulje-til-at-styrke-indsatsen-for-ordblinde-og-laese-og-skrivesvage/>

¹¹⁴ KEB Deutschland. Adult education in Denmark, <https://keb-deutschland.de/adult-education-in-denmark/>

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Denmark. Adult education and continuing training. Accessed March 2021 <https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system/adult-education-and-continuing-training>

¹¹⁶ Ministry of Children and Education, Denmark. About the preparatory adult education (FVU). Accessed March 2021 <https://www.uvm.dk/forberedende-voksenundervisning-fvu/om-forberedende-voksenundervisning>

addition, FVU digital and English are aimed at adults in the workforce, while FVU start is offered to bilingual adults who know some Danish but would like to improve their language skills, prior to enrolment into other FVU courses.¹¹⁷ FVU courses are free for participants and it does not lead to certification. Upon completion, participants may continue further studies in general adult education.

The General Adult Education Programme (Almen voksenuddannelse-AVU)¹¹⁸ is incorporated into the public education system. The programme's focus is to support adults in enhancing their skills and knowledge in general subjects. It is similar to the municipal primary and lower secondary school (the Folkeskole). AVU is for people over 18 who have not attained lowered secondary education or basic education. The programme is offered in a form of single-subject courses and it aims to improve adult's employability and further education opportunities.

Adult education centres (voksenuddannelsescenter (VUC)) deliver the programme. They also offer the following types of general adult education: education for adults with dyslexia, preparatory education for adults, higher preparatory examination courses, and supplementary courses at upper secondary level.

The courses are characterised by the following:¹¹⁹

- curricula are developed in consideration of the learners' backgrounds
- programme offers core subjects¹²⁰ and optional subjects¹²¹
- subjects are offered at different levels: Basic, G, F, E and D.

Prior to enrollment in the course, participants are assessed by a counsellor. Consequently, courses are determined according to the learner's abilities. Upon completion, examination may lead to continued education equivalent to a school-leaving certificate obtained after the 9th and 10th forms of the Folkeskole.¹²²

There is a participation fee, however students may receive financial support from the Danish State Educational Support for Adults (SVU), while unemployed adults actively searching for a job may still receive unemployment benefits while studying at VUC.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Ministry of Children and Education, Denmark. About the preparatory adult education (FVU). Accessed March 2021 <https://www.uvm.dk/forberedende-voksenundervisning-fvu/om-forberedende-voksenundervisning>

¹¹⁸ Ministry of Children and Education, Denmark. The General Adult Education Programme. Accessed March 2021 <https://eng.uvm.dk/adult-education-and-continuing-training/the-general-adult-education-programme>

¹¹⁹ Ministry of Children and Education, Denmark. The General Adult Education Programme. Accessed March 2021 <https://eng.uvm.dk/adult-education-and-continuing-training/the-general-adult-education-programme>

¹²⁰ Danish, Danish as a second language, English, French, German, history, mathematics, science and social studies

¹²¹ arts, basic information technology (IT), cooperation and communication, Latin, philosophy, physical education and sport, psychology, public speaking

¹²² Ministry of Children and Education, Denmark. The General Adult Education Programme. Accessed March 2021 <https://eng.uvm.dk/adult-education-and-continuing-training/the-general-adult-education-programme>

¹²³ Ministry of Children and Education, Denmark. The General Adult Education Programme. Accessed March 2021 <https://eng.uvm.dk/adult-education-and-continuing-training/the-general-adult-education-programme>

Non-formal adult education (folkeoplysning) in Denmark emphasises an individualized approach to learners and concerns courses that do not result in grades or exams.¹²⁴ It encompasses teaching, study circles, lectures, debate creating activities and flexibly organised activities, and fees are charged for participation. The teaching is usually offered at evening schools, which themselves create the frame for their choice of subjects and activity. Various providers operate within the framework of non-formal adult education and their activity can be divided into voluntary non-formal education and voluntary adult learning in associations. Non-formal adult education comprises the following:¹²⁵

- Independent non-formal educational activity: evening schools and voluntary activity in associations
- University extension courses
- Day folk high schools
- Private independent boarding schools (folk high schools, home economics schools, arts and crafts schools, and continuation schools)

Folk high schools (Folkehøjskole) are residential schools providing general and non-formal education,¹²⁶ offering non-qualifying courses meant to broaden general, social and democratic competencies. A variety of courses offered by different folk high schools are characterised by mutual learning.¹²⁷ Upon completion of a course, the participant obtains a diploma which is not part of the qualification structure, but may be used for validating non-formal and informal learning (individual assessment of competences).¹²⁸

Day folk high schools (Daghøjskoler) and adult education associations offer programmes of liberal adult education, and they are also offered as university extension courses.¹²⁹ The objective of day folk high schools is to support adults improve their skills and employability, and primarily their target group are unemployed adults.¹³⁰ Many day folk high schools offer FVU (Preparatory Adult Education) courses.¹³¹

To participate in non-formal adult education, it is not necessary to hold a specific school or professional qualification.¹³²

¹²⁴ KEB Deutschland, Adult education in Denmark, <https://keb-deutschland.de/adult-education-in-denmark/>

¹²⁵ Ministry of higher education and science, Denmark. Adult education and continuing training, Accessed March 2021 <https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system/adult-education-and-continuing-training>

¹²⁶ Danish Folk High Schools <https://www.danishfolkhighschools.com/about-folk-high-schools/>

¹²⁷ Ministry of higher education and science, Denmark. Adult education and continuing training, Accessed March 2021 <https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system/adult-education-and-continuing-training>

¹²⁸ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. Adult Education and Training in Europe: Programmes to Raise Achievement in Basic Skills. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹²⁹ Ministry of higher education and science, Denmark. Adult education and continuing training, Accessed March 2021 <https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system/adult-education-and-continuing-training>

¹³⁰ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. Adult Education and Training in Europe: Programmes to Raise Achievement in Basic Skills. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹³¹ Ministry of Education and Children, Denmark. Non-formal adult education. Accessed March 2021 <https://eng.uvm.dk/adult-education-and-continuing-training/non-formal-adult-education>

¹³² Non-formal education in Denmark (2011). Available at https://nvl.org/Portals/0/_dokumenter/natverk/forskning/nonformal/non_formal_dk.pdf

Within the **framework for validation of prior learning** established in 2007, individuals have the right to request an assessment of their prior learning in relation to the standards of an education and training programme, regardless of whether the competences were acquired within formal, non-formal, or informal learning. According to Danish law, the assessment must be conducted by the educational institution offering the corresponding study programmes.¹³³

Such procedure is called '**Individual assessment of competences**' (realkompetencevurdering (RKV) or individuel kompetencevurdering (IKV)). The assessment must be conducted by the educational institution offering the corresponding programme. The educational institutions have the responsibility for quality assurance, review and evaluation.¹³⁴

It is important to note that validation in Denmark is implemented via top-down and bottom-up approaches, i.e. the legislation and the formal framework have been set nationally, but the implementation is decentralised at the provider level.¹³⁵

Upon the completion of a competence assessment, learners receive an individual learning plan alongside a competence document stating the individual's formal qualifications, the prior experiences and learning equivalents, or a course certificate depending on the relevance and validity of their former experiences. The validation process consists of four stages: identification, documentation, assessment, and certification.¹³⁶

Validation of prior learning in Denmark may also be regarded as competence identification and skills audit. The following **tools for documenting knowledge, skills and competences** acquired through non-formal education have been developed:

- general assessment refers to identification of all individual's competences. Example of such assessment is **My Competence Portfolio**,¹³⁷ developed by the Ministry of Education, which includes a series of questions within three different areas of competence. Individuals may use the results for education or employment purposes.
- a specific or convergent assessment concerns assessment of individuals' competences relevant in relation to the standards of a specific qualification (e.g. IT test tools), such as **Knowertia**¹³⁸
- self-assessment tools are used often, however the results of the self-assessment test are insufficient, hence additional forms of assessment, such as tests (multiple choice or written assignments) are required.¹³⁹

¹³³ Eurydice. Validation of non-formal and informal learning, Denmark. Date published 5 April 2019 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/denmark/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning_en

¹³⁴ Eurydice. Validation of non-formal and informal learning, Denmark. Date published 5 April 2019 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/denmark/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning_en

¹³⁵ Cedefop (2016). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Country report: Denmark. Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2016_validate_dk.pdf

¹³⁶ Cedefop (2016). 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Country report Denmark. Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2016_validate_dk.pdf

¹³⁷ My Competence Portfolio. Accessed MARCH 2021 <https://www.minkompetencemappe.dk/>

¹³⁸ Knowertia. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.knowertia.com/>

¹³⁹ Cedefop (2014). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Country report:Denmark. Available at http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/870_54_DK.pdf

Non-formal education providers, such as folk high schools, focus on clarifying learner's personal and social competencies together with their professional profile. Some providers however, such as evening schools, validate prior learning depending on whether they find it relevant to their learners.¹⁴⁰

Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA) - Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd (DFS)¹⁴¹ uses the **Realkompetenceforum (Forum for real competences (an informal network))**¹⁴² as a meeting point for the exchange of updates and experiences among stakeholders within non-formal education.¹⁴³

Various stakeholders, including study committees, job-centres, trade unions among others, provide information regarding the validation process, and they likewise provide guidance to the individuals about their choice of further learning and career options.¹⁴⁴

2.5 FINLAND

PIAAC study findings for Finland show that one in ten adults in Finland have low basic skills. In addition, it was found that Finland has the largest discrepancy between adult participation in learning among low-skilled and adults with higher skills among the participating OECD countries, indicating there is a need for provision of support and upskilling and reskilling of low-skilled adults.¹⁴⁵

It is noted, however, that adult participation in education in Finland has significantly increased in recent years. More specifically, findings from 2018 show that participation in adult education and training by adults aged between 18 and 64 saw an increase of 50%, which amounts to 1.6 million people.¹⁴⁶ Concerning job-related learning, Finland has a somewhat high proportion of low-skilled adults participating in learning (31%), however, it is lower than in the neighbouring Nordic countries.¹⁴⁷

Lifelong learning is fostered within the Finnish education system in various ways - learners can always continue their studies on an upper level of education irrespective of their

¹⁴⁰ Cedefop (2016). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Country report: Denmark. Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2016_validate_dk.pdf

¹⁴¹ Danish Adult Education Association. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.dfs.dk/>

¹⁴² Competence Forum. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.kompetenceforum.com/>

¹⁴³ Husted, B. (2019). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Denmark.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Denmark.pdf

¹⁴⁴ Husted, B. (2019). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Denmark. Available at

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Denmark.pdf

¹⁴⁵ OECD iLibrary. Improving learning participation of adults with low skills. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/07d987ba-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/07d987ba-en>

¹⁴⁶ Eurydice. Adult education and training, Finland. Date published 19 December 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-25_en

¹⁴⁷ OECD iLibrary. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/07d987ba-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/07d987ba-en>

previous choices, thus legislation concerning upper secondary education and higher education requires educational providers to promote lifelong learning.¹⁴⁸

Initiatives supporting basic skills development

In 2019, **The continuous learning reform** (2019-2023) was launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture. It will include development of study leave and financial aid for adult students, and the opportunities for people to study while looking for work will be improved. Moreover, the reform aims to resolve how non-formal and informal learning can be more efficiently exploited in competence development, enhancing the visibility of learning outcomes. It is stated that the reform will include principles concerning recognition of prior learning obtained outside formal education. In addition, services offering lifelong guidance will be created, providing support for underrepresented groups in adult education.¹⁴⁹

The reform's vision and objectives are:

1. *Everyone acquires their skills and competence during their careers.*
 - Equal opportunities for everyone to upskill and reskill proactively, so that they have improved employability, career progression, and workplace development
2. *Everyone has the knowledge, competence and skills required for employment and a meaningful life.*
 - A higher level of competence.
 - A higher employment rate.
 - A higher number and proportion of 25 to 64-year-olds with a higher education degree and lower number and proportion of 25 to 64-year-olds without a post-primary qualification or degree.
3. *Competence renews the world of work and the world of work renews competence.*
 - A skilled workforce complementing sustainable growth, innovation, competitiveness and wellbeing
 - Skilled workforce for employers.
 - Workplace communities advocate the importance of learning.

The reform is based on information that provides a shared view of the current situation, formed by collecting statistics, data from researchers, and interviews with experts and citizen surveys, among others.¹⁵⁰

Further initiative implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland is the **annual quality award competition** for adult education providers with aim to encourage learning centres to assess and continuously improve the quality of their activities. Furthermore, the goal is to identify best practices among providers and to enhance the

¹⁴⁸ Eurydice. Lifelong learning strategy, Finland. Published date 22 January 2020

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/finland/life-long-learning-strategy_en

¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland. Reforming continuous learning. Accessed March 2021
<https://minedu.fi/en/continuous-learning-reform>

¹⁵⁰ Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland. Reforming continuous learning. Accessed March 2021
<https://minedu.fi/en/continuous-learning-reform>

attractiveness and visibility of adult education. Each year, a different theme is selected, and the award of the prize is based on performance evaluation based on criteria determined by an expert committee appointed by the Ministry.¹⁵¹

Adult learning encompasses vocational training and general education as well as formal, non-formal and informal learning.¹⁵² Adult education in Finland is mostly provided within the formal educational system¹⁵³ and learners are eligible to participate in education at all levels of education. Adult education and training comprises education leading to a qualification, degree studies, training preparing for competence-based qualifications, apprenticeship training, further and continuing education updating and extending the professional skills, studies in subjects relating to citizenship skills, working life skills and society, and studies in various crafts and subjects on a recreational basis.¹⁵⁴ Various educational institutions also offer separate adult education courses taught in the form of evening classes distance learning. Adults may study at work, alongside employment or in their spare time.¹⁵⁵ Formal adult education is mostly acquired through the university system and vocational schools, while non-formal learning does not result in qualifications or diplomas.¹⁵⁶

The basic right to education in Finland is stated in the Constitution, and one of its main principles is to ensure equal opportunities and access to education for all residents in Finland after compulsory schooling, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Besides, basic education in Finland includes provision of educational offers aimed at improving literacy skills in the adult population.¹⁵⁷

Basic education for adults is intended to promote uniform basic education for adults in general upper secondary schools for adults, folk high schools and other educational institutions providing basic education for adults. It is available for anyone wishing to complete basic education after the compulsory school age.¹⁵⁸

In the introductory phase, literacy training may be provided for the learner, should it be deemed necessary.¹⁵⁹ The courses are offered on a full-time and a part-time basis, and have

¹⁵¹ OECD. Improving the quality of basic skills education for adults: a review of European best practices on quality assurance. Available at <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2020/01/06/oeso-rapport-2019-improving-the-quality-of-basic-skills-education-for-adults/oeso-rapport-2019-improving-the-quality-of-basic-skills-education-for-adults.pdf>

¹⁵² Eurydice. Adult education and training, Distribution and responsibilities. Date published 19 December 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-25_en

¹⁵³ Niemi, H., Isopahkala-Bouret U. (2012), Lifelong learning in Finnish society – An analysis of national policy documents, International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Volume 5 (1)

¹⁵⁴ Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland. Finnish Education System. Accessed March 2021

¹⁵⁵ Nordic co-operation. Adult education in Finland. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.norden.org/en/info-norden/adult-education-finland>

¹⁵⁶ Eurydice. Adult education and training, Finland. Date published 19 December 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-25_en

¹⁵⁷ Elinet (2016). Literacy in Finland, country report short version. Available at http://www.elin-net.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Finland_Short_Report.pdf

¹⁵⁸ Finnish National Agency for Education. (2019). National core curriculum for basic education for adults 2017. Available at <https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/national-core-curriculum-basic-education-adults-2017>

¹⁵⁹ Finnish National Agency for Education. (2019). National core curriculum for basic education for adults 2017. Available at <https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/national-core-curriculum-basic-education-adults-2017>

a modular structure. Adults undertaking basic education follow an individualised curriculum, and each learner has an individual learning plan, and their previously acquired knowledge is recognised. Besides, learners may receive study guidance and support for learning and studies. It is important to note that the curriculum for basic adult education enables learners to learn at their own pace, evaluate themselves, and set targets of their learning path.¹⁶⁰

Basic education for adults is moreover characterised by bringing diverse cultures together, strengthening one's ability to adapt to different cultures and function in a culturally diverse society.¹⁶¹

Adult basic education for immigrants includes Swedish and Finnish language courses.¹⁶² Language courses are offered by a variety of providers, such as vocational adult education centres, folk high schools, adult education centres, general upper secondary schools for adults, language centres at universities, open universities and summer universities. Eligible participants are people who have not completed basic education, need a basic education certificate for secondary education studies, or immigrants needing to acquire skills in literacy, numeracy, and basic knowledge about Finnish society.¹⁶³

Early stage studies in adult basic education for immigrants are equivalent to lower comprehensive schools for pupils of compulsory education age, or grades 1–6. Eligible participants are adults who have completed integration training for immigrants, training for illiterate immigrants and/or instruction preparing immigrants for basic education.¹⁶⁴

In addition, integration support in Finland is provided via several institutions, mainly municipalities, regional employment offices, and third sector providers. Once a person obtains residency in Finland, initial skills evaluation is conducted by an employment office. If the person is unemployed, the municipality provides the integration support. Consequently, an individual integration plan is drawn up, and the person is appointed to a language course, (depending on the level of their proficiency, the person is placed on a basic, slower, or faster track). The aim is that the person reaches level B1.1 in Finnish or Swedish, as acquisition of the local language is essential for a person's employability, and it is also a requirement for obtaining citizenship.¹⁶⁵

One of the realised projects aiming to support immigrants in Helsinki in finding employment and improving their education was **Helsinki Skills Center**. The goal of the project was to

¹⁶⁰ European Commission (2015). Adult education and training in Europe: Programmes to raise achievements in basic skills. Eurydice report, p.19. Available at https://www.erasmusplus.sk/uploads/publikacie/2015_AEducation_BasicSkillsRise_EurydiceReport_en.pdf

¹⁶¹ European Commission (2015). Adult education and training in Europe: Programmes to raise achievements in basic skills. Eurydice report, p.19. Available at https://www.erasmusplus.sk/uploads/publikacie/2015_AEducation_BasicSkillsRise_EurydiceReport_en.pdf

¹⁶² Studyinfo.fi. Immigrants' language skills. Accessed March 2021 <https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/valintojen-tuki/education-for-immigrants/immigrants-language-skills/>

¹⁶³ Studyinfo.fi. Immigrants' language skills. Accessed March 2021 <https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/valintojen-tuki/education-for-immigrants/immigrants-language-skills/>

¹⁶⁴ Studyinfo.fi. Immigrants' language skills. Accessed March 2021 <https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/valintojen-tuki/education-for-immigrants/immigrants-language-skills/>

¹⁶⁵ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Language and integration and Finland and the Nordic countries. Date published 12 August 2020 <https://www.fes.de/en/displacement-migration-integration/article-page-flight-migration-integration/default-2a05efb2ae>

offer and combine employment, vocational education and rehabilitation and build better coordinated and effective means to employment. The workshops developed within the project gave participants an opportunity to develop professional language skills, work skills and find employment.¹⁶⁶

Project **KYKY**¹⁶⁷ aimed to improve wellbeing, civic skills and social knowledge of stay-at-home parents and to encourage them towards education and employment. The project moreover developed the Finnish language **KOTIVA courses**¹⁶⁸, aiming to support participants in gaining information about society, working life, and strengthen their functional language skills. Stay-at-home parents were provided with support in terms of their personal education and career plan development.

Adults may acquire basic skills within the sector of liberal adult education provided by adult education centres, folk high schools and summer universities.¹⁶⁹ Liberal adult education institutions also provide courses for low-skilled adults, including refugees and immigrants.¹⁷⁰

Liberal adult education in the context of Finland originates in the establishment of the Workers' Education Association in 1919.¹⁷¹ Nowadays, it concerns grassroots education and continuous learning provision for all, enhancing active citizenship and promoting social cohesion and lifelong learning.¹⁷²

The institutions offer courses in¹⁷³:

- literacy
- writing
- numeracy
- digital skills
- Finnish language
- working life
- society orientation courses

Characteristics of liberal adult education are¹⁷⁴:

¹⁶⁶ The immigrant's Helsinki. Projects that support immigrant's education. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.hel.fi/maahanmuuttajat/en/welcome-to-helsinki/strategy-and-projects/projects/education/>

¹⁶⁷ The immigrant's Helsinki. Projects that support immigrant's education.. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.hel.fi/maahanmuuttajat/en/welcome-to-helsinki/strategy-and-projects/projects/education/>

¹⁶⁸ Finnish courses for stay-at-home parents. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.hel.fi/maahanmuuttajat/en/learning-finnish-and-swedish/learning-finnish/courses-for-stay-at-home-parents/courses-for-stay-at-home-parents>

¹⁶⁹ European Commission (2015). Adult education and training in Europe: Programmes to raise achievements in basic skills. Eurydice report Available at https://www.erasmusplus.sk/uploads/publikacie/2015_AEducation_BasicSkillsRise_EurydiceReport_en.pdf

¹⁷⁰ Eurydice. Adult education and training, Finland. Published 19 December 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-25_en

¹⁷¹ Pantzar, E. (2007), Introduction to lifelong learning and adult education in Finland, Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung. Available at URL: <http://www.die-bonn.de/doks/pantzar0701.pdf>

¹⁷² Finnish National Agency for Education, Liberal adult education, Accessed March 2021 <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system/liberal-adult-education>

¹⁷³ Finnish National Agency for Education. Liberal Adult education. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system/liberal-adult-education>

1. Non-formal education is provided by adult education institutions¹⁷⁵

Adult education centres are mainly supervised by local authorities and offer courses based on local and regional civic needs, promoting the development of civic skills. In addition, they also provide courses in basic education in arts.

The courses are available in various forms: online, distance form, at evening or weekend classes, or as intensive courses.

Learning centres are often affiliated with political parties or labour unions, and the rest are independent non-governmental organisations. The courses offered concern promotion of lifelong learning, well-being, active citizenship, democracy, activities of civil society, and are delivered by the learning centres independently or in collaboration with their member organisations.

Trained instructors deliver the courses in the form of courses and learning clubs.

Sports training centres (sport institutes) offer vocational upper secondary and vocational further education and training, including non-formal education for youths and adults.

Summer universities offer open university studies, vocational further education, language studies and short-term, non-formal education and consist of regional educational institutions. Among learning offers there are also university-level courses in arts and culture, seminars and events as well as university activities for mature students. While the focal point of the courses is open higher education, the course contents also correspond with the region's other learning and civic needs. While their activities mainly occur in summertime, summer universities offer courses all-year round.

2. Liberal adult education does not result in a degree or qualification
3. Supports learners' personal growth, health and well-being
4. Promotes active citizenship and offers courses on different crafts and subjects

Liberal adult education organisations are independently responsible for the education they provide and its development. Courses are offered in the form of evening school, full-time short term or long term courses, distance studies, and intensive courses.

2.6 FRANCE

PIAAC findings from 2012 show that 22% of adults in France had low literacy skills, while 28% of the participants had low numeracy skills.¹⁷⁶ Following that, the French government

¹⁷⁴ Eurydice. Lifelong learning strategy, Finland. Date published 22 January 2020
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/finland/life-long-learning-strategy_en

¹⁷⁵ Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland. Liberal Adult education. Accessed March 2021
<https://minedu.fi/en/liberal-adult-education>

¹⁷⁶ European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice (2015), Adult Education and Training in Europe:

made the fight against illiteracy a policy priority.¹⁷⁷ Concerning the participation in continuing training, according to the figures in the Education and Training Monitor 2014 report, the participation rate of adults aged between 25 and 64 amounted to 17.7% in 2013.¹⁷⁸ However, it is noted that low numeracy and literacy attainment levels in adults aged between 25 and 64 prevail despite the country having a low proportion of low educated adults.¹⁷⁹

Lifelong learning in France covers all areas of education, including education taking place in alternative forms, or job-related learning. Everyone may access education, regardless of their age or background.¹⁸⁰ It is defined as “a continuum between initial education, general education or vocational training and refers to all situations where competences are acquired: activities in further and continuing education, in the working context, in associations or voluntary work. It comprises measures of advice and guidance, documentation, counselling on behalf of employment/career (re-)entry, training and the validation of acquired experience (Schneider-Barsch, 2015, p.22).”¹⁸¹

It is important to note that there is distinction between lifelong learning (la formation tout au long de la vie) and further and continuing education (formation professionnelle continue). Further and continuing education (formation professionnelle continue) is governed by the Ministry of Labour and it concerns everyone over 16 years of age who have not completed the initial education. Furthermore, it includes vocational return into the labour market, employment retention, competence attainment, and access to various qualification levels.¹⁸²

Initiatives supporting basic skills development

The Skills Investment Plan (The Plan Investissement Compétences (PIC)) is an initiative launched in effort to promote upskilling, the digital and ecological transition, sustainable employment, and funding for low-skilled individuals.¹⁸³ In 2018, the plan was included in the vocational training reform.¹⁸⁴ The plan was put in force in the last quarter of 2018, and will run until 2022.¹⁸⁵

Programmes to Raise Achievement in Basic Skills, Eurydice Report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg,
Available at

https://www.erasmusplus.sk/uploads/publikacie/2015_AEducation_BasicSkillsRise_EurydiceReport_en.pdf

¹⁷⁷Windisch, K.H. (2015). Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills: OECD Education Working Papers No.123. Available at <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jrxnjdd3r5k-en>

¹⁷⁸ Eurydice. Adult education and training, France. Date posted 27 December 2018

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/france/adult-education-and-training_en

¹⁷⁹ Cedefop(2020). Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways. Volume 1: adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Cedefop reference series; No 112. Available at <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/475393>

¹⁸⁰ Centre Inffo (2019). Vocational education and training in Europe: France. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018. Available at

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_France_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf

¹⁸¹ Schreiber-Barsch, S. (2015), Adult and continuing education in France. DOI: 10.3278/37/0577w

¹⁸² Schreiber-Barsch, S. (2015), Adult and continuing education in France. DOI: 10.3278/37/0577w

¹⁸³EAEA Country reports. Developments: France launched a Skills Investment plan. Date published 23

November 2020. <https://countryreport.eaea.org/search/france-2020/france%20launched%20a%20new%20skill%20investment%20plan>

¹⁸⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23755&langId=hu>

¹⁸⁵ ICDL..Large French Investment Plan to enhance basic skills in the country. Published date 12 November 2018 <https://icdl.org/large-french-investment-plan-to-enhance-basic-skills-in-the-country/>

The goals the Skills Investment Plan aims to achieve are:¹⁸⁶

1. Provision of training for 1 million low-skilled or low-skilled job seekers, including 1 million young people outside the labour force
2. Provision of skilled workforce corresponding with the emergence of new professions in a growing economy
3. Support skills transformation, with focus on digital and ecological transition
4. Build a skills society with a skill-tool-based approach
5. Promote a regional pact to finance and support low-skilled people

About half of the planned budget is intended to be allocated to implementation at regional level. Furthermore, the skills investment plan is tailored to each region through regional pacts for investment in skills (PRIC- Pactes Régionaux d'Investissement dans les compétences)¹⁸⁷. The regional pacts are obliged to provide qualifying pathways to employment, while considering the future labour market needs. Hence, modernisation of training and content likewise must be provided.¹⁸⁸ The funding is supposed to support new training courses, and in 2018, the initiative led to creation of 70 000 training courses in the Paris region.¹⁸⁹

Personal training account (the Compte Personnel de Formation - CPF) was created in 2015¹⁹⁰ with aim to provide individuals older than 16 years with a personal account, leading towards recognised qualifications or certifications programs included on specific lists created either at the national level or at the regional level by social partners. As of 2018, everyone eligible receives certain monetary support which they can spend on training of their choice, and the amount offered is higher for low-skilled individuals. The purchase of training can be done via mobile application , hence no intermediate body is involved.¹⁹¹

The CPF aims to¹⁹²:

- enable access to training for low-qualified individuals or those who are at risk of unemployment

¹⁸⁶ EAEA Country reports. Developments:France launched a Skills Investment Plan. Date posted 23 November 2020 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/search/france-2020/france%20launched%20a%20new%20skill%20investment%20plan>

¹⁸⁷ Regional skills investments plans. Accessed March 2021 <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/le-ministere-en-action/pic/pactes-regionaux-pic>

¹⁸⁸ Cedefop. France: investing in upskilling and sustainable employment for the young and the unemployed. Date published 3 June 2019 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/france-investing-upskilling-and-sustainable-employment-young-and-unemployed-0>

¹⁸⁹ ICDL Europe, Large French Investment Plan to enhance basic skills in the country. Date published 12 November 2018 <https://icdl.org/large-french-investment-plan-to-enhance-basic-skills-in-the-country/>

¹⁹⁰ Enhancing Qualification of Adult Learners through the implementation of Upskilling pathways (2019). Note for the EQUAL project:Belgium (French). Available at <http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>

¹⁹¹ Enhancing Qualification of Adult Learners through the implementation of Upskilling pathways (2019). Note for the EQUAL project:Belgium (French). Available at <http://www.upskillingitaly.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UPSKILLING-PATHWAYS-in-France-WP1.pdf>

¹⁹² OECD (2020). Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No.245, Individualising training access schemes: France - The Compte Personnel de Formation (Personal Training Account - CPF), p.4 <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/301041f1-en>

- encourage personal autonomy in the take-up and choice of training
- improve skills and training provision

In addition, the account can be topped up, i.e. hours start to be paid in again each time a withdrawal reduces the balance of the account to less than the ceiling, in order to motivate people to further participate in training.¹⁹³

France has taken various steps in addressing illiteracy in the population. In 2000, the **National Agency for the Fight against Illiteracy (ANLCI)** was established in the form of a public interest group, with the aim of coordinating and optimising the means of the State, the local authorities, businesses and civil society in the fight against illiteracy.¹⁹⁴ In addition, the Agency every 2-3 years identifies good practices via its Forum for Good Practice (Forum des bonnes pratiques). Regional groups provide descriptions of particular practices, supplemented by implementation guidance and teaching materials. ANLCI organises local, regional and national meetings for practitioners to encourage sharing of good practices among participants.¹⁹⁵

In 2003, a national frame of reference for universal access to reading, writing and basic skills was adopted. From 2019, it includes the digital skills necessary to avoid illectronism.¹⁹⁶

CléA certification is a tool developed by Certif'Pro¹⁹⁷ (the national association for the joint inter-certification) in 2014¹⁹⁸, which ensures the delivery of the Clea certification. It is aimed to support all working people, youth, and especially low-skilled adults in acquiring validation and recognition of their knowledge and skills, for purposes of their professional development and employability. The programme covers the following skill areas¹⁹⁹:

- communication in French
- the use of basic rules of calculation and mathematical reasoning
- the use of ICT
- teamwork
- ability to work independently and achieve individual goals
- learning to learn
- mastery of gestures and postures, and respect for hygiene, safety and environmental rules

The process of obtaining the certificate consists of:

¹⁹³ OECD (2020). Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No.245, Individualising training access schemes: France - The Compte Personnel de Formation (Personal Training Account - CPF), p.18 <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/301041f1-en>

¹⁹⁴ ANLCI. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.anlci.gouv.fr/L-ANLCI/Qui-sommes-nous/Qu-est-ce-que-l-ANLCI>

¹⁹⁵ ELINET (2016). Literacy in France: country report, short version. Available at http://www.elinet.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/France_Short_Report1.pdf

¹⁹⁶ Vie publique. Fight against illiteracy: France can do better. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.vie-publique.fr/en-bref/272298-lutte-contre-lillettrisme-la-france-peut-mieux-faire>

¹⁹⁷ Pro-Cert. Accessed March 2021. <https://www.paritarisme-emploi-formation.fr/instances-paritaires/article/certif-pro>

¹⁹⁸ Vie publique. Fight against illiteracy: France can do better. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.vie-publique.fr/en-bref/272298-lutte-contre-lillettrisme-la-france-peut-mieux-faire>

¹⁹⁹ Akto. CleA, a certificate for those who don't have one. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.akto.fr/certifications/clea/>

1. meeting with an organisation conducting the evaluation
2. the preliminary assessment for evaluating the skill level of applicants
3. an individualised training course tailored to learner's needs which learners may complete within a maximum of five years
4. assessment of the learner's file conducted by a jury consisting of employers and employee representatives

As of 2007, Savoirs pour Réussir Paris offers French language classes as part of the programme **Fight Against Illiteracy (Lutte contre l'illettrisme)** for low-skilled individuals over the age of 16 who have low literacy skills, irrespective of their backgrounds.²⁰⁰

In addition, apart from helping learners acquire basic literacy skills, the aim of the programme is to build the learner's self-esteem and confidence, and it is achieved by having learners in small culturally diverse groups.

The programme is implemented in a form of one-to-one tutoring sessions and workshops, and the learning path is adapted to the individual needs of a learner. The curriculum includes themes on basic knowledge and skills, including, reading, writing, oral expression, numeracy and spatio-temporal identification.

Learners are assessed²⁰¹ throughout the course, and upon the final evaluation at the end of the course, learners receive a certificate. In addition, the participants may obtain Passport Internet Multimedia (PIM), a certificate based on basic IT skills (learner learns how to use the internet, e-mails, Office). Participants who successfully complete the workshop obtain a PIM certificate, recognised by companies and future employers.²⁰²

2.7. GEMRANY

National declaration for literacy and the basic skills 2016-2026

German Federal government and regional governments on September 8, 2015 (the World Literacy Day) presented the General agreements on the national decade for literacy and basic skills for 2016 to 2026 titled: **"Decreasing of the functional literacy and increasing basic skills level in Germany (Decade)"**.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ UNESCO Institute of lifelong learning. Fight against illiteracy, France, Date published 4 March 2016
<https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/fight-against-illiteracy-france>

²⁰¹ the assessment focuses on learner's autonomy, confidence, motivation, daily life interactions with people, cognitive development, and know-how

²⁰² UNESCO Institute of lifelong learning. Fight against illiteracy, France, Date published 4 March 2016
<https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/fight-against-illiteracy-france>

²⁰³ General Agreement on the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Skills 2016-2026. Available at
https://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/EN_General_Agreement_on_the_National_Decade_for_Literacy_and_Basic_Skills.pdf
https://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/EN_General_Agreement_on_the_National_Decade_for_Literacy_and_Basic_Skills.pdf

National strategy was formulated before the National Decade.

In 2011, the federal government and the regional governments took over the common initiative for launching the national strategy for literacy and the basic skills in Germany for the period 2012 - 2016. Many other interest groups joined the strategy: German federal association for literacy, German institute of Adult education, and German foundation for reading, Federal Agency for Employment, German confederation of the enterprise unions, Association of German cities and others.

Broad cooperation of the different partners attracted the attention of the public to the issues related to literacy and basic skills.

The report from 2015 stated that it is necessary to build on what has been achieved, and to broaden the existing partnerships and networks, as well as to create new initiatives. As a result the National strategy was transformed into the Nation decade, which puts the literacy and basic skills questions on the top of the political agenda in the area of education.

The notion of the basic skills involves reading, mathematical and digital literacy, as well as education in health care, finance and social competence.

The implementation of the National Decade

The General federal government and the regional governments took over the common responsibility for the National decade. The competencies division at the federal level, among the federal government and particular countries, create the framework for this cooperation. The federal government and the *Länder* realise appropriate measures and initiatives in its competence.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) plays a leading role in the National Decade and closely cooperates with other federal governments. Participation of the federal *Länder* is organised through the working group 'Further education' which is created in the framework of the Permanent Ministers Council of Education and Cultural issues of the federal *Länder* in Germany.

The coordination point for the National Decade of Literacy has been established by the federal Ministry of Education and Research and overtakes the Decade coordinators role. It cooperates with the coordination points for literacy and basic skills of particular federal *Länder*.

Within the framework of Decade an alliance among the federal government was formulated, consisting of *Länder* governments and other interest groups. The Advisory Board was created as well, consisting of the representatives of the federal government and *Länder* government and particular partners. Annually the conference is being organised, with the program containing the measures implementation results from the past year.

The Science Council has been established in cooperation with *Länder*, which co-creates the National Decade and participates in Advisory Board meetings.

National Decade aims and recommendations

The key issue for other measures and initiatives is the common understanding that literacy and basic skills are inevitable suppositions for the independent life, lifelong learning as well as for the active social and professional participation of the individuals.

The following aims and recommendations were agreed within the framework of the Decade:

1. **Competencies improvement:** All partners aim for sustainable improvement of the adults' basic skills in Germany. LEO/Level One Study from 2010²⁰⁴ found that 14, 5% of German population aged 18 to 64 can be classified as functionally illiterate, i.e. 7, 5 millions of adults. The primary target groups are the people whose mother tongue is German, as well as the migrants that have been living in Germany for longer periods of time.
2. **Intensify more the public relations:** The primary goal is to spread awareness among the general public about the necessity of individual basic skills improvement. This is the key issue in the effort to motivate individuals to support those in need of upskilling and encourage them to participate in learning opportunities. This includes primarily recognition of the problem and the willingness to resolve it. Inclusion of the important ambassadors is helpful, especially in PR activities. The internet portal has been launched,²⁰⁵ which serves as a platform for the information and experience exchange.
3. **Broaden the research:** All Decade partners agreed on the need to improve the overall situation regarding adult's literacy and basic skills research.
4. **Broaden the educational opportunities:** The common aim is to create new educational opportunities, as well as to disseminate successfully tested approaches that were elaborated in the previous programmes. Decade partners aim to create and broaden tailor-made educational opportunities targeting the different groups.
5. **Professionalization in life-long learning and vocational training:** All Decade partners agree on the fact that the appropriate trainers' qualification is the key supposition of high quality educational offers. Teacher's qualification in the literacy and basic skills area is necessary to broaden with regard to use of the specific training materials aimed at adult learners, as well as the new approaches in didactic and methodology specifically focused at this target group.
6. **Creation, development and extending of the structures:** Previous National strategy for literacy and basic skills implementation proved that the sustainable impact in this area can be achieved only via its inclusion into the existing structures and via further development of new appropriate structures.

²⁰⁴Grotlüschen, A. & Riekman, W. (2011): leo. - Level-One Studie. Presseheft. Universität Hamburg, Hamburg.

Available at <https://leo.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/leo-Press-brochure15-12-2011.pdf>

²⁰⁵ Alphadekade. <http://www.alphadekade.de/>

It means mainly:

- Anchoring the literacy and basic skills as interdisciplinary topics in the frame of public administration organs of the federal government, *Länder* governments and municipalities, following the interdepartmental coordination approach.
 - Inclusion of literacy and basic skills as the aim in funding schemes also in other areas of public policy.
 - Use of consultation and evaluation competencies of the Federal Agency for Employment to identify the shortcomings in literacy and basic skills area.
 - Cooperation with the Federal Office for migrants and refugees (BAMF) in issues concerning literacy and basic skills of migrants.
7. **Measuring the impact:** In the mid-period of the implementation of the Decade, the measures and initiatives implemented will be monitored and evaluated by particular partners.

According to the latest 2018 - LEO Level One Study²⁰⁶ study, 12.1% of the German population aged from 18 to 64 years can be classified as functionally illiterate, , i.e. approximately 6.2 millions of adults. Compared to the previous study results from 2010 there is a decline of 2.4 %.

Based on the in-depth comparison of both study²⁰⁷ results, general decline seems to be the result of the changes in German society composition. Compared to 2010 a higher share of adults is employed and higher share of adults achieved higher formal school qualification, it means, that the average number of years spent in school has increased.

Examples of the realised projects and campaigns in frame of the National Decade

German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) supports within the frame of the Decade projects aimed at reaching as many low-skilled people as possible. Research and practice showed that too few people are attracted by the classical educational offer. Motivation to learn grows in relation to the fact which level of education offers reacts to the individuals' interest and their everyday life.

One such project was a successful project **ABCami- ABC in mosque**.²⁰⁸ The Society for intercultural coexistence (GIZ)²⁰⁹ via this project succeeded to reach those who were not reached by the usual education offers aimed at basic skills development. It involved e.g. Turkish migrants, as well as refugees. The training takes place at the venues which are

²⁰⁶ Grotlüschen et al.: *LEO: Level One Study 2018*. Hamburg University: 2018. Available at <https://leo.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/LEO2018-Pressheft.pdf>

²⁰⁷ GROTLÜSCHEN, A., et al.: Low literacy in Germany. Results from the second German literacy survey. European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults: 2020. https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2020/18848/pdf/RELA_2020_1_Grotlueschen_et_al_Low_literacy_in_Germany.pdf

²⁰⁸ ABCami- ABC. <https://giz.berlin/projects/abgeschlossene-projekte.htm>

²⁰⁹ The Society for intercultural coexistence (GIZ). <https://giz.berlin/about-giz/page1.htm>

familiar to the learners, in an environment where they feel comfortable. Despite the fact that the training is in German, the teaching methods used highly value the learners' mother tongue.

The project offered courses for Muslims in mosques or in other religious groups. The fee free offer was used mainly by the women. The project **KASA**²¹⁰ builds upon the achievements of this project.

Further supported projects concerned the internet portal creation, enabling opportunities for learners to study in their spare time.

The web page ich-will-lernen.de was the biggest internet portal in Germany for people lacking the basic skills and web site ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de supported language, professional and social migrants' integration. Both portals were included into one portal: **vhs-lernportal.de**.²¹¹ The portal was technically advanced and recently the learning is accessible also via mobiles or tablets.

The portal offers free online courses in the literacy and basic skills area, as well as German as the second language.

The Federal Association for Literacy and Basic Skills through the project and campaign **iCHANCE**²¹² informs and motivates young people with low levels of reading and writing skills.

According to LEO study from 2018 1, 8 millions of people in Germany 18 to 35 years of age are functionally illiterate, indicating that targeting young adults in literacy is crucial. iCHANCE instantly develops new communication channels aiming to increase the awareness about this problem and prepare the ways for assistance offers. After the analysis of the target groups, a continually changing campaign is being promoted via social networks (Instagram and Facebook) and is accompanied by the promotional campaigns about the important events (fairs, etc.) The initiative is supported by many famous personalities.²¹³

The umbrella campaign of the National Decade is the campaign of the federal Minister of the education and research (BMBF) "**Reading and writing – the key to the world**",²¹⁴ which covers a given topic via all relevant media channels. The campaign aims to break the taboo connected with the lack of basic skills, and to encourage people to start with learning. The stories of people talking about the key moment when they decided to improve their reading and writing skills are at the centre of the campaign.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ KASA. <https://kasa.giz.berlin/>

²¹¹ <https://www.vhs-lernportal.de/www/9.php#/www/home.php?sid=52643917711132567259730883088570S4c837d42>

²¹² iChance. <https://www.ichance.de/>

²¹³ iChance. <https://alphabetisierung.de/verband/projekte/ichance/>

²¹⁴ Reading and writing – the key to the world <https://www.mein-schlüssel-zur-welt.de/>

²¹⁵ Grundbildung fördern-Chancen eröffnen, Die Nationale Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung, Available at https://www.bmbf.de/upload_filestore/pub/Grundbildung_foerdern_Chancen_eroeffnen.pdf

2.8. IRELAND

According to the OECD PIAAC study, Ireland ranked 17th in the area of adults reading literacy and 19th in mathematical literacy out of 24 participating countries.²¹⁶ The findings pointed at the fact that 18% of adults (aged 16 to 65) perceive reading understanding of text as a demanding task. In other words, one out of 6 participating adults experienced difficulties in reading and understanding texts such as the bus transport schedule or the medical leaflet. Moreover, 25% of adults experienced difficulties in using maths in everyday life. In other words, one out of four participants struggled with basic counting or calculations. The study findings further show that more than 42% adults experienced difficulties in the digital skills domain.²¹⁷

Ireland's policy makers and education providers jointly work towards enhancing learning opportunities in the workplace, i.e. retraining and certification of people on basis of their prior learning. There is a growing awareness of people's knowledge, skills and competencies gained through informal and non-formal learning and Ireland has set some good examples. However, some space for improvement remains regarding validation in the third sector.²¹⁸

Initiatives supporting upskilling

Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025²¹⁹ is based on the progress made under the previous strategy Towards Tomorrow's Skills.

The strategy sets out the following goals²²⁰:

- ensure the quality of education and training while addressing the demographic, societal, and economic needs
- improve synergies between employers, education and training providers, and all sections of society
- equip the population with knowledge, entrepreneurial agility, and analytical skills
- ensure the effective application of skills in support of the country's well-being and prosperity
- effective use of technology and skills supply

It is emphasised that a significant proportion of young adults (30%) in Ireland are economically inactive, indicating the need for upskilling, as Ireland ranks highest in the EU regarding the proportion of young adults under 15.

²¹⁶ Central Statistics Office (2013). PIAAC 2012 Survey results for Ireland. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Ireland.pdf>

²¹⁷ NALA. Literacy Now-The cost of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs in Ireland and why we need to act now. Accessed March 2021. <https://www.nala.ie/publications/literacy-now/>

²¹⁸ NALA. Literacy Now-The cost of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs in Ireland and why we need to act now. Accessed March 2021. <https://www.nala.ie/publications/literacy-now>

²¹⁹ Department of Education and Skills, Ireland. Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025. Available at https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf

²²⁰ Department of Education and Skills, Ireland. Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025. Available at https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf, p.10

In April 2019, a national initiative **Skills to Advance (2019-2021)**²²¹ was launched, aiming to support retraining and upskilling of employees in low-skilled and enabling vulnerable Irish workforce in adapting to the labour market. The scheme moreover encompasses small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The eligible applicants likewise are companies in need to upskill and reskill their employees.

In addition, **Individual Learning Plans (ILP)** are designed according to the learner's needs. Learner's strengths and weaknesses are identified during the initial interview, as well as the skills needed to achieve their goals. Consequently, learning goals and objectives are set and continuously adapted based on the observations and recordings of learner's work.²²² Furthermore, tutors and learners determine together their learning goals, and they also may decide to review and record progress.²²³ The Individual Learning Plan sets out the learner's short-term and long-term goals, describes the person's starting level, includes a draft plan of work, as well as technical knowledge, skill and broader dimensions of learning.²²⁴

AONTAS²²⁵ is the National Adult Learning Organisation in Ireland, representing adult learning and advocating for equality in education of all learners. The organisation also runs national campaigns supporting adults to return to education and offers free helpline and **One Step Up**²²⁶ website providing information on community education, events, qualifications, local services, courses, and funding.

Young learners and adults in Ireland may participate in the **Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)**.²²⁷ The programme's aim is to provide participants with an opportunity to combine a return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Eligible participants are individuals who haven't completed full-time education, however the priority is given to learners who have obtained less than Leaving Certificate level qualifications. The courses moreover lead to a range of accreditation at levels 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).²²⁸

NALA²²⁹ (National Adult Literacy Organisation) is an independent non-governmental organisation providing free courses covering literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, for anyone above 16 wishing to improve their basic skills. Further services that NALA provides cover financial literacy, family literacy and workplace basic education, among others. The organisation has approximately 100 literacy centres in particular regions of Ireland.

The courses are designed to reflect individuals' abilities and are focused at providing support in order to enable people's return to education. Literacy courses are delivered in a relaxed

²²¹ Solas. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.solas.ie/programmes/skills-to-advance/>

²²² Ibid, p.13

²²³ Ibid, p.14

²²⁴ Ibid, p.20

²²⁵ Aontas <https://www.aontas.com/>

²²⁶ <https://www.onestepup.ie/>

²²⁷ Qualifax. Back to Education. Accessed March 2021
https://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=59

²²⁸ QQI. National Framework of qualifications. Accessed February 2021
[https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-\(NFQ\).aspx](https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx)

²²⁹ NALA. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.nala.ie/>

and friendly atmosphere. Majority of the centres offer the one to one tutoring or courses in a small group. Besides, NALA trains literacy trainers for the post office staff, health care establishments, and school institutions. These are the first contact places for people with low literacy and these trainings increase their awareness on literacy issues and on problems related.

In case a learner is unable to travel regularly to some of the regional centres, NALA offers distance education services. This opportunity enables people to learn individually online or they may likewise learn together with a lecturer via telephone or video call. They can learn in their spare time and increase their skills and gain the qualification.

The need for a holistic approach in adult education policy

Marginalised groups in Ireland can be disproportionately influenced by unfulfilled needs in reading and digital literacy. These groups include:

1. Irish “travellers”

“Travellers” are ethnical minority in Ireland.

There are approximately 40 000 representatives of the minority in Ireland. Circumstances resulting from life in poverty and discrimination negatively impact the individual’s life expectancy, education attainment, and quality of life overall. In fact, approximately 82% of members of the minority are unemployed and encounter difficulties when searching for a job, while 40% of members claim that their children are bullied at school as a result of their ethnicity.²³⁰

2. Households with low income (intergenerational poverty)
3. Migrants and refugees
4. Lonely parents
5. People with health handicap
6. People with specific disorders e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia, and ADHD and Asperger syndrome
7. Addicts
8. Prisoners

Poverty and illiteracy simultaneously impact people’s lives, resulting in inequality, social stigma, and marginalisation. People with a higher level of reading, numerical and digital literacy are more likely to be healthier, have higher life expectancy, are employed and reach higher income.²³¹

²³⁰ Exchange House Ireland organisation is the centre providing the different services for ‘travellers’ ethnical minority, such as education and training, services for children and young people, support services for family and crisis intervention, services for addictions treatment and mental health. Their goal is to lower barriers and discrimination of this ethnical minority. They have been providing this service for 40 years. The important factor is that most of the employees are the members of this minority. More information about this organisation can be found at: <http://www.exchangehouse.ie/>

²³¹ NALA (2020). Literacy Now-The cost of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs in Ireland and why we need to act now. Available at <https://www.nala.ie/publications/literacy-now/>

In Ireland, there are nine Ministries having different strategies in adults' literacy. These are:

- The Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Innovations
- The Ministry for Children and Youth affairs
- The Ministry for Communication, Climatic action and Environment
- The Ministry of Schooling and Skills
- The Ministry of Employment and Social protection
- The Ministry of Finance
- The Ministry of Health care
- The Ministry of Justice and Equality
- The Ministry for Regional and community development

The Irish National Agency for adults literacy²³² (NALA) claims that there is a lack of overall coordination and ideas sharing in order to improve the situation in this area. NALA puts through for the alternative approach, anchored in a broader understanding of relation between reading, mathematical and digital literacy and overall viability via evaluation of how they contribute to the individual skills to react to the external pressure and changes.

NALA proposes **the whole governmental holistic approach of investing into adults for just and viable Ireland.**²³³

It endeavours for creating a new policy structure in the area of increasing adults' literacy based on the acceptance of the common framework among particular government resorts.

It therefore means that it is necessary to re-evaluate adults' education policy in order to improve the resilience and viability of the Irish citizens.

Due to the global challenges as a consequence caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, global economic instability and technical innovations, the decision makers started to deal more with the concept of resilience and viability.

Resilience in this sense includes resource mobilisation by the organisations, institutions and individuals in order to overcome the challenges and adapt to the current circumstances.

NALA promotes a holistic approach, which would go through all nine ministries cooperating in adults' literacy area. This framework is connected by investing into the literacy, training outcomes and resilience impact. In order to achieve this it is necessary that all ministries accept the holistic understanding of adults' literacy as a key ability and this is related to building the resilience. It means a certain diversion from the previous work and national strategies focus at literacy area needs.

²³² National Adult Literacy Agency. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.nala.ie/>

²³³ NALA & TASC.(2020). A Whole-Of-Government approach for investing in adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills for an equal and resilient Ireland. Available at <https://www.nala.ie/research/literacy-for-life-2/>

Newly proposed political framework should not focus on literacy only as a skill, but literacy should be regarded as a human right and something that is beneficial for the individual, social wealth and key for resilience.

This framework is to be implemented during the following 10 years and it regards literacy as a key state responsibility towards broader societal agreements. It also pleads to change the attitude in the public debate, which represents unfulfilled needs in the literacy area as the individuals' failure.²³⁴

NALA's publication²³⁵ enlists particular starting points, outcomes and indicators in this proposed whole governmental strategy.

2.9 LUXEMBOURG

According to survey findings from 2011, participation in education among low-skilled adults in Luxembourg was at 55.3%, significantly above the EU average (21.8%).²³⁶ In addition to that, a vast majority (87%) of younger adults aged between 25 and 34 had completed at least upper secondary education, while the share of participants who completed tertiary education amounted to 53%, making it third highest attainment rate among the participating OECD countries.²³⁷

In Luxembourg, all adults have opportunities to participate in education, regardless of their age, level of qualification or labour market situation.²³⁸

Initiatives supporting basic skills development

Adult education provision in Luxembourg is available to low-skilled adults, adults wishing to obtain a basic qualification or a diploma of secondary education through distance learning or via the second qualification pathway (2e voie de qualification), or a higher education diploma. Adults who wish to improve their employability, or enrich their knowledge on technical, social, economic and cultural subjects or to improve their language skills, may participate in education. For adults wishing to complete or adapt their qualifications, there are options in terms of continuous professional development (CPD) and continuous vocational education and training (CVET).²³⁹

²³⁴ NALA(2020). Literacy impact-An Outcomes Framework for measuring the impact of improved literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Available at <https://www.nala.ie/publications/literacy-impact/>

²³⁵ NALA&TASC. (2020). A Whole-of-Government approach for investing in adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills for an equal and resilient Ireland. Available at <https://www.nala.ie/research/literacy-for-life-2/>

²³⁶ Eurydice. Provision to raise achievement in basic skills, Luxembourg. Date published 26 April 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-45_en

²³⁷ OECD (2016). Education policy outlook: Luxembourg. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/luxembourg/Education-Policy-Outlook-Country-Profile-Luxembourg.pdf>

²³⁸ Eurydice. Luxembourg, adult education and training. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-46_en

²³⁹ Eurydice. Luxembourg, adult education and training. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-46_en

Basic education for adults (Instruction de base des adultes) in Luxembourg was introduced in 1991 by the Department of Adult Education of the Ministry of Education, Children, and Youth (MENJE).²⁴⁰ The courses aimed at improvement of basic skills in the adult population are offered by the Adult Education Service. Adults may participate in basic instructional courses to enhance their literacy and numeracy skills, or workshops in various regions of the country. Furthermore, the courses are likewise organised by associations and municipalities.²⁴¹

The basic instructional courses are aimed at a group of adult learners who follow the same curriculum and are offered quarterly, while adults participating in basic instruction workshops learn in small groups. Admissions are possible throughout the year and the program is individualised.²⁴²

Center for the Development of Skills Relating to Sight (former IDV) aims to support visually impaired or blind people, parents and teachers of visually impaired or blind students or employees of out-of-school and extracurricular structures.²⁴³

National Institute for the Development of Continuing Vocational training (INFPC) manages and coordinates the **lifelong-learning.lu portal**,²⁴⁴ offering courses, seminars, and evening and day classes on a wide variety of subjects. More specifically, the portal offers 9 801 Courses provided by 278 Member training providers.

Courses are available in English, French, German, Luxembourgish and Portuguese and are offered locally in commune or school buildings.²⁴⁵ Courses focusing on **basic skills** cover the following areas²⁴⁶:

1. reading (e.g. the learner familiarises with the letters in the alphabet, learns to identify names and places, understands short texts, learns to use a dictionary)
2. writing (e.g. the adult learns how to make lists, fill out forms, and can read and understand a basic manual)
3. speaking (e.g. the participant learns how to express their needs, use correct pronunciation, formulate simple messages)

²⁴⁰ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. Adult education and training in Europe: Programmes to raise achievement in basic skills, Luxembourg, p. 24

²⁴¹ Ministry of National Education, Children, and Youth, Luxembourg. Adult learning - basic education. Accessed March 2021 <https://men.public.lu/fr/formation-adultes/instruction-base-adultes.html#:~:text=L'instruction%20de%20base%20s,veulent%20am%C3%A9liorer%20leurs%20comp%C3%A9tences%20num%C3%A9riques>.

²⁴² Ministry of National Education, Children, and Youth, Luxembourg. Adult learning - basic education. Accessed March 2021 <https://men.public.lu/fr/formation-adultes/instruction-base-adultes.html#:~:text=L'instruction%20de%20base%20s,veulent%20am%C3%A9liorer%20leurs%20comp%C3%A9tences%20num%C3%A9riques>.

²⁴³ Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth, Luxembourg. Basic education. Accessed March 2021 <https://men.public.lu/fr/formation-adultes/instruction-base-adultes.html>

²⁴⁴ lifelong-learning portal. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Accueil/en>

²⁴⁵ Luxembourg Times. Adult education choices. Date published 30 August 2020 <https://luxtimes.lu/education-and-family/38323-adult-education-choices>

²⁴⁶ lifelong-learning portal. Basic instruction. lifelong-learning. lu Accessed March 2021 https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/Orientation/abcd_lu---instruction-de-base/fr

4. understanding (e.g. the participant learns how to react to simple messages and instructions, identify emotions, opinions, and needs)
5. numeracy (e.g. the adult learns to count and compare numbers, read plans or maps, understands simple tables and charts)

The **skills audit** is a tool included in Guidance through life.²⁴⁷

Individuals may have their knowledge, aptitudes, skills and motivations assessed for the purposes of tailoring their career path and/or planning a career change or training project by multiple institutional and private training providers.²⁴⁸

LS4 Learn for Success²⁴⁹ offers personalised learning workshops aimed at adults wishing to improve their general knowledge and skills in order to prepare for a test, an entrance examination or to improve their employability, participate in a training course, or for professional or personal development purposes. In addition, LS4 encompasses tailor-made content and flexible courses. The content covers Languages (German, English, French) and Mathematics. The training is tailored according to learners' needs.²⁵⁰

Upon completion of the course, the participants receive a certificate of participation and an individual report stating the new knowledge and skills acquired.

National School for Adults (ENAD)²⁵¹ provides courses for young adults who haven't obtained certification within formal education.

Project "**multi-LITERACIES**"²⁵² aimed to identify challenges that low-skilled immigrants in Luxembourg face and it sought to monitor how to enhance their literacy in languages spoken in Luxembourg. The project's aim was to make the policy makers, municipalities and schools aware of the challenges that immigrants face in terms of linguistic integration.

2.10 NORWAY

PIAAC study findings from 2012 for Norway show that 6.9% of the adult population between 16 to 65 reported having no prior experience with computers or lacked very basic computer skills. Regarding problem solving in technology-rich environments, the results were significantly above the OECD countries' average (41%). In addition, the study findings

²⁴⁷ lifelong-learning portal.. Guidance through life. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/INFPC/orientation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie/en>

²⁴⁸ lifelong-learning portal. Skills audit. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/INFPC/bilan-de-competences/en>

²⁴⁹ lifelong-learning portal. L4S-personalised learning workshops. Accessed March 2021 https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/Orientation/l4s---les-ateliers-d_apprentissage-personnalises/en

²⁵⁰ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. Adult education and training in Europe: Programmes to raise achievement in basic skills, Luxembourg, p. 25

²⁵¹ École nationale pour adultes (ENAD). Accessed March 2021 <https://www.enad.lu/>

²⁵² multi-LITERACIES. Accessed March 2021 <https://sites.google.com/site/multilearninstitute/multi-litteraties>

show that 400 000 adults have low reading skills, while 500 000 scored low in numeracy skills assessment.²⁵³

Lifelong learning has a long tradition in Norwegian society. Over the past decades, learning opportunities for adults have been offered by folk high schools²⁵⁴, study associations, and distance learning.²⁵⁵

In recent years, Norwegian government introduced reforms in support of adult learners. More specifically, in 2019, a competence reform was issued. The reform included a scheme that provides a loan for adults, which they can use to access short courses in higher vocational education. Moreover, the courses available equip learners with skills sets needed on the labour market. Further reform was introduced in 2019, which included financial support for unemployed adults while they obtain education.²⁵⁶

Norwegian National Policy Strategy on Competence 2017-2021

Norwegian National Policy Strategy on Competence 2017-2021²⁵⁷ aims to equip individuals and businesses with skills that give Norway a competitive business sector, an efficient and sound public sector, and an inclusive labour market.

The National Policy Strategy's key priorities are to:

1. Support individuals in making informed choices

- better understanding of skills needs
- skills and regional development must be better coordinated
- career guidance services must be further developed
- cooperation between education and the labour market for improved quality and relevance

2. Promote workplace learning and the application of the skills acquired

- better knowledge of learning in the workplace
- strengthen and develop vocational education and career opportunities
- flexible programs for continuing education and training with high quality and relevance
- national measures for reskilling
- better systems for documenting skills acquired in the workplace
- making better use of skills from abroad

3. Enhance the skills in low-skilled adults

- coordinated programs for adults with poor basic skills and low formal qualifications

²⁵³ Kompetanse Norge. basic skills. <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/#ob=9957&Toolsandresources4>

²⁵⁴ Folk high schools provide young people and adults with general courses but do not organise any formal examinations

²⁵⁵ The Norwegian Association for Distance Education and Flexible Education is a membership organisation for among others the independent distance education institutions

²⁵⁶ EAEA, Country reports. Developments: Ambitious reforms on access and inclusion:Norway. Date published 17 November 2020 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/search/norway-2020/Ambitious%20reforms%20on%20access%20and%20inclusion>

²⁵⁷ Norwegian Strategy for Skills Policy 2017-2021

<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/3c84148f2f394539a3eefdfa27f7524d/strategi-kompetanse-eng.pdf>

- targeted and effective training for immigrants
- the workplace as a learning environment for people who are at risk of exclusion
 - Skills plus work scheme enables employers to apply for grants regarding training purposes.
- NGOs as learning arenas
 - The scheme Skills Plus for the voluntary sector aims to enhance low-skilled adults' literacy, numeracy, and digital skills in their own organisation. For unemployed adults, such a scheme provides an alternative to the corresponding scheme for employment (Skills plus work).

The strategy is implemented by a Skills Policy Council.²⁵⁸

In addition, the National Unit for Career Guidance (Nasjonal enhet for karriereveiledning) and the Ministry of Education and Research work towards developing a national system for skills forecasts.²⁵⁹

Skills Norway (Kompetanse Norge), formerly known as Vox, is the Directorate for Lifelong Learning, under the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, aiming to support adult learners in basic skills attainment, and supports the implementation of National Skills Strategy.²⁶⁰

The agency's priority is to support low-skilled adults whose skills are not in demand on the labour market. Since the availability of low-skilled jobs is decreasing, it is deemed important to support immigrants, particularly refugees, as the employment rate among this group of adults in Norway is lower than in the rest of the population.²⁶¹

Skills Norway administers the **SkillsPlus programme**, aiming to improve adults' reading, writing, numeracy, digital skills. As of 2014, the programme incorporates oral communication in combination with other skills. The programme prioritises the following areas:

- combination of learning activities with work and connection of basic skills training to other job-related learning
- the courses should have positive impact on learners' motivation to participate in learning
- it is necessary that courses relate to the competence goals specified in the Framework for Basic Skills developed by Skills Norway²⁶²

SkillsPromotion is a further initiative implemented by the agency. It offers basic skills profiling to unemployed adults receiving assistance from the government agencies.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ Norwegian Strategy for Skills Policy 2017-2021

<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/3c84148f2f394539a3eefdfa27f7524d/strategi-kompetanse-eng.pdf>

²⁵⁹ Eurydice. Adult education and training, Norway. Date published 20 December 2019

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-54_nl

²⁶⁰ Skills Norway. Our objective. Accessed March 2021 https://www.kompetansenorge.no/english/basic-skills/#Ourobjective_1

²⁶¹ Skills Norway. About Skills Norway. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/About-skills-norway/>

²⁶² Skills Norway. Skills Plus. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/english/basic-skills/competenceplus/>

Basic job skills profiles²⁶⁴ are a tool for design of basic skills courses. The profiles contain descriptions on how each of the basic skills applies to certain occupations and are based on the competence goals. In addition, the tool helps employers in meeting the person's training needs.

Competence Goals for Basic Skills of Adults²⁶⁵ determine national standards for reading and writing, digital skills and oral communication. In addition, the competence goals are examples of local curricula in basic skills for adults and are based on the curricula in the Knowledge Promotion Reform and the Framework for Basic Skills prepared by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training.

The competence goals are moreover divided into three levels, reflecting the individual level of learner's skills for each of the basic skills²⁶⁶:

- **Literacy**

1. Literacy skills at levels 1-2 concern ability to read and write brief and familiar texts that one encounters frequently.

2. Level 3 concerns reading and writing comprehensible texts. The learner is able to relate actively to written information and has strategies for refinement of these skills. Moreover, the learner is able to read and write in new situations, use these skills for learning, as well as to solve everyday challenges.

3. Level 4 in literacy means that the learner is able to read and write independently, critically, and is able to differentiate and apply various strategies in accordance to needs and settings.

- **Numeracy**

1. Numeracy skills at level 1-2 mean that the individual comprehends simple mathematical information in everyday situations and is able to apply simple calculations in known settings.

2. Level 3 indicates that the learner successfully applies calculation in various settings and actively relates to mathematical information.

3. Level 4 refers to a learner's ability to understand and use complex mathematical information and use that knowledge to draw conclusions, communicate and present mathematical information.

- **Digital skills.**

1. Level 1-2 in digital skills indicates that the learner is able to relate digital information when required and use digital tools, and is familiar with simple precautions when using the Internet.

²⁶³ Skills Norway. About Skills Norway. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/About-skills-norway/>

²⁶⁴ Skills Norway. Basic job skills profile. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/basic-job-skills-profiles/>

²⁶⁵ Skills Norway. The Competence Goals. Accessed March 2021. <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/#ob=9957&Toolsandresources4>

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

2. Level 3 means that the learner acquired skills to relate actively to digital information and use this information in new settings and situations. Digital tools and services are known and being used.

3. Level 4 indicates that the learner is a reflective user of complex digital tools and services. Production of personal ICT-based information is adapted to the situation and based on prior experience.

- **Oral skills.**

1. Levels 1-2 mean that the learner can engage in simple communication in known settings. The main content of messages and instructions is comprehended and simple communication strategies are applied.

2. Level 3 means being able to communicate actively on topics of interest in known settings. Personal interests and needs in daily life can be fulfilled, and oral communication abilities can develop as needed.

3. Level 4 refers to a learner's ability to communicate flexibly and effectively in known as well as unfamiliar settings. The adult can engage in exchanges of opinion in public and private settings and assume responsibility for the communicative process.

In addition, the agency likewise offers a series of **tools for basic skills trainings** aimed at learners and tutors:²⁶⁷

InterAct is a web-based model based on role play and problem solving, aimed at workplace learning attainment, and it particularly concerns the employees with insufficient formal education who lack digital skills.

Skills Norway moreover supports pilot projects in eight adult education centers across the country concerning the development of basic skills courses, aiming to encourage other adult education centers and local authorities to initiate similar training courses.

Guidelines for designing basic skills training have also been developed by Skills Norway, outlining the components needed for creating training tailored to learner's needs.²⁶⁸

Guidelines for designing effective training courses in basic skills specify the following:

1. **Tailored training** - in order to motivate learners to participate, the course content should be linked to topics that are relevant to individuals' everyday life, such as work, other education, voluntary work, follow-up of children, personal finance and leisure activities.
2. **Adapted courses** - as adult learners' backgrounds vary, it is essential to create motivating courses that would bring together adults with similar interests. Equally important is to encourage the participation of learners who are searching for a job or are already employed in a specific sector (e.g. topics on healthcare, kindergarten).

²⁶⁷ Kompetanse Norge [Skills Norway]. Learning materials. Accessed March 2021
<https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/learning-materials/>

²⁶⁸ Kompetanse Norge [Skills Norway]. Designing basic skills training. Accessed March 2021
<https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/Local-training-services/Designing-basic-skills-training/>

3. **Learning goals** - learning goals should address the learning needs of the course participants and their progression throughout their learning path. Trainer's responsibility is to adapt the course content and challenges based on the progress and individual needs of learners.
4. **Accessibility** - flexible course schedules should enable participation of all adults interested in learning
5. **Recruiting** - information regarding training courses should be made available in adult's daily life, i.e. in local workplaces, libraries, health centres, employment offices, parent meetings at school.²⁶⁹

2.11 THE NETHERLANDS

A study published in 2016 found that 1, 3 millions of people in the Netherlands 16 to 65 years old had low literacy skills. They reported having problems regarding writing, reading and communicating in Dutch language. A total number of illiterate individuals (low-skilled in literacy, numeracy, and digital skills) had reached a total of 2,5 millions people, i.e. one in five adults in the Netherlands.²⁷⁰

It is noted that participation of adult learners in education in the Netherlands is rather high, i.e. reaching close to 60% according to PIAAC data.²⁷¹ However, adults encounter challenges in participation and labour market transition. The Netherlands implements the Upskilling Pathways initiative in making efforts to further develop a vocational training sector.²⁷² According to the OECD's report on assessment and recommendations from 2019,²⁷³ the increasing offer of non-formal basic skills provision in the Netherlands lacks a quality assurance framework.

In the Netherlands, non-governmental adult education providers' and the government's efforts are aligned in relation to the promotion of lifelong learning in society.²⁷⁴ However, the organisations propose a development of a system that would allow learners' participation in the decision-making process.²⁷⁵

Count on Skills Programme

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ NL Times. Netherlands literacy policy fails with 2.5 million illiterate. Date published 21 April, 2016 <https://nltimes.nl/2016/04/21/netherlands-literacy-policy-fails-25-million-illiterate>

²⁷¹ OECD. Better quality and monitoring in the Netherlands. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/skills-and-work/adult-learning/quality-monitoring-netherlands.htm>

²⁷² EAEA (2019). Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, The Netherlands. <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

²⁷³ OECD. (2019). Improving the quality and monitoring of basic skills education for adults. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2020/01/06/oeso-rapport-2019-assessment-and-recommendations-improving-the-quality-and-monitoring-of-basic-skills-education-for-adults-engels/oeso-rapport-2019-assessment-and-recommendations-improving-the-quality-and-monitoring-of-basic-skills-education-for-adults-engels.pdf>

²⁷⁴ EAEA Country reports. The Netherlands introduction. Accessed March 2021 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/netherlands/netherlands-reports-2019/The%20Netherlands%20introduction%202019>

²⁷⁵ EAEA Country reports. Challenges and recommendations in the Netherlands. Date published 9 January 2020 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/netherlands/netherlands-reports-2019/Challenges%20and%20recommendations%20in%20the%20Netherlands%202019>

In order to prevent and improve low literacy levels in the Netherlands, the government has initiated the program **Count on Skills**²⁷⁶, which has been launched in 2016.²⁷⁶

The program is based on the holistic approach and creates the synergy with the different areas, where the language plays an important role, e.g. in the libraries and community centres, in terrain work and social services, at the offices responsible for paying the support and at schools.²⁷⁷

The program is the whole government strategy and includes the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Ministry of Health care, Social care and Sport and the Ministry of Social affairs and Employment. The program aims at three areas: family, employability and health care.

- **Family:** Language deficiency is carried through the generations. It is necessary to have tools to prevent low literacy among children, as well as parents and between mothers and fathers. Only this can break this vicious circle of carrying through the language deficiency.
- **Employability:** Employees, employers as well as job applicants can gain a lot from reading literacy at the job market. Employees become more flexible and are able to move to a better job position and at the same time they are able to follow the instructions. Employers can react more quickly with this work force to the challenges in a dynamic economy.
- **Health care:** People with low skills in the area of reading literacy are less able to look for the information concerning health and healthy lifestyle.²⁷⁸

The programme “Count on Skills” includes the following five action points:

1. **The approach of the local networking disseminates the pilot program ‘Language for life’²⁷⁹ across the whole country.** The program ‘Language for life’ is the common name for different types of language courses for adults with low literacy, it was coordinated by the Foundation for reading and writing²⁸⁰ and realised via local and regional partners, libraries and voluntary organisations.

The approach supports the libraries, municipalities, Labour Office, language training providers and many other organisations in their long-term approach to the low literacy.

The goal is to involve at least 45 000 new participants in the Netherlands who will start attending the language course of the Dutch language, where materials and volunteers of Language for life will be used.

²⁷⁶ Count on Skills, The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Netherlands. Available at <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sk/node/16897>

²⁷⁷ Langendonk, A. and Toonen, M. (2017), Dutch approach to prevent and curate low literacy, Available at <http://library.ifla.org/1759/1/138-langendonk-en.pdf>

²⁷⁸ The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, The Netherlands. Count on Skills, Available at <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sk/node/16897>

²⁷⁹ Language for life. <https://readingandwriting.eu/examples-dutch-projects-and-tools/language-life>

²⁸⁰ Reading and Writing Foundation, <https://readingandwriting.eu/>

The local governments and organisations where people can be educated are supported, , while using the training materials created at the national level, adopted to the literacy level of individuals. In each region there are trained language volunteers, for purposes of deployment as language coaches.

2. **Regional language agreements and stimuli budget:** Regional language agreements set the measures among particular parties, which contribute to the support of reading, language competences improvements and fighting low literacy. Partners (e.g. language training providers) use the measures in order to set up the common goals, defining the partners' role and to create the concrete agreements.

Sufficient funding to stimulate these types of partnerships is available. The agreements must contain the work plan and description of the concrete activities.

In the language agreements, there is a space for inclusion of the existing local and regional agreements on adults training and tackling the language deficiency of children or the financing this area. Through connecting more agreements the cohesion regional plan can be created to fight low literacy.

In almost 30 regions, language agreements were created for the years 2019 and 2022.

In order to make the local networking approach and language agreements more effective, the annual budget is allocated for provision of the supplementary practical language training for low skilled people.

3. **Reading support via “The art of reading”:** Municipality plays a key role in strategic shaping of the local libraries and through this also the reading support. The programme offers municipalities a tailor-made approach via libraries, which coordinates the activities and supports schools, children health centres and kindergartens in proposing a promotion of reading.

The main aim in 2018 was to annually reach 1 million 12-year olds via reading activities, in order to improve their skills in reading literacy and support the joy of reading.

The studies show that reading and telling the stories have a positive effect on skills in reading literacy, including reading with understanding, orthography, writing, grammar and vocabulary.²⁸¹

The policy focused at promotion of reading is a valuable supplement to language learning and that is why it is incorporated in this part of the Count on Skills programme .

4. **Experimenting:** Investing in experiments in order to improve the services for hard to reach target groups. The aim is to broaden existing pilot projects and find other ones.

One of these pilot projects was released in the frame of “The art of reading” programme. It focused on families with low reading skills, and it hasn't been effectively captured. Foundation for reading and writing proposes better cooperation with schools, etc. The special attention should be dedicated to children, whose parents have low skills.

²⁸¹ Broekhof, K. & Nijhof-Broek, M. (2014). [2nd print] approach. *Meer voorlezen, beter in taal (More storytelling, better in language)*. Sardes, p.19.; Broekhof, K. (2014). [4th print]. *Meer voorlezen, beter in taal (More storytelling, better in language)*, Sardes

Another existing pilot project was the project “**EVA**” (**E**ducation for **W**omen with **A**mbition).²⁸²

This pilot project was coordinated by the Foundation for reading and writing during 2014 - 2018 under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (department of emancipation).

In the Netherlands, women are more often disadvantaged in terms of literacy and numeracy. Low skilled women are likewise economically less independent than low skilled men. The aim of the project was to motivate women to start developing their skills in order to make a step towards employment.

Women who left the job market lose their skills, resulting in worsening of their opportunity to find a new job. The special attention is dedicated to women with low literacy, which have a small chance to enter the labour market. Another important issue in this project was to interconnect the reading skills with other skills, like computer or digital skills. Women were offered support and guidance in order to increase their self-assurance. The project was aimed at Dutch-speaking women aged from 30 to 55 wishing to improve their basic skills.²⁸³

Another pilot project was focused at the approach “**Language for parents and children**” in pre-kindergarten education. It was focused on examining the methods of motivation on low skilled parents in the area of reading literacy, so they work on these skills while using the training materials of their children.

All projects will be integrated in the program “Language for life” in order to reach effectively all the aforementioned target groups.

5. **Knowledge and communication:** In order to support regional and local approach the involved ministries organised few national support tasks. E.g. research agency, which supports language deficiency research, promotion of reading and low literacy. The Centre for support of the basic skills organises the events and training courses.

The programme also continuously submits the evaluation to independent research agencies in order to realise the necessary changes. The programme likewise prioritises development of language skills over mathematical and digital skills, as they provide a basis for social participation, healthy lifestyle and better employability for low-skilled adults. There is a smaller stigma connected to participating in these courses compared to participating in improving reading and mathematical literacy. It is really the important factor to consider when designing adults education policy in a broader sense.

²⁸²Empowerment. <https://www.taalvoorhetleven.nl/empowerment>

²⁸³ WorkKit: Job language kits for migrants.EVA - Educatie voor Vrouwenmet Ambitie (Education for Women with Ambition) . Available at http://workit-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/WORKIT_Good-Practices_NL1.pdf

2.12 POLAND

Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) results from 2012 indicate that 18.8% of the adults scored at the lowest levels in literacy and 23.5% scored low in numeracy. In terms of digital skills, it was found that a quarter of the adult population aged between 16 and 65 reported having no prior experience with computers or lacked very basic computer skills. However, 19.2% of the adult population ranked highest in problem solving in technology-rich environments.²⁸⁴

Besides, OECD Skills Strategy for Poland 2019 finds that significant proportion of adults reported lack of willingness to participate in formal and/or non-formal adult education or training, indicating that there is space for improvement concerning raising awareness of adult learning benefits and opportunities, making access and learning more flexible, and increasing participation in adult learning.²⁸⁵

Some of the recent developments include increase of funding allocated for adult education, which enabled organisations in supporting individuals particularly in the area of basic skills acquisition.²⁸⁶ However, one of the main challenges perceived by the adult education providers in Poland is the low visibility of adult education.²⁸⁷

Initiatives supporting basic skills development

In 2019, Polish Ministry of National Education started addressing OECD's "National Skills Strategy for Poland."^{288,289}, resulting in the development of the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030, under supervision of the Ministry of National Education and in cooperation with the Educational Research Institute (IBE).²⁹⁰ In July 2020, the Minister of National Education has announced the inter ministerial and public consultations of a draft proposal of the detailed part of the Strategy on the development of children, youth and adult skills.²⁹¹ In December 2020, the document²⁹² was adopted by the Council of Ministers.²⁹³

²⁸⁴ OECD, Education GPS. PIAAC 2012 results - Poland. Accessed March 2021

<https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=POL&treshold=10&topic=AS>

²⁸⁵ OECD (2019), OECD Skills Strategy Poland: Assessment and Recommendations, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, Available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/b377fbcc-en>.

²⁸⁶ OECD (2019), OECD Skills Strategy Poland: Assessment and Recommendations, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, Available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/b377fbcc-en>.

²⁸⁷ EAEA Country reports. Poland, Developments:the new strategy. Date published 23 November 2020 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/poland/poland-2020/A%20New%20Skills%20Strategy>

²⁸⁸ EAEA Country reports. Poland, Developments:the new strategy. Date published 23 November 2020 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/poland/poland-2020/A%20New%20Skills%20Strategy>

²⁸⁹ OECD (2019), OECD Skills Strategy Poland: Assessment and Recommendations, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, Available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/b377fbcc-en>.

<http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/Skills-strategy-poland-report-summary-EN.pdf>

²⁹⁰ ReferNet Polska. 'Report OECD Skills Strategy: Poland' has been released. Date published 20 December 2019 <http://refernet.ibe.edu.pl/index.php/en/report-oecd-skills-strategy-poland-has-been-released>

²⁹¹ Eurydice. National reforms related to transversal skills and employability, Poland. Date published 23 July 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-related-transversal-skills-and-employability-50_hr

²⁹² Ministry of Education and Science, Poland (2020). The Integrated Skills Strategy 2030-detailed part. (Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności-część szczegółowa). Available at <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/d878ece0-503d-4b91-a9a1-68e8b3c9a375>

The Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 (Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności - ZSU 2030)²⁹⁴ provides a strategic policy framework for developing basic, transversal and vocational skills necessary for economic growth, social inclusion, and quality of life for all.

The strategy covers all areas of the education and training system, including non-formal and informal learning.

The strategy's goals are as follows:²⁹⁵

- coherent policy development aimed at skills attainment
- coordination of the implementation carried out by multiple stakeholders
- ensuring provision of equal opportunities in accessing information concerning skills demand and supply, vocational training, and supply of education services
- increase awareness concerning the importance and benefits of upskilling for individuals, economy, and society
- improving educational and employability opportunities for everyone, particularly those at risk of poverty

Within the strategy, the term 'skill' is understood and defined as ability to properly and efficiently perform a specific type of activity, task or function.²⁹⁶

- Basic skills encompass understanding and creating information, multilingualism, numeracy
- Transversal skills cover digital, personal, social, civic, entrepreneurial skills, cultural awareness and expression, teamwork, adaptation, leadership, critical thinking, and comprehensive problem solving
- Occupational skills refer to the skills of people capable of full development using their talents, which is impossible in standard forms of school work, include application of knowledge from a specific industry and skills acquisition for purposes of performance in certain professions.

The areas of impact within the framework of the Integrated Strategy 2030 (detailed part):²⁹⁷

1. Basic, transversal, and occupational skills of children, youth, and adults

²⁹³ Ministry of Education and Science, Poland. Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 (detailed part) - document adopted by the Council of Ministers. <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/zintegrowana-strategia-umiejtnosci-2030-czesc-szczegolowa--dokument-przyjety-przez-rade-ministrow> Date published 31 December 2020

²⁹⁴ Educational Research Institute (IBE). Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności [Integrated Skills Strategy]. Accessed March 2021 <http://www.ibe.edu.pl/pl/projekty-krajowe/zintegrowana-strategia-umiejtnosci>

²⁹⁵ Cedefop. Poland: developing the Integrated skills strategy, Date published 15 June 2018

²⁹⁶ Ministry of Education and Science, Poland (2020). The Integrated Skills Strategy 2030-detailed part. (Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności-część szczegółowa). Available at <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/d878ece0-503d-4b91-a9a1-68e8b3c9a375>

²⁹⁷ Ministry of Education and Science, Poland (2020). The Integrated Skills Strategy 2030-detailed part. (Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności-część szczegółowa). Available at <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/d878ece0-503d-4b91-a9a1-68e8b3c9a375>

- dissemination of existing ones, as well as development and implementation of new solutions for the development of basic, transversal and professional skills in children, adolescents and adults
- supporting the development of social capital for development skills in formal and non-formal education and informal learning

Skills development is perceived as crucial for future social and labour market needs. To reduce inequalities, favourable learning conditions should be provided for everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

2. Developing skills in formal education - management staff

- supporting management staff in formal education in creating conditions for skills development
- supporting management staff in formal education in managing the skills of teaching staff
- developing management skills for professional development in the field of teaching and methodological skills for teaching staff
- preparation and development of monitoring and evaluation tools in supporting the functioning of formal education institutions

3. Skills developing in formal education - teaching staff

- supporting the development of professional skills of the staff educators in formal education
- supporting and developing the authorization process for the teaching profession and functioning in the profession
- developing a school-based work culture on cooperation, teamwork and interdisciplinarity

4. Skills development outside of formal education

- support the skills of people capable of full development using their talents
- supporting management and teaching staff in non-formal and informal learning
- supporting the staff of institutions outside the formal education system in acquiring skills
- popularizing the use of institutional support
- supporting families in combining professional and personal life

5. Development and use of skills in the workplace

- equipping employees with skills in adult education and training not only to support professional activity of the population, but also to improve the innovation of the economy
- supporting the development of human capital management in the workplace
- disseminating knowledge about methods, skills, and highly effective work practices
- supporting employees' motivation for skills development

6. Career guidance

- development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and provision of effective career counseling for children, youth and adults

- creating effective mechanisms for providing information regarding labour market needs, qualifications and skills on national and regional level

7. Cooperation of employers with formal and non-formal education

- to promote the effective skills development of all citizens throughout lifetime, it is necessary to develop new tools and methods aimed at skills development to support existing, and create new organisational solutions. To achieve that, effective cooperation of formal and non-formal education providers and labour market institutions is needed.
- developing technical and teaching facilities and institutional vocational training taking into account labour market needs

8. Planning lifelong learning and validation of skills

- integration of formal, non-formal education and informal learning
- development of validation and recognition of prior learning at national, regional, and local level

ZSU 2030 as a public policy does not define a precise implementation framework. Mechanisms of cooperation and coordination at national and regional level in the field of lifelong learning will be developed and implemented as part of a project carried out by the Ministry of Education.²⁹⁸

Implementation of Upskilling Pathways initiative in Poland is realised via joint efforts made by The Foundation for the Development of the Education System and the Educational Research Institute within the project “**A Chance – New Opportunities for Adults.**”²⁹⁹

The project aims to support adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences who are not eligible for support under the Youth Guarantee³⁰⁰ and it is supposed to run between 2018 and 2021.³⁰¹

The project’s target groups include employees, unemployed or inactive adults, adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, elderly people (over 50 years of age), immigrants, adults with intellectual disabilities, adults with physical and/or sensorial disabilities, and adults affected by abuse (e.g. physical, mental, economic).³⁰² Furthermore, the project aims to enhance adults’ literacy, numeracy, digital and social competences, as well as to support them in progressing towards higher Polish Qualifications Framework levels.³⁰³

To enhance adults’ digital skills, in Poland, workshops on digital skills acquisition for adults aged 50+ are often offered by amateurs or students as part of their internship. In addition, it

²⁹⁸ Ministry of Education and Science, Poland (2020). The Integrated Skills Strategy 2030-detailed part. (Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności-część szczegółowa). Available at <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/d878ece0-503d-4b91-a9a1-68e8b3c9a375>

²⁹⁹ Upskilling Pathways in Poland. Accessed March 2021 <https://szansa-power.frse.org.pl/en/>

³⁰⁰ Upskilling Pathways in Poland. Accessed March 2021 <https://szansa-power.frse.org.pl/en/>

³⁰¹ EAEA (2019). Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, Country reports, Poland <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

³⁰² Upskilling Pathways in Poland Accessed March 2021 <https://szansa-power.frse.org.pl/en/>

³⁰³ Upskilling Pathways in Poland Accessed March 2021 <https://szansa-power.frse.org.pl/en/>

is important to note that only a little more than 25% of the citizens aged 60+ access the internet regularly.³⁰⁴

For this reason, **Digital Poland of Equal Opportunities** (Polska Cyfrowa Równych Szans) was carried out in 2010 by the Ministry of Administration and Digitisation and the Cities on the Internet Association (Stowarzyszenie Miasta w Internecie).³⁰⁵ The campaign was a nation-wide educational programme aimed at digital skills enhancement in the population.³⁰⁶

Universities of the Third Age (U3A) also engage in developing digital literacy among seniors. However, it is stated that digital skills deficiency in the adult population in Poland corresponds with lack of motivation rather than due to a limited Internet access.³⁰⁷

To improve digital skills in population, in 2020, the Ministry of Digital Affairs has created the **Digital Competencies Development Programme until 2030 (PRKC)** with aim to increase digital skills among the population in Poland. The programme's goals are to create an inclusive society by offering the opportunity to develop or improve their digital competencies for everyone. Digitally talented individuals would moreover be invaluable regarding the future labour market needs. In addition to that, future developments would include measures in addressing digital exclusion, particularly by improving accessibility concerning people with disabilities.³⁰⁸

In Poland, educators have an opportunity to enhance their skills while working in the adult education sector through Erasmus+ project coordinated by the Polish Association of NGO Trainers, **“Education by the way”**³⁰⁹³¹⁰ The project's objectives focus on changing the views of education from the perspective of low-skilled people and development of methods for purposes of educating trainers and social activists in creation of educational processes.³¹¹

The Association of NGO Trainers - STOP (Stowarzyszenie Trenerów Organizacji Pozarządowych) is a nation-wide non-governmental organisation working on the quality of the learning process in non-formal adult education in the field of youth and adults education, especially in training of trainers, educators and facilitators. The organisation provides activities concerning training for people working with groups of adults at risk of social exclusion, such as elderly, people with special learning needs, and low-skilled adults. In addition to that, the Association of NGO trainers designed and developed the system of

³⁰⁴ Tomczyk, Ł., Wnęk-Gozdek, J., Mróz, A., Wojewodzik, K. (2020). ICT, digital literacy, digital inclusion and media education in Poland, DOI: 10.24917/9788395373732.7

³⁰⁵ Upskilling Pathways in Poland Accessed March 2021 <https://szansa-power.frse.org.pl/en/>

³⁰⁶ European Commission. Shaping Europe's digital future. Digital Poland of equal opportunities. Accessed March 2021 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/digital-poland-equal-opportunities%E2%80%9D-cyfrowa-polska-r%C3%B3wnych-szans-campaign>

³⁰⁷ Tomczyk, Ł., Wnęk-Gozdek, J., Mróz, A., Wojewodzik, K. (2020). ICT, digital literacy, digital inclusion and media education in Poland, DOI: 10.24917/9788395373732.7

³⁰⁸ Eurydice. National reforms related to transversal skills and employability, Poland. Last updated 16 March 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-related-transversal-skills-and-employability-50_hr

³⁰⁹ EAEA. Education by the way. Accessed March 2021 <https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/education-by-the-way/>

³¹⁰ EAEA (2019). Adult Education in Europe 2019: A civil society view, Poland. Available at <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Country-Reports-2019.pdf>

³¹¹ EAEA. Education by the way. Accessed March 2021 <https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/education-by-the-way/>

certificates³¹² of quality in learning for trainers and educators, which is acknowledged by various institutions in Poland and is regarded as an example of innovation in non-formal education.³¹³

2.13 PORTUGAL

OECD Indicator findings from 2019 show that only 4% of adults aged between 25 and 64 participate in formal education. In contrast, it was also found that 44% of adults participate in non-formal education and training.³¹⁴

However, adult education providers in Portugal find that one of the main challenges for the organisations is to enhance the participation of the adult population in education, particularly the low-skilled group of adults.³¹⁵

Types of provision supporting basic skills development

In 2017 the Portuguese government established the “National Digital Competences Initiative e.2030, Portugal INCoDe.2030”³¹⁶, aiming to promote digital inclusion in society.

Consequently, in 2019, INCoDe.2030 released the **Digital Competence Dynamic Reference Framework (Quadro Dinâmico de Referência de Competência Digital – QDRCD)** - a tool to evaluate the population’s digital skills.

The competencies that are the focal points of the initiative concern: information literacy, communication and citizenship, content creation, security and privacy, and solutions development.³¹⁷

The objectives of QDRCD are to:

- support the definition of policies and strategies
- design education programmes
- evaluate and certificate skills, either by self-diagnosis or by certifying entities³¹⁸

The initiative is based on the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens³¹⁹ from 2017.

³¹²STOP (Stowarzyszenie Trenerów Organizacji Pozarządowych) [The Association of NGO Trainers]. Certification. Accessed March 2021 <https://stowarzyszeniestop.pl/certyfikacja/>

³¹³STOP (Stowarzyszenie Trenerów Organizacji Pozarządowych) [The Association of NGO Trainers]. About us.. Accessed March 2021 <https://stowarzyszeniestop.pl/about-us/>

³¹⁴ OECD (2019), Education at a Glance 2019: Country note, Poland. Available at https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019_CN_PRT.pdf

³¹⁵ OECD, (2018). Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Portugal: Strengthening the Adult-Learning System, OECD Skills Studies, Available at <https://www.oecd.org/skills/nationalskillsstrategies/Action-Report-Portugal.pdf>

³¹⁶ INCoDe.2030. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.incode2030.gov.pt/en/incode2030>

³¹⁷ Incode2030. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.incode2030.gov.pt/en/featured/incode2030-releases-digital-competence-dynamic-reference-framework>

³¹⁸ Incode2030. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.incode2030.gov.pt/en/featured/incode2030-releases-digital-competence-dynamic-reference-framework>

Further initiative, **"We are all digital"** was introduced by INCoDe.2030, aiming to support adults with low digital skills.³²⁰

In order to encourage greater participation in adult education, the Qualifica programme was launched in 2017.

The Qualifica programme³²¹ aims to support adult learners who wish to improve their levels of education and training, contributing to the improvement of the qualification levels of the population and facilitate their employment and is implemented by the government.

The programme's objectives are to:

- improve the workforce's qualification levels in order to improve the employability of the population
- reduce illiteracy
- improve the system with young adults investing more in education and training
- align the country's educational structures with the European levels
- tailor provision and training network to the needs of the job market and the national and regional development model

The programme incorporates **The Basic Skills Training (FCB) programmes**³²² which are designed to improve adults' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and digital skills. In addition, the FCB programmes target adults who haven't attended the first cycle of basic education (or equivalent) or low-skilled adults.

The curriculum consists of 6 training units (50 hours each) and it may include 50 hours of additional training. Learners can consequently proceed to the Integration into Adult Education and Training courses or referral to a basic level Recognition, Validation and Certification (RVCC) process.

Adult Education and Training (EFA)³²³ courses are aimed at adults who wish to improve their qualifications, i.e. acquire 1st, 2nd, and 3rd cycles of basic education or secondary education. The EFA Dual Certification allows learners to obtain a school qualification and professional qualification. In addition, all EFA providers are included in the National Qualifications Catalogue.³²⁴

³¹⁹EU Science Hub. DigComp 2.1 The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens with eight proficiency levels and examples of use. Accessed March 2021 <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/digcomp-21-digital-competence-framework-citizens-eight-proficiency-levels-and-examples-use>

³²⁰ EAEA Country reports. Developments, Portugal. Date published 23 November 2020 <https://countryreport.eaea.org/search/portugal-2020/Urgent%20demand%20for%20the%20implementation%20of%20the%20National%20Plan%20for%20Adult%20Literacy>

³²¹ Qualifica programme. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/>

³²² Qualifica. Modalidades. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/modalidades>

³²³ Qualifica. Modalidades. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/modalidades>

³²⁴ Eurydice. Portugal, Main providers. Accessed March 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-providers-57_en

Qualifica centres³²⁵ provide skills recognition, validation and certification (RVCC) of competences of adult learners acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, professional domains or dual certification. The processes are based on the reference frameworks of the National Qualifications Catalogue.³²⁶

Eligible candidates must be over 18, while candidates who are 23 and under are required to submit proof of a minimum of three years professional experience via a statement issued by the relevant social security office.³²⁷ The process of recognition and validation is delivered by a group of teachers/trainers qualified to teach specific groups.³²⁸

The recognition and validation stage consist of adult learner's identification, appreciation and recognition of competences,³²⁹ and a specific set of assessment activities and tools,³³⁰ including the recognition session guided by professionals or different trainers/teachers.

Certification of competences is completed by a panel's assessment³³¹ of the learner's skills test, including the portfolio analysis and the assessment tools used during the recognition and validation of competences stage.³³²

Academic RVCC process results in basic level certification (certificate of qualifications corresponding to the 1st, 2nd or 3rd cycle and a diploma, if concluding compulsory education - levels 1 and 2 of the National Qualifications Framework (*Quadro Nacional de Qualificações* - QNQ) or the upper secondary level (qualification certificate corresponding to the QNQ level 3) is completed.

Regarding the *certification of professional competences*, the assessment is conducted upon a demonstration of a practical test relevant to the profession/activity concerned. The professional RVCC process may result in learners obtaining the certification of academic and professional qualifications or only a certificate of qualifications.

Moreover, should the learner not acquire the certificate or diploma, they would nevertheless receive a qualifications certificate, stating the competences units already validated. In

³²⁵ Qualifica centres provide the following: information, counselling and guidance concerning different types of qualification and matching existing provision with candidates' profiles, needs, motivations and expectations according to the job market needs
recognition, validation and certification of competences acquired formally, informally, or non-formally
information and outreach concerning young people and adults, businesses and other employers in relation to vocational education and training provision, as well as the promotion of lifelong learning

³²⁶ Eurydice. Portugal, Main providers. Accessed March 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-providers-57_en

³²⁷ Eurydice. Portugal, Main providers. Accessed March 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-providers-57_en

³²⁸ Eurydice. Portugal, Main providers. Accessed March 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-providers-57_en

³²⁹ Eurydice. Portugal, Main providers. Accessed March 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-providers-57_en

³³⁰ in the case of the professional RVCC, there are four different assessment tools: the portfolio analysis form, the technical interview guidelines, the performance in the workplace observation grid and the practical exercises assessment grid (within the context of simulated practice).

³³¹ The panel and its chair are nominated by the body running the Qualifica Centre

³³² Eurydice. Validation of non-formal and informal learning, Portugal. Date published 1 February 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-57_en

addition, a personal qualification plan is issued according to the competences lacking, which is used to refer the candidates for a path that allows them to acquire the competences they require. In case of qualification certificates and diplomas issued by Qualifica Centres without certification capacity it is compulsory to have them approved by the designated bodies.³³³

2.14 SLOVENIA

According to the PIAAC study, in Slovenia 1/5 of participants aged from 16 to 65 reached the lowest skills levels in the area of reading literacy. PIAAC findings show that adults are able to read just short and simple texts. Slovenia belongs to the countries with the highest share of the active population at the lowest skills attainment levels.

Approximately 5.6% of adults in Slovenia reached the highest skills levels in the area of reading literacy (level 4 and 5), which is significantly less than the average of the participating OECD countries (10, 6%).³³⁴

In 2019, the **National strategy for reading literacy development for 2019 – 2030** was agreed.

Reading literacy enables and supports the personal development and social inclusion of the individuals in the community, as well as the effective economic development in sustainable society. It provides the base for all other literary types, which makes National strategy a strategic document setting the priorities and educational goals in the literacy area.

The main responsibility for National strategy implementation at the system level has the Ministry of Schooling and Science, while ministries responsible for culture, family affairs, health care and other ones share the strategy implementation.

Strategic goals of literacy development stated in the National strategy:

In order to reach the highest literacy level possible in all areas of private and social life, it is necessary to:

1. Create the effective social framework for reading literacy development:

- Promote the understanding that reading literacy is a basic ability for achieving and creating new knowledge in personal and professional life and for work in the community.
- Secure the basic standards of reading literacy for the successful integration into the society.
- Create the reading culture – the attitude of the individual and society towards reading.
- Create internal, social and external motivation to read and express what was read/reading understanding.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ OECD-Skills matter: further results from the survey on adult skills: country note. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Skills-Matter-Slovenia.pdf>

2. *Development of individuals reading literacy, with different tasks, needs, requirements in the different areas of their life and to enable continuous development of the society and economy:*

- Encourage the development of reading literacy and reading culture within family, at work place, leisure time, etc.
- Development of reading strategies and the ability to apply critical thinking when reading.
- Increase the social interest about the skills development in reading literacy in marginalised groups.
- Monitoring and verification of reading literacy level and their comparison with the international results.
- Support of professional knowledge and reading literacy development.

3. *Increased access to the books and other reading materials:*

- Systematically support the investment into the quality book production and other reading materials.
- Support the activities in libraries as well as different projects for the effective promotion of reading in community.
- Provide the individuals the access to various materials and the advice regarding the choice and use of these materials in all stages of life.

4. *Special attention to be given to particular age and target groups within the education system:*

- Develop reading literacy and culture of reading in families, as well as emerging reading skills in preschool children.
- Secure early detecting reading literacy language in which the teaching is instructed and accordingly to create the differentiated programmes for its development, e.g. focusing at the individuals with low performance in reading literacy and at the talented individuals.
- Development of basic and internationally detectable skills in reading during the first years of school attendance and sustaining the positive attitude towards reading.
- Development of reading literacy at higher levels of primary and secondary school for the successful continuation in further training and education.
- Support for further development and increase of reading literacy and awareness about the importance of life-long reading literacy development among the students at higher and university education.
- Support reading literacy development and the culture of reading among the adult population in the context of formal, non-formal education and informal learning. .

New strategy also sets the ambitious and quantitative goals to be achieved until 2030:

- At least 90% of 15 year old pupils will be able to reach the basic level of reading literacy according to PISA measuring.
- At least 10% of 15 year old pupils will be able to reach the highest literacy level, at the level 5 – 6 according to PISA study.

According to the latest PISA findings (2018), the average achieved result of the student in Slovenia outreached OECD average, but only 82,1% of students reached the basic reading literacy level, meanwhile 8,8% reached the highest levels 5 and 6.

The basic principles of the National Strategy are as follows:

1. *Reading literacy as a right, responsibility, and value*

Development of reading literacy is the responsibility of the government, ministries, media, local communities as well as education providers, employers, parents and each individual. Promotion of reading literacy, as one of the most important values of Slovenian society, is the responsibility of the professional and political sphere.

2. *Awareness about the importance of reading literacy and their promotion*

Raising awareness about the importance of reading culture and reading literacy and their effective promotion are the integral part of National strategy implementation.

3. *Integrated approach*

Activities aimed at increasing reading literacy level include all age categories - children, adolescents and adults. Reading literacy develops via formal and non-formal education and informal learning.

4. *Accessibility, equality and justice*

Access to all levels and areas of education and training is a supposition for lifelong development of reading literacy. Kindergartens, schools, adult education providers, libraries and cultural institutions play a key role. In order to secure equality and justice, it is necessary to monitor the level of the achieved reading literacy in the population. The necessary measures accounting positive discrimination of vulnerable groups are being planned and implemented.

5. *Individualisation and personalisation*

Professionals and providers of further education ensure that reading literacy developed upon the previously acquired knowledge, interests and other individuals features.

6. *Professional quality and responsibility*

Commitment to develop own reading literacy, as well as to develop learners reading literacy, is the responsibility of all professionals at all levels and in all areas of education and vocational training.

7. *High expectations and standards*

Regarding reading literacy there are quite high expectations and standards for all, regardless personal, socio-economic and other social differences between individuals and groups.

8. *Diversity of reading*

Materials for reading and leisure time should have been diverse with regard to a format (print, electronic and interactive), content and language. The right to choose, understand and evaluate the text should be respected.

9. *Planning, evaluation and self-evaluation*

Activities to support reading literacy development should be systematically and continuously planned and monitored, the achieved level of reading literacy should be evaluated.

National strategy implementation

The government denominates the National Council for Reading literacy, which monitors implementation of the National strategy. National Council consists of the literacy experts (up to 10 members), covering the different aspects of literacy development and representatives from the ministries, which play a key role in literacy development (up to 5 members).

The implementation, technical support and finance for its operation are provided by the Ministry of Schooling, Science and Sport.

The National Council coordinates the tasks and duties among the particular ministries, promotes the National strategy and its implementation in professional circles and prepares the annual reports on implementation.³³⁵³³⁶³³⁷

2.15 SPAIN

PIAAC study findings from 2012 indicate that 17% of adults in Spain had no prior experience with computers, while 6% of adults lacked basic digital skills.³³⁸ In literacy and numeracy assessment, the participants scored below OECD-country average in both domains, while the younger group of adults performed better than their older counterparts.³³⁹

It is noted that over 40% of adults in Spain participate in adult learning. However, only 19% of adults who scored lowest in PIAAC literacy skills assessment reported participation in learning. In contrast, 79% of the study participants who scored highest reported participation in adult education, indicating linkage between the level of education attainment and participation in education.³⁴⁰

Initiatives supporting basic skills development

In Spain, adult education fosters provision of support for adults in basic skills acquisition, knowledge attainment, professional qualification acquisition or acquisition of the necessary training for professional purposes. Furthermore, adult education aims to respond to the challenges related to demographic changes, ensuring older people have the opportunity to

³³⁵ Republika Slovenija, Vlada Republike Slovenija, Ljubljana, December 2019, National strategy for the development of reading literacy 2019-2030.

³³⁶ Eurydice. Slovenia: a new reading literacy strategy for the new decade. Date published 6 January 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/slovenia-new-reading-literacy-strategy-new-decade_en

³³⁷ Elinet (2016). Literacy in Slovenia, Available at http://www.elinet.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Slovenia_Short_Report.pdf

³³⁸ OECD. Survey of adult skills first results. Country note: Spain. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Country%20note%20-%20Spain.pdf>

³³⁹ OECD, Education GPS. Adult skills (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC 2012). Accessed March 2021 <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=ESP&treshold=10&topic=AS>

³⁴⁰ OECD. Survey of adult skills first results. Country note: Spain. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Country%20note%20-%20Spain.pdf>

upskill, and fosters equality in society. Adults may participate in education to acquire basic skills, for career purposes, or leisure activities.³⁴¹

Basic education for adults³⁴² in Spain is for individuals who have not completed compulsory education and aims to equip learners with basic skills and knowledge. It is characterised by the following:

1. *Initial learning*
 - eligible participants must be over 18
 - to enroll, the participant is required to take part in an initial assessment test
 - in most Autonomous Communities, initial education is structured into two levels:
 - a) Level 1 or Literacy, which enables adults to acquire literacy and numeracy skills
 - b) Level 2 or Consolidation of Knowledge and Instrumental Techniques, which enables access to secondary education for adults
 - the learning content is categorised in fields (e.g. Communication, Social) or knowledge areas (Mathematics, Language)
 - adults may be familiarised with foreign languages
 - guidance and tutorials regarding training and employment integration are offered to learners
 - courses are flexible, and vary in duration depending on learner's needs
 - some Autonomous Communities offer courses in a form of distance learning
 - upon completion, learners receive certificate
2. *Secondary education for adults*
 - participants must be over 18
 - prior to enrolment, assessment is conducted
 - participants are provided with guidance and counselling
3. *Vocational secondary education for adults*
 - it is required that participants have completed secondary education
 - courses are classroom-based and are provided by adult education institutions
 - leads to a Basic Vocational Training certificate
4. *Language education*
 - eligible participants must be over the age of 16
 - may be done in a form of distance learning and results in certification

Popular education in Spain is offered by **liberal universities (Universidades Populares)**,³⁴³ with aim to promote social participation, education, training and culture in order to improve the quality of life of people and the community.

The provision of popular universities targets adults, including people from disadvantaged groups, such as women, young people, senior citizens, immigrants or people outside of the

³⁴¹ Eurydice. Adult education and training, Spain. Date published 1 December 2020

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-79_en

³⁴² Eurydice, Main types of provision, Spain. Date published 4 December 2020

[Phhttps://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-76_en#COMPBASICAS](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-76_en#COMPBASICAS)

³⁴³ Eurydice, Main types of provision, Spain. Date published 4 December 2020

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-76_en#COMPBASICA

labour market. Participation and completion of courses provided by popular universities however does not result in certification.

The provision of popular universities can be divided into four different categories:

1. *educational provision* concerns courses related to various types of provision within the education system and cover content on acquiring literacy skills, and preparatory courses for further education
2. *training provision* relates to programmes aiming to enhance an individual's personal life skills, or general training programmes (e.g.history), among others
3. *training for employment provision* concerns training focusing on personal development, and various other activities, such as acquiring skills related to job search
4. *cultural provision* concerns creative and cultural activities and leisure workshops, among others.

It is noted that youth unemployment in Spain in 2020 was rather high (43.9%), making it the highest rate in the European Union.³⁴⁴ Unemployed individuals, as well as low-skilled workers, immigrants, and people with disabilities, have the opportunity to develop their skills by participating in vocational training for employment, which leads to a certificate of professional experience. Adults may also receive training unrelated to certificates of professional experience, in which case they are awarded with a certificate of attendance or a diploma. People outside of the labour market may likewise attend employment and training programmes offered by Workshop-Schools and Trade Training Centres, among others.³⁴⁵

In an effort to support individuals with no qualifications, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training introduced the following **competence assessment tools**, aimed at evaluation and accreditation of competences acquired through work experience or non-formal and informal training³⁴⁶:

1. Tool ACREDITA³⁴⁷ through the TodoFP web portal³⁴⁸
2. the National Institute for Qualifications (INCUAL)³⁴⁹ website, designed to link the world of labour with the training sector

Upon evaluation of the professional competences, individuals are provided with the necessary guidelines to complete training leading to the award of a vocational training qualification or a Certificate of professional experience.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁴ European Parliament. Parliamentary questions: youth unemployment in Spain. Last updated 21 October 2020 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-005461_EN.html

³⁴⁵ Eurydice. Main types of provision. Date published 4 December 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-76_en

³⁴⁶ Eurydice. Validation of non-formal and informal learning. Date published 4 December 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-76_en

³⁴⁷ Acreditación de Competencias. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.todofp.es/acreditacion-de-competencias.html>

³⁴⁸ <https://www.todofp.es/inicio.html>

³⁴⁹ The National Institute for Qualifications. Accessed March 2021 <http://incual.mecd.es/inicio>

³⁵⁰ Eurydice. Validation of non-formal and informal learning. Accessed March 2021 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-76_en

2.16 SWEDEN

Sweden is one of the countries that ranked above-average among the OECD countries participating in the 2012 PIAAC study. In fact, the majority of study participants aged between 16 and 65 demonstrated above-average proficiency in domains of literacy, numeracy, while the country ranked highest in the domain of problem solving in technology-rich environments among all participating OECD countries.³⁵¹

According to findings from 2018, Sweden likewise ranks highest in terms of adult participation in lifelong learning among the EU Member States (29.2%).³⁵² However, PIAAC study results revealed that 6.4% of participants had no prior experience with computers or lacked basic digital skills.³⁵³

The Swedish Strategy for Lifelong Learning

Sweden has a long history of efforts in establishing lifelong learning policy, and the first documents regarding lifelong learning policy emerged in 1994.³⁵⁴

In 2007, the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research issued The Swedish Strategy for lifelong learning.³⁵⁵

The strategy's main focus is on quality, accessibility, and goal attainment³⁵⁶:

1. The right of everyone to a good education
2. The Government's aim is to ensure basic knowledge and skills acquisition among the young population. Likewise, adult learners should have opportunities for skills and knowledge enhancement.
3. Education should be accessible to everyone, its quality needs be ensured regardless of the type of provision, and the learning opportunities should be offered continuously throughout the individual's life
4. Transitions between different levels of the education system should be facilitated, including the transitions between education and working life.
5. Education should be free of charge for everyone, and support should be provided for everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic background

³⁵¹ Statistic Sweden. PIAAC: Adult skills stand up well internationally. Date published 8 October 2013. <https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/education-and-research/education-of-the-population/programme-for-the-international-assessment-of-adult-competencies/pong/statistical-news/piaac---programme-for-the-international-assessment-of-adult-competencies/>

³⁵² Eurostat. 11.1% of adults participate in lifelong learning. Date published 17 May 2019. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20190517-1#:~:text=In%20the%20EU%20Member%20States,%25\)%20and%20Denmark%20\(23.5%20%25\).](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20190517-1#:~:text=In%20the%20EU%20Member%20States,%25)%20and%20Denmark%20(23.5%20%25).)

³⁵³ OECD, Education GPS. Adult skills (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC, 2012), Sweden. Accessed March 2021. <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=SWE&treshold=10&topic=AS>

³⁵⁴ Boström, A-K. (2017). Lifelong learning in policy and practice: The case of Sweden. Australian Journal of Adult Learning, Volume 57, Number 3. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1163709.pdf>

³⁵⁵ Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden. (2007). The Swedish Strategy for lifelong learning. A summary of principles and orientations. Available at <https://uil.unesco.org/i/doc/lifelong-learning/policies/sweden-the-swedish-strategy-for-lifelong-learning.pdf>

³⁵⁶ Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden. (2007). The Swedish Strategy for lifelong learning. A summary of principles and orientations. Available at <https://uil.unesco.org/i/doc/lifelong-learning/policies/sweden-the-swedish-strategy-for-lifelong-learning.pdf>

6. Knowledge and experience should be recognised through validation
7. Role of working life in learning and development

The strategy moreover covers all levels and parts of the education system, i.e. preschool, compulsory school, upper secondary school, higher education, adult education, and popular adult education.

The adult education system in Sweden comprises municipal adult education (Komvux), special education of adults (Särvux), and Swedish for Immigrants (SFI). Adults may likewise participate in higher vocational and supplementary educational courses.³⁵⁷

Municipal adult education (Komvux) programme³⁵⁸ targets individuals who haven't obtained compulsory or upper secondary education. The eligibility requirement is that participants must be over 20.

Komvux at basic level offers learning opportunities for adults who haven't acquired compulsory education and prepares them for participation in society and working life.³⁵⁹

- courses are offered in the following subjects: Swedish/Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics, social studies, religious studies, history, geography, physics, chemistry, biology and home economics and nutrition. The syllabi are corresponding with the courses at compulsory schools, but the courses may be split into several sub-courses.
- basic adult education covers the first 9 years of secondary school³⁶⁰

Adults may take courses at **upper secondary level** resulting in a certificate equivalent to upper-secondary level qualification. Learners may also participate in vocational training, undertake a knowledge test on a particular subject, validate their previous knowledge, and participants may also take courses in Swedish for immigrants (SFI).

In addition, the course Swedish for immigrants may be combined with additional courses offered in Komvux.

Courses are delivered in full-time or part-time form, at school, distance learning, or a combination of all three. Also, adults may take certain courses at a workplace.

Moreover, information provision and career guidance are provided at Komvux in municipalities.

Assessment is continuously provided to learners in relation to the teaching objectives. The grading scale ranges from A-F, equivalent to the one at compulsory or upper secondary education level.

³⁵⁷ Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden. (2013). Adult education and training in Sweden <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/f29759a8695f4d7fa72a70aa16ee7f84/adult-education-and-training-in-sweden-u13.012>

³⁵⁸ <https://utbildningsguiden.skolverket.se/languages/english-engelska/education-programmes-for-adults>

³⁵⁹ Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden. (2013). Adult education and training in Sweden. Available at <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/f29759a8695f4d7fa72a70aa16ee7f84/adult-education-and-training-in-sweden-u13.012>

³⁶⁰ Eurydice. Main types of provision, Sweden. Date published 28 January 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-types-provision-77_en

Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)³⁶¹ aims to support a diverse group of learners over the age of 16 in acquiring Swedish language skills. The language of instruction is Swedish, however learners learn to read and write in their mother tongue. Each learner is provided with an individual learning plan which states the learning objectives and the scope of the learner's studies. Moreover, the individual learning plan may be adapted based on the learner's preference.

The programme consists of three learning paths (1,2,3) and four courses (A, B, C, and D):

1. Study track 1 refers to learners who have little or no prior education and includes courses A,B, C, and D
2. Study track 2 concerns learners who have obtained an education level that is lower than the equivalent of Swedish upper secondary education level and offers B, C, and D courses.
3. Study track 3 is aimed at learners who have acquired an education level equivalent to Swedish upper secondary level or those who have participated in university studies.

Similarly as Komvux programme, SFI provides assessment for learners on continuous bases. Likewise, the information concerning courses is offered in municipalities or online. In addition, it is possible to obtain information regarding SFI courses provided by certain folk high schools.

Special needs adult education (Särvux)³⁶² aims to support anyone having special learning needs aged over 20 who have not obtained education from special-needs compulsory, compulsory or upper secondary schools. Moreover, the programme offers learning opportunities for anyone wishing to supplement their previous education, learn Swedish or participate for career purposes.

Participants may attend the programme on full-time or part-time basis, and it may be taken at a workplace. Different levels of study may be combined, for example it can be combined with courses provided within the SFI programme.

Assessment is provided continuously, and the grading system is identical as in the SFI programme (A-F).

University education³⁶³ for adults who don't meet the general entry requirements may be available upon completion of the 1-year foundations programme at the upper secondary level. Alternatively, adults can qualify at an upper-secondary level via municipal adult education, Komvux.

³⁶¹ Skolverket. Education programmes for adults. Accessed March 2021

<https://utbildningsguiden.skolverket.se/languages/english-engelska/education-programmes-for-adults>

³⁶² Skolverket. Education programmes for adults. Accessed March 2021

<https://utbildningsguiden.skolverket.se/languages/english-engelska/education-programmes-for-adults>

³⁶³ Skolverket. Education programmes for adults. Accessed March 2021

<https://utbildningsguiden.skolverket.se/languages/english-engelska/education-programmes-for-adults>

Adults without completed upper secondary education have the possibility to access university education, provided they can demonstrate corresponding knowledge or experience acquired professionally or via courses completed previously, or the knowledge and skills one has acquired from extended stays abroad.

Higher vocational education is offered to learners upon completion of upper-secondary level or municipal adult education (Komvux). Prerequisite is to have an adequate level of Swedish and the school is responsible for the language assessment. Some schools offer additional support in Swedish, should it be deemed necessary.

Non-formal adult education

Liberal (popular) adult education (Folkbildning)³⁶⁴ is a voluntary and decentralised form of learning,³⁶⁵ referring to non-formal adult education, fostering active learning adapted to learners' needs,³⁶⁶ while the focus is placed on acquiring general competences within lifelong learning.³⁶⁷ Liberal education moreover is regarded as an example of democracy and social equality.³⁶⁸ Liberal adult education providers may create courses of their choice, including the learning objectives. The providers of liberal adult education in Sweden are folk high schools (folkhögskolor) and study associations, (studieförbund).³⁶⁹

Folk high schools offer various types of programmes for learners over 18 years of age. According to the Swedish National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet),³⁷⁰ more than one million people participate each year in the activities of student associations and folk high schools. The courses offered are the following³⁷¹:

1. Folk high school's general courses aim to support adults who haven't obtained a compulsory or upper secondary education level. The course content and the duration are tailored according to the learner's needs. Upon completion, the participant may proceed to studies at vocational college or university.
2. Various vocational educational programmes are offered
3. Courses for individuals who recently arrived to Sweden

³⁶⁴Eurydice. Glossary, Sweden. Liberal adult education (Folkbildning), Date published 2 December 2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-70_en#F

³⁶⁵ studieförbunden. Swedish non-formal adult education, Accessed March 2021 <https://studieforbunden.se/other-languages/>

³⁶⁶ Swedish National Council for Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet). Om folkbildning. Accessed March 2021 <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkbildning/>

³⁶⁷Eurydice. Validation of non-formal and informal learning, Sweden. Date published 28 June 2019 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-77_en

³⁶⁸ Boström, A-K. (2017). Lifelong learning in policy and practice: The case of Sweden. Australian Journal of Adult Learning, Volume 57, Number 3. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1163709.pdf>

³⁶⁹Eurydice website. Adult education and training, Sweden. Date published 13 August 2018 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-80_en#:~:text=Sweden%20has%20established%20a%20legal,not%20completed%20lower%20secondary%20education.&text=Municipal%20adult%20education%20at%20compulsory,s%C3%A4rskild%20utbildning%20f%C3%B6r%20vuxna%20s%C3%A4rvux

³⁷⁰ The Swedish National Council for Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet). Last modified 10 July 2020 <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkbildning/>

³⁷¹ Skolverket. Education programmes for adults. Accessed March 2021 <https://utbildningsguiden.skolverket.se/languages/english-engelska/education-programmes-for-adults>

Popular education is characterised by the participants learning together in groups, and the aim is to encourage interaction among the learners.³⁷² In addition, the competences that learners acquire when attending liberal education include general skills such as skills to handle information, problem-solving, decision-making, use of digital media and collaboration skills.³⁷³

The establishment course at folk high school is available to people who recently arrived in Sweden, however the priority is given to low-educated individuals. Upon completion, the learner receives a certificate which they may use for employment purposes or they may also proceed in their studies at folk high schools or municipal adult education.³⁷⁴

According to the the **Swedish National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet)**,³⁷⁵ there is an increase in learners attending folk high schools who have limited educational attainment, lack skills in Swedish language, or have a disability.³⁷⁶

Besides, folk high schools offer courses for seniors, which positively impacts their overall quality of life. It is found that the courses provide participants with a sense of belonging, and due to the nature of the courses, the senior participants report it significantly contributes to their well-being.³⁷⁷ In addition, popular education is also seen as a solution for many young people in Sweden who are outside of the labour market and do not participate in education, and are at risk of exclusion.³⁷⁸

Within liberal adult education, validation is done in a form of mapping general competences within lifelong learning. **The Swedish Adult Education Association's (Studieförbunden) program "General competencies for working life"**³⁷⁹ forms the basis for the validation in non-formal education and is quality assured using the OCN method at the Nordic Validation Forum.. The content of the learning modules is approved by a national panel consisting of representatives from different areas of society. In addition, the Association was the principal of a Heritage Fund project that validated young people between 16 and 24 years, including the newly arrived young people. Database was built throughout the project, which now may be used for validation of general competencies across 60 different learning modules.

³⁷² The Swedish National Council for Adult Education. About liberal education. Last updated 26 June 2018

³⁷³ Swedish Adult Education Association. Accessed March 2021 <https://studieforbunden.se/validering-inom-studieforbunden/>

³⁷⁴ The Swedish National Agency for Adult Education. Establishment course at folk high school. Last updated 26 <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkhogskolan/etablering-arbetsmarknadsatgarder-och-manskliga-rattigheter/etableringskurs-pa-folkhogskola/>

³⁷⁵ The Swedish National Council for Adult education. About us. Last updated 31 January 2018 <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkbildningsradet/>

³⁷⁶ The Swedish National Council for Adult education. About the folk high school. Last updated 26 June 2018 <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkhogskolan/>

³⁷⁷ Hedegaard, J & Hugo, M. (2020). Inclusion through Folk High School courses for senior citizens, *Educational Gerontology*, 46:2, 84-94, DOI: 10.1080/03601277.2020.1712773

³⁷⁸ The Swedish National Agency for Adult Education. Folk high school turning point for many young people in exclusion. Published 19 February 2021 <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkbildningsradet/aktuellt/nyheter/2021/folkhogskolan-viktig-for-unga-i-utanforskap/>

³⁷⁹ Swedish Adult Education Association. Validation within the student unions. Accessed March 2021 <https://studieforbunden.se/validering-inom-studieforbunden/>

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