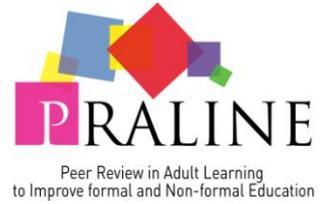




**OBSERVATORY**  
CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT



# **Desk analysis of the needs and challenges of the adult learning sector**

**Budapest,  
January – March 2015**

## **PRALINE – Peer Review in Adult Learning to Improve formal and Non-formal Education**

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This research is part of the PRALINE project, which aims at developing innovative and sustainable initiatives to support Adult Learning providers in approaching Quality Assurance in their organization and training provision.

*PROJECT COORDINATOR:*

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## INTRODUCTION

The PRALINE Project aims at developing innovative and sustainable initiatives to support Adult Learning providers, specifically those of the non-formal domain, in approaching Quality Assurance (QA) in their organization and training provision. Specifically it aims at transferring the European Peer Review to the Adult Learning sector.

As one of the first activities of the project, a thorough desk research on and analysis of the needs and challenges of the Adult Learning sector was conducted, which also sets the context for further project developments. The desk analysis was carried out by the Hungarian partner - the Observatory Centre for Educational Development within *Corvinus University of Budapest* - with the contribution of the other project partners.

The core European references that the desk analysis builds on include:

- European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture, Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report 24th October 2013.
- Simon Broek and Bert-Jan Buiskool (2013): Developing the adult learning sector. Quality in the Adult Learning Sector (Lot 1) Final report.

The desk research report includes 4 main chapters:

- Chapter 1 introduces the main elements of the EU policy context, which have a role in and implications for the adult learning sector and, as such, our work in the PRALINE Project.
- Chapter 2 presents the special features, needs & challenges of the adult learning sector.
- Chapter 3 provides information on the state of the art in quality assurance of adult learning in Europe and also in some of the PRALINE partner countries.
- Chapter 4 summarizes the main conclusions of the desk analysis including some recommendations for the future development of QA of the adult learning sector.

The list of references (bibliography) is an important and valuable resource to support the development work in the different phases of the project implementation. It includes EU level references (e.g. relevant EU policy documents, studies, articles, EU projects - completed and ongoing - in the field) as well as national references.

Annex 1 provides background information – detailed up-to-date description of the state of the art in Quality Assurance in Adult Learning in the PRALINE partner countries.

Annex 2 gives an overview of the different definitions of formal and non-formal adult learning.

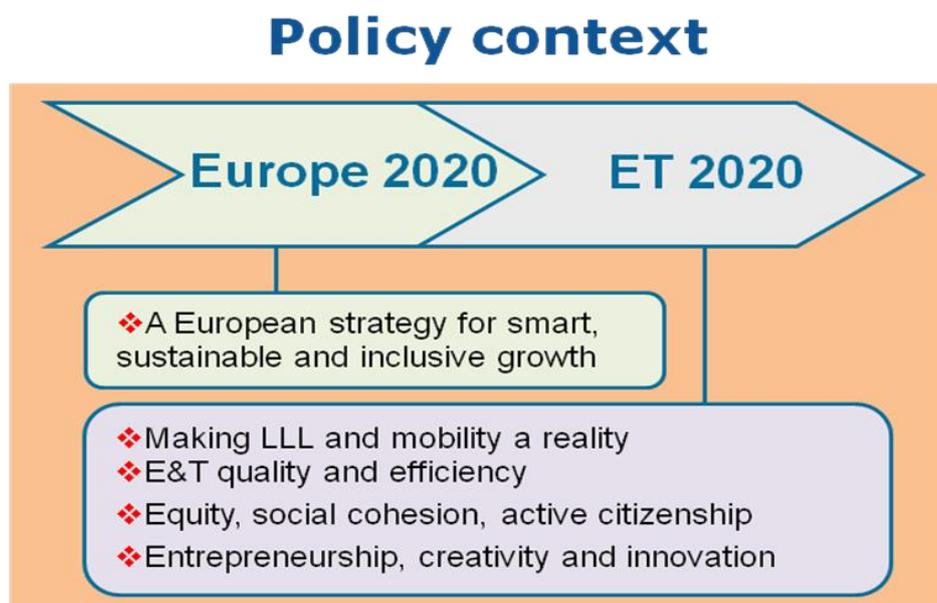
The main results and findings emerged from the in-depth desk analysis of the needs and challenges of the Adult Learning sector will form part of the Warming up Strategy – a tool to promote the development of a quality culture in the organisation of adult training providers, especially in the non-formal sector.

## Chapter 1 - EU policy context of adult learning

This chapter introduces some elements of the EU policy context that have a role in and implications for the adult learning sector and, as such, our work in the PRALINE Project.

The two main, fundamental documents setting the policy framework / context:

- *Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* and
- *Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)*.



Source: ppt presentation of Martina Ni Cheallaigh, European Commission, titled *European Agenda for Adult Learning*, Brussels, 6 May 2013.

### 1.1 Europe 2020

**A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth<sup>1</sup> is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy launched in 2010. It is about addressing the shortcomings of our growth model and creating conditions for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Europe 2020 puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities:**

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
- Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

The EU needs to define where it wants to be by 2020. To this end, the Commission proposes the following EU headline targets:

- 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed.
- 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D.

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<sup>1</sup><http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

- The "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right).
- The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree.
- 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

## 1.2 The Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)<sup>2</sup>

This document provides for a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training until 2020. This framework builds on the achievements of the "[Education and Training 2010](#)" (ET 2010) work programme, with a view to responding to the challenges that remain in creating a knowledge-based Europe and making lifelong learning a reality for all. The main aim of the framework is to support Member States in further developing their educational and training systems. These systems should better provide the means for all citizens to realise their potentials, as well as ensure sustainable economic prosperity and employability. The framework should take into consideration the whole spectrum of education and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective, covering all levels and contexts (including non-formal and informal learning).

The conclusions set out four **strategic objectives** for the framework:

- **Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality** – progress is needed in the implementation of lifelong learning strategies, the development of national qualifications frameworks linked to the [European Qualifications Framework](#) and more flexible learning pathways. Mobility should be expanded and the [European Quality Charter for Mobility](#) should be applied.
- **Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training** – all citizens need to be able to acquire [key competencies](#) and all levels of education and training need to be made more attractive and efficient.
- **Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship** – education and training should enable all citizens to acquire and develop skills and competencies needed for their employability and foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue. Educational disadvantage should be addressed through high quality inclusive and early education.
- **Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training** – the acquisition of transversal competences by all citizens should be promoted and the functioning of the knowledge triangle (education-research-innovation) should be ensured. Partnerships between enterprises and educational institutions as well as broader learning communities with civil society and other stakeholders should be promoted.

In order to measure progress achieved on these objectives, they are accompanied by indicators and European benchmarks (set out in Annex I of the Conclusions).

### The EU benchmarks identified for 2020 are:

- At least 95% of children between the age of 4 & the age for starting primary education in early childhood education.
- Share of 15 year olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics & science less than 15%.
- Share of early leavers from education and training less than 10%.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42010Y1201\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42010Y1201(01)&from=EN)

- Share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment at least 40%.
- Average of at least 15 % of adults (age group 25-64) participating in lifelong learning.

Table 1 below shows the progress in achieving these benchmarks.

Table 1: Progress towards EU benchmarks

PRIORITY	BENCH MARK	EU AVERAGE 2006	EU AVERAGE 2011
Early school leaving	10%	15,5%	13,5%
Tertiary Attainment 30-34	40%	28,9%	34,6%
Early Childhood education	95%	89,3%	92,3%
Employment rate (age 20-34) - Employability	82%	79,0%	77,2%
Adult participation in learning	15%	9,5%	8,9%
Basic skills	15%	R 23,1% M 24% S 20,3	R 19,6% M 22,2% S 17,7%

Source: ppt presentation of Martina Ni Cheallaigh, European Commission, titled *European Agenda for Adult Learning*, Brussels, 6 May 2013.

R = reading, literacy

M = mathematics, numeracy

S = science

### 1.3 EU policy in the field of adult learning<sup>3</sup>

Adult learning is a vital component of the European Commission's lifelong learning policy. It is essential to promoting competitiveness and employability, social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development across Europe. The demand for adult learning is increasing and the Commission is committed to help all EU countries create adult learning systems characterised by flexibility, high quality, excellent teaching, and an enhanced role of local authorities, employers, social partners, civil society, and cultural organisations.

The Commission is working with 32 countries to implement the **European Agenda for Adult Learning**<sup>4</sup>. The Agenda highlights the need to increase participation in adult learning of all kinds (formal, non-formal and informal learning) whether to acquire new work skills, for active citizenship, or for personal development and fulfilment. The Agenda sets the following priority areas:

Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality and increasing access to education for all.

- Improving the quality and efficiency of the adult learning system.
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning, participation in social and cultural learning for personal development and fulfilment.
- Enhancing the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments.

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/adult-learning/adult\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/adult-learning/adult_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=OJ:C:2011:372:TOC>

- Improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult learning sector.

In the newly established (Juncker) Commission the units of VET and adult learning policies (including quality assurance dossiers) have been moved from DG Education and Culture to DG Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Mobility which is an enterprise-led environment. This change will most probably have an impact on both EQAVET and adult learning. It is expected that the main focus of policies and activities will remain unchanged but new priorities will emerge, e.g. labour market relevance will be underlined, much more focus will be on CVET etc.

### *In summary, the European policies related to adult learning include:<sup>5</sup>*

#### *EU Policy on Adult Learning*

Adult learning is a vital component of the European Commission's lifelong learning policy. It comprises formal, non-formal, and informal learning for improving basic skills, obtaining new qualifications, up-skilling, or re-skilling for employment.

#### *European Agenda for Adult Learning 2012-2014*

Progress reports from European member states on the European Agenda for Adult Learning. This project has been funded with support from the European Union under the Invitation to submit grant applications for the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning addressed to the National Coordinators (period 2012-2014).

#### *Europe 2020*

Europe 2020 is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy that was launched in 2010. It is about addressing the shortcomings of our growth model and creating the conditions for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

#### *Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) - A Europe 2020 Initiative*

The Digital Agenda for Europe aims to help Europe's citizens and businesses to get the most out of digital technologies. It is the first of seven flagships initiatives under Europe 2020, the EU's strategy to deliver smart sustainable and inclusive growth.

### *Vision of adult learning by 2020<sup>6</sup>*

The renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning while initially focusing on the period 2012-14, should be seen in the context of a longer term vision for adult learning which — in the period up to 2020 — will endeavour to raise the sector's profile due to:

- Enhancing the access to high quality learning at any time in life for personal, social and economic ends.
- Fostering greater awareness among adults /employers of the importance of adult learning.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/epale-useful-links>

<sup>6</sup> Ppt presentation of Martina Ni Cheallaigh, European Commission, titled *European Agenda for Adult Learning*, Brussels, 6 May 2013.

- Fairly shared responsibility, adequate resourcing.
- Focussing on learner / learning outcomes supported by guidance, validation and flexible provisions.
- Learning locally with a significant role for social partners, civil society and local authorities.
- Active learning for seniors and mutual learning & solidarity between generations.

## 1.4 Skills development, provision of the right skills

The key contribution of adult learning to competitiveness and employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development across Europe is especially true in times of economic crisis - when there is an urgent need for new skills - and amid the current demographic changes across the European continent.

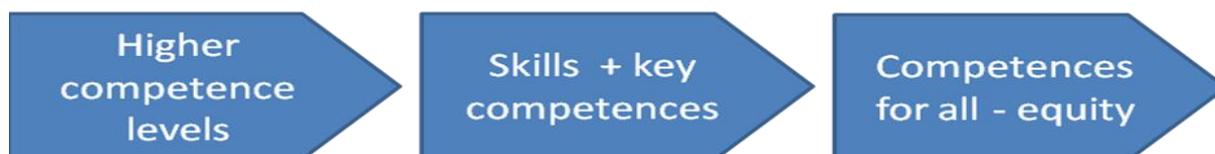
In the **Communication of the Commission “Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes”**<sup>7</sup> emphasis is being put on delivering the right skills for employment (besides increasing the efficiency and inclusiveness of our education and training institutions and working collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders).

High quality skills can support both growth and jobs, therefore investment in education and training for skills development is essential to boost growth and competitiveness. However, European education and training systems continue to fall short in providing the right skills for employability. High levels of unemployment in Europe coexist with over two million vacancies, reflecting skills bottlenecks and mismatches and barriers, which prevent mobility to the sectors and locations where the jobs are in Europe.

On the other hand, by 2020, 20% more jobs will require higher level skills. CEDEFOP forecasts predict that the proportion of jobs in the EU requiring tertiary level qualifications will increase from 27% in 2011 to 35% in 2020, while the proportion of low skilled jobs will fall in the same period from 27% to 15%. (See Table 2)

Table 2: Skills mismatch: supply and demand

Educational attainment	Skills supply in 2011	Forecasted skills demand 2020
High	26.8%	35%
Medium	46.6%	50%
Low	26.6%	15%



(Source: ppt presentation of Martina Ni Cheallaigh, European Commission, titled European Agenda for Adult Learning, Brussels, 6 May 2013)

The first comprehensive international **Survey of Adult Skills**<sup>8</sup> published in October 2013 by the OECD and European Commission (PIACC Survey) highlights the need to improve education and training.

<sup>7</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0669:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>8</sup> [http://piaackorea.krivet.re.kr/down\\_file/Technical\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_Survey\\_of\\_Adult\\_Skills\(PIAAC\).pdf](http://piaackorea.krivet.re.kr/down_file/Technical_Report_of_the_Survey_of_Adult_Skills(PIAAC).pdf)

The Survey's key findings include:

2. 20% of the EU working age population has low literacy and numeracy skills: the figure is higher among the unemployed who are likely to be caught in a 'low-skills trap' because they do little or no adult learning.
3. 25% of adults lack the digital skills needed to effectively use ICT (addressing this is one of the objectives of the Commission's new [Opening up Education](#) initiative).

Modern, knowledge-based economies require people with higher and more relevant skills. Efforts need to be concentrated on developing transversal skills – such as the ability to think critically, take initiative, problem solve and work collaboratively –, particularly entrepreneurial skills. But the first step must be that foundation or basic skills are achieved by all... basic skills are also needed for participating actively in modern society. The **2006 Recommendation on the European Key Competences Framework**<sup>9</sup> identified 8 key competences that are essential for a knowledge-based society: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression. There is also broad agreement that in a fast changing world and labour market, digital, language and entrepreneurial competences are crucial to ensure that individuals can adapt and quickly respond to changing environments. 'Learning to learn' as well as 'social and civic competences' (soft skills) can be mentioned as necessary key competences that need to be fostered in order to manage jobs and lives.

Countries should offer adult learning opportunities, which increase people's employability (in both the short and long term), which allow them to develop quality careers, satisfactory work experience, self-confidence, professional pride and integrity and which open up opportunities for growth in their professional and personal lives. To achieve this objective, countries should make sure that adult learning systems also foster the acquisition and further development of key competences.

Non-formal and informal learning can in particular be mentioned as a significant contribution to the development of relevant skills for employability and for life.

### 1.5 New impetus for adult learning in Europe – Increasing the focus on quality assurance

Europe wants to become smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive. There is broad agreement that to achieve this, high quality education and training systems are needed that are flexible and able to react and respond fast to the needs of today and tomorrow. **Strong(er) focus on quality assurance arrangements** help to improve the responsiveness of the education and training systems and also to deliver high quality educational outcomes and to foster trust.

While to date the main developments at European level in relation to the quality of education and training have been in the vocational education and training (VET) and the higher education (HE) sectors where stakeholders have worked for more than a decade to build quality structures and systems and, most importantly, widespread transparency, mutual trust and agreement among themselves, quality

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<sup>9</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=EN>

initiatives have also been developed in other areas, including adult learning. However, the developments in relation to quality in adult learning are at an early / earlier stage.

The 2006 **Communication on adult learning**, *It is never too late to learn* (2006)<sup>10</sup> urged Member States to address the challenge of ensuring quality in adult learning and the follow-on **Action Plan on adult learning (2007)**<sup>11</sup>, Priority Action 2: *To improve the quality of provision*, sought to improve the quality of provision by a focus on staff as the key determinant of quality in adult learning.

In the period up to 2020 the issue of quality in education and training will continue to be a major theme at European level. The second strategic objective of the **Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020')** is *improving the quality and efficiency of education and training in the interests of ensuring the acquisition of key competences by everyone*. The Council Conclusions point to a need to ensure high quality teaching and to develop effective quality assurance systems. In the first cycle of the framework period (2009 – 2011) the professional development of education and training staff and the improvement of governance have been the specific priorities areas, with an explicit focus under governance on the development of quality provision in the adult learning sector.

Five drivers, in particular, are pushing the adult education and training quality agenda in Europe:<sup>12</sup>

1. The education and training of adults must be of *sufficient quality* to attract and retain adults and equip them to live in and contribute to a Europe that is rapidly changing economically, socially, culturally and environmentally.
2. *Fiscal constraints* in all countries are intensifying the focus on returns on investment with resultant calls for greater accountability and quality assurance in adult education and training.
3. *Increased decentralisation* and the *delegation of responsibilities to providers* mean that public authorities are endeavouring to ensure the quality of adult learning outcomes through a focus on the quality of policies, systems and delivery.
4. Adult learning *institutions* themselves are adopting *more professional approaches* to management, including quality assurance.
5. With the growing emphasis on the mobility of learners there is a *demand* at all levels for *quality assurance* to provide the required transparency, information and reassurance between stakeholders.

Quality is a complex, multi-dimensional and flexible concept. All definitions of quality are context-bound in terms of place, topic under discussion, expectations and purpose. According to the **Global Report on Adult Learning** (GRALE) (CONFINTEA VI December 2010)<sup>13</sup> four core dimensions of quality in adult education and training can be identified, namely:

- Equity (in access and participation).
- Efficiency (the ratio of costs to benefits).
- Effectiveness (positive means-end relationships).
- Relevance (provision of an effective route to and support for, personal and social change).

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<sup>10</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0614:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2007). *Action Plan on adult learning It is always a good time to learn* <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0558:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>12</sup> GHK Consulting (2010). Workshop on Quality, Brussels 30<sup>th</sup> June – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010. Background Report

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2009). *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg: UIL [http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIL/confintea/pdf/GRALE/grale\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIL/confintea/pdf/GRALE/grale_en.pdf)

In practice, quality in education and training systems is seen as having three components<sup>14</sup>:

- Quality of structure, which focuses on organisational and resource issues.
- Quality of process, which focuses on internal activities, such as teaching and learning.
- Quality of result, which focuses on the outcomes of the learning activities.

Quality is essentially generated and maintained in education and training by the first two. Quality of process concerns all aspects of the 'learner journey' from access initiatives to progression supports and evaluation. Thus, quality assurance has a critical role to play in supporting teaching and learning processes and outcomes for individuals and is not just for monitoring and accountability to funders and other stakeholders.

The **Council Conclusions on quality assurance supporting E&T** (May 2014)<sup>15</sup> promote transparency and complementarity between sectoral approaches to quality assurance by building on European principles for QA in a lifelong learning perspective. The Conclusions emphasise the importance of ensuring the quality of learning outcomes and quality assurance as a means of strengthening the use of a learning outcomes-based approach.

An important statement / message of the Council of the European Union is: they agree that the experience gained with EQAVET could serve as the basis for the development of a comprehensive approach to quality assurance in the field of adult learning.

The **Final report of the Evaluation of implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)**<sup>16</sup> among its main findings concludes the following: „When it comes to the EU-level developments in quality assurance in adult learning this is for the moment less mature than EQAVET. It is still in development. The influence and inspiration is rather from EQAVET to the adult learning sector than the other way around.”

In the Communication „**Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes**”<sup>17</sup> the EU Commission calls for the creation of a **European Area for Skills and Qualifications (EASQ)** to promote a stronger convergence between the EU transparency and recognition tools to ensure that skills and qualifications can be easily recognised across borders, based on on-going evaluations and pursuing the learning-outcomes approach. This in-progress initiative of the Commission if implemented will stress the common and underpinning role quality assurance plays across the different education and training sub-sectors and in relation to increasing mobility.

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<sup>14</sup> Faurchau, K. (2008). *Systematic quality assurance in adult learning, Nordic tiles in a mosaic*. Nordic Network Quality in Adult Learning. [http://www.nordvux.net/download/3115/rapport\\_kvalitet\\_eng\\_upd.pdf](http://www.nordvux.net/download/3115/rapport_kvalitet_eng_upd.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe (2014). *Conclusions on quality assurance supporting education and training*. EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE and SPORT Council meeting. Brussels, 20 May 2014 [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142694.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142694.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/index_en.htm)

<sup>17</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0669:FIN:EN:PDF>

## Chapter 2 - Special features, needs & challenges of the adult learning sector

### 2.1 Special features of Adult Learning

The present chapter attempts to summarise the special features of adult learning compared to other educational sectors on the basis of the main observations and conclusions of the policy documents mentioned in Chapter 1 and some recently published reports on the quality of adult learning<sup>18</sup>.

#### **What makes adult learning different than other educational sectors? – The 6 most important features to take into consideration**

One of the most recent and comprehensive report on adult learning<sup>19</sup> summarizes the 6 main characteristics that distinguish AL from other educational sectors – on the basis of the analysis of the relevant research. These features are the most important ones to take into consideration in the course of any kind of development regarding adult learning.

- **Diverse background** of learners (competences, expectations, emotional development, experience, prejudices and needs);
- Higher proportion and importance of **non-formal and informal** learning environments;
- Heterogeneity of the **types of providers** (enterprises, community centres, libraries, NGO's, study circles, traditional schools, learning institutes etc.).
- The emphasis for adult learners is on **'engaged' learning**<sup>20</sup>, instead of traditional learning, in contrast to young learners.
- **AL requires specific competences on the part of teaching staff and other persons managing the learning provider** (related to the characteristics of the learners, e.g. dealing with heterogeneity, and the way adult learning is provided in terms of didactics and methods, and due to the specificity of the institutional context in which **adult learning** takes place.
- The provision should be offered in a **flexible manner** in terms of duration, time, and place, so learners could combine their learning activities with their tight working schedule and family life.

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<sup>18</sup> Primarily on the base of the following two: European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture, Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report 24th October 2013 and Panteia/Simon Broek and Bert-Jan Buiskool (2013). *Developing the adult learning sector. Quality in the Adult Learning Sector (Lot 1) Final report.*

<sup>19</sup> Panteia/Simon Broek and Bert-Jan Buiskool (2013). *Developing the adult learning sector. Quality in the Adult Learning Sector (Lot 1) Final report.*

<sup>20</sup> „engaged learning”: *the process in which students actively participate in their learning. Students are involved, beginning on the first day, in the decision making of the course of their study. Students vigorously research, discuss, create projects, and use technology to make discoveries based on their choices. Students are active participants in the learning process. The teacher serves as a "coach or facilitator," guiding students to the desired goal (...)* Engaged learning allows students to participate in "real-life" activities through collaboration, exploration, and discovery with peers. Engaged learning projects do not focus on one subject, but the integration of many or all subjects. Assessment in engaged learning can be very diverse. Assessment should be real, continuing, and encouraging." Source: Belt, K., et al., Green is Good, cited by *School Reform and Student Diversity* - September 1995 <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/SER/Diversity/sec-i4.html#foot5>

## 2.2 Challenges

### 2.2.1 Challenges and opportunities

The features of AL listed and presented in this chapter can be identified as needs or challenges, factors which make inter alia participation in learning activities or categorization more difficult than in other sectors. Nevertheless, many of these challenges can be interpreted as opportunities as well (see table 3.)

Two of such opportunities - discussed in detail below - are worth highlighting:

- The provision of adult learning opportunities **overarches all sub-systems of education** and training, takes many forms and has a strong non-formal dimension. This draws attention to the fact that that adult learning “requires a comprehensive approach that crosses all education and training sectors”<sup>21</sup> and that in the long term future developments and EU tools should be planned following a **lifelong learning approach**.
- Several characteristics of adult learning (such as the lower level of state funding or the prior learning experiences of adult learners) may **contribute to the improvement of the quality** and the effectiveness of learning or training provision.

As a general and significant feature - which is true for every country, though to a varying extent – we have to conclude that **societal challenges** can be considered as transversal, connecting to most of the features detailed below. The Eurydice report (2015) on the access to learning opportunities emphasizes that “adults with the greatest education and training needs have the least opportunity to benefit from lifelong learning”<sup>22</sup> (see also section 2.3).

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<sup>21</sup> European Commission DGEAC (2013). Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report, Op Cit p 6

<sup>22</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. *Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/179EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/179EN.pdf)

### 2.2.2 Adult Learning: Summary table of special features, challenges & needs – opportunities and recommended solutions

Table 3: Summary table of the special needs and challenges of adult learning

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p><b>Diversity, heterogeneity:</b> The learning activities for adults are provided at various levels and through a broad spectrum of contributors, providers, learning forms etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In many countries adult learning is not a well-defined sector with an explicit strategy and it appears as the weakest link in national lifelong-learning systems.<sup>23</sup></li> <li>• Difficulties of categorization, definition of the concept and types of AL (e. g. formal, non-formal and informal learning, see Annex 2)</li> </ul>	<p>Further development of ICT/Digital tools, programmes and software can allow to better cope with diversity, heterogeneity</p>	<p>“While a common approach to quality assurance in adult learning is needed, its application should not be prescriptive but rather adapted according to the forms of adult learning and their intended outcomes. The way forward lies with generic processes and tools from which adult education providers could choose and/or create their own approaches” (Panteia)</p>

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<sup>23</sup> European Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, 2011/C 372/01.

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p>Quality assurance and development in different E&amp;T subsectors seems to remain an autonomous field of action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to promote the acquisition of knowledge and to develop a culture of lifelong learning, notably by implementing gender equality policies designed to make adult learning more attractive, more accessible and more effective?</li> <li>• quality systems used in formal learning (e.g. HE) do not pay attention to adult specific elements (e.g. flexibility, validation of prior learning, skills assessment etc.)</li> <li>• a growing need for a common (core) framework for quality assurance and accreditation is slowly emerging.</li> </ul>		<p>The lifelong learning approach is gradually making the division between the different education and training sectors obsolete.</p> <p>Steps to make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding out whether a common understanding of quality exists and what characterises quality in adult learning (openness between different players, dialogue, participation, freedom of methodology, flexibility, accessibility, experience and freedom with responsibility seem to characterise adult learning)</li> <li>• Linking existing policies and tools in such a way as to create synergies and bring about coherence and transparency in systems that still operate quite separately.</li> <li>• The definition of a common quality framework encompassing all the educational and training sectors should take into consideration both the elements that these subsectors share and those that distinguish them. This could be the response to the growing need for an intelligent structure for the existing approaches to quality assurance and accreditation.</li> </ul>

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p>At system level the AL sector is less regulated, often <b>lacking a system level quality assurance</b> system</p>	<p>It is difficult to generalise what quality means in adult learning.</p> <p>According to Panteia report (2013) the main challenge in the QA of AL is “the fragmented approach to quality assurance in adult learning. Fragmentation does not necessarily lead to a lack of quality as such, but it makes it difficult to stimulate quality development.” There is a need for quality assurance and programme assessment &amp; evaluation as integral components of adult learning systems.</p> <p>Though the learning outcome and the participant’s development can be considered as appropriate criteria by which to measure the quality of organised adult learning – there are difficulties in connection with the assessment of the learning outcomes of education, training and learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The diversity of providers and training forms increases the need for applying a learning outcomes approach in the processes of evaluation, certification and QA.</li> <li>• Providers might be more interested and motivated to apply self-evaluation tools e.g. Peer Review in AL (especially in non-formal learning) and to learn from practical experience than in formal education. Such tools provide flexible, practical and quick inputs for quality development.</li> </ul>	<p>The common language for defining outcomes is “competences”. A full implementation of the learning outcomes approach and a clear definition of learning outcomes to be achieved at the end of a learning experience are considered of paramount importance. These should be clear to all involved: the learners, the teachers, the assessors, the education and training providers, the employers, etc.</p> <p>To improve market transparency, governments can set an appropriate regulatory framework for competition among providers and make information on provider quality available to users. They can set quality standards, certify adherence to these standards and disseminate information about adhering providers to the general public.<sup>24</sup></p> <p>Experimenting exchange of practices among VET providers, AL providers, schools, companies can be also helpful.</p>

<sup>24</sup> OECD (2005). *Promoting Adult Learning* [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/promoting-adult-learning\\_9789264010932-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/promoting-adult-learning_9789264010932-en)

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
Cross-sectoral nature	The provision of adult learning opportunities cuts across all sub-systems of education and training.	This may improve the labour market relevance of the training.	There is an increased need for the involvement of the different stakeholders into the planning, implementation and QA of training programmes.
Lower state support compared to general, vocational or higher education <sup>25</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in many cases learners have to co-finance or finance their training</li> <li>• increased competition among AL providers</li> <li>• reduced public funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AL providers are interested in quality improvement because of their financial interests</li> <li>• Adult learners – especially who finance their learning - are often more conscious in choosing and more motivated in completing a training course than in the case of state financed trainings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve market transparency, governments can set an appropriate regulatory framework for competition among providers and make information on provider quality available to users. They can set quality standards, certify adherence to these standards and disseminate information about adhering providers to the general public.<sup>26</sup></li> <li>• ROI (Return On Investment) rate should be defined within the work contracts or other legal frameworks by companies, employers' associations, trade unions, employees' associations.</li> <li>• Funding and co-funding arrangements and targeted instruments.<sup>27</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>25</sup> Also due to the stronger focus of ESF to the labour market and the employability

<sup>26</sup> See footnote n° 24

<sup>27</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, (2015). Op. Cit. pp 117-129

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
Adults have prior learning and working experiences	Need for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prior learning assessment</li> <li>• validation of non-formal and informal learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the knowledge and experience of the adult are a <b>resource</b> in the learning process</li> <li>• each adult can become an important <b>contributor to quality</b> in the educational process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults' awareness on prior learning recognition and learning impacts must be increased</li> <li>• Expoliting the experiences of adults by better involving them into the learning and QA processes.</li> </ul>
adult learning <b>staff</b> : a larger variety of types of requirements in relation to their training and competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient requirements in relation to adult learning staff (in many countries there is no clear view on the standard competences needed to fulfil their professional tasks),</li> <li>• patchy nature of adult learning professionals' initial and continuing professional development,</li> <li>• poor occupational status and career opportunities</li> </ul>	Valorisation of adult learning professionals as key actors to support adults in the labour market (find a job, go-getting, etc.)	As follow-on from the 2008 study on adult learning professionals in Europe <sup>28</sup> , the Commission launched a study on key competences for adult learning professionals. The resultant competence profile is an overarching profile of competences with layers of context that embrace adult learning in all its forms and settings.

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<sup>28</sup> Research voor Beleid (2010). *Key competences for adult learning professionals. Contribution to the development of a reference framework of key competences for adult learning professionals. Final report* – referred by European Commission, DGEAC (2013), Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p>Limited availability of <b>guidance</b></p>	<p>How does one give guidance to an adult in a lifelong learning perspective?</p> <p>How can one assure the quality of that guidance?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools and policies should be brought closer to the end users (learners, workers, teachers, education and training providers, employers, guidance counsellors, etc). This requires more appropriate communication, information guidance and training activities.<sup>29</sup></li> <li>• Planning and setting of support services (guidance, general information, facilities to access to the learning activities, etc.) and related Quality Standards Competences.</li> <li>• Exploiting the results of several LLP programmes supporting guidance, e. g. Europeerguid-RVC project<sup>30</sup></li> </ul>

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<sup>29</sup> Towards a European Area of Skills and Qualifications. Results of the public consultation. (2014)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.europeerguid-rvc.eu/index.php/en/>

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<b>no uniform set of indicators to monitor progress &amp; poor statistics</b>	due to the heterogeneity of objectives, delivery modes, funding mechanisms, background of participants and types of learning outcomes monitoring adult learning based on a clear set of indicators is difficult overall, particularly for non-formal adult learning <sup>31</sup> .		<p>Short-term solution: Strand 1 within Conclusions of the TWG on the QA in AL<sup>32</sup>: “strengthening of monitoring and data collection” in AL, particularly in non-formal learning, e.g. in Erasmus+ projects.</p> <p>Longer-term solution: a reformed and extended EQAVET, in such a way that it can support the quality of outcomes of both vocational and non-vocational adult learning</p>

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<sup>31</sup> *“Diversity of adult learning systems in countries is matched by diversity in the number, type, coverage and robustness of data sources. Some countries collect few or no data beyond those required at European level; others have sophisticated survey data systems. Data on the inputs and, to a lesser extent, the processes of adult learning – particularly participation in formal learning and training at work – were found to be the most sufficient at both the European and country levels. In general, data relating to the outcomes of adult learning are insufficient for monitoring purposes”.* National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (2010). Final report for: *Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector.*)

<sup>32</sup> European Commission DGEAC (2013). Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p><b>Skills shortages</b> of adult and especially older learners</p>	<p>One in five adults in Europe have low literacy and numeracy skills, and one in four lacks the digital skills needed to use ICT effectively</p> <p>The challenge is to provide learning opportunities for all, especially disadvantaged groups who need them most.</p> <p>Today, in Europe some 76 million 25-64 year olds - roughly equivalent to the combined total populations of Italy, Hungary and Austria - have either low qualifications or no qualifications at all. Cedefop's projections of skills needs for the next decade show that technological change will increase the demand for those with high and medium qualifications at the expense of low-qualified people. Even those occupations that used to require mostly low-level skills are increasingly requiring medium or even high-level qualifications. This means that people with low (or no) formal qualifications will find it more difficult to find a job in the future.</p>	<p>Development of basic skills can be integrated in education and training provision in many ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• programmes dedicated to improve these skills</li> <li>• embedded in programmes that contribute to the same objective without specifically mentioning basic skills</li> <li>• basic skills can be delivered in a range of environments, from education and training institutions to workplace or community settings.<sup>33</sup></li> </ul> <p>This means that AL provides an efficient opportunity for skills improvement thus promoting social integration of vulnerable people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting national targets and strategies,</li> <li>• increasing incentives for adult training by companies,</li> <li>• validating skills and competences acquired outside formal education,</li> <li>• setting up access points that integrate different lifelong learning services such as validation and career guidance offering tailored learning to individual learners.<sup>34</sup></li> <li>• Encouraging training institutions and employers to collaborate, particularly in the training of low-skilled workers who will benefit from approaches where basic skills are embedded in VET<sup>35</sup></li> </ul>

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
Declining participation in AL	<p>Main obstacles of participation in AL (according to the Cedefop study<sup>36</sup> and Eurydice report<sup>37</sup>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of intention<sup>38</sup></li> <li>• family responsibilities</li> <li>• time: conflicts between training and the work schedule,</li> <li>• missing prerequisites for study (level of educational attainment)</li> <li>• expenses of the training are not affordable for potential learners</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adequate early childhood education and care services</li> <li>• flexibility</li> <li>• distance learning</li> <li>• modularisation</li> <li>• credit-based qualifications</li> <li>• validation of non-formal and informal learning</li> <li>• paid training leave</li> <li>• funding and co-funding arrangements and targeted instruments<sup>39</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>33</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, (2015). Op Cit

<sup>34</sup> COM (2012) 669. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*

<sup>35</sup> European Commission (2010): *The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020*

<sup>36</sup> Cedefop (2012). *Training leave. Policies and practice in Europe*. RESEARCH PAPER n° 28. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5528>

<sup>37</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, (2015). Op Cit

<sup>38</sup> “Within the AES, adults who did not participate in education and training during the 12 months preceding the survey were asked to indicate the reason for their non-participation. On average, across EU countries, more than 80 % of non-participants stated that they simply did not want to take part in education or training. This shows that lack of interest is by far the most common reason for nonparticipation”. European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, (2015). Op. Cit. p 99

<sup>39</sup> *Idem*, pp 120-127

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
Number of elderly population is increasing in Europe	Adults - and in particular, older workers - will increasingly be called upon to update and broaden their skills and competences through continuing VET. This means that an increasingly growing group of people will be effected by AL in the next decades	The potential of information and communications technology (ICT) can be used to boost adult education and training through distance learning.	This increased need for lifelong learning means we should have more flexible modes of delivery, tailored training offers and well-established systems of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
Participation of vulnerable groups in AL is particularly low	Adults with low levels of educational attainment (older and immigrant adults, people with learning difficulties) are less likely to show interest, search for information about learning opportunities and to participate in education and training. <sup>40</sup>	Supporting adults in participating in learning activities may serve as an effective way of improving social inclusion.	<p>Co-funding instruments targeting employers and encouraging the participation of low qualified adults and other specific groups in education and training.<sup>41</sup></p> <p>Improving the guidance services regarding non-formal and informal learning opportunities.</p> <p>Monitoring and assessment of the impacts of AL in terms of social inclusion (to be considered also connected to position in the labour market), by involving companies and HR managers.</p> <p>Awareness of the benefits of AL in terms of personal development and social inclusion should be raised among adults, local policy makers and employers.</p>

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<sup>40</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, (2015). Op Cit

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*

### 2.2.3 Detailed description of some features and challenges

#### Diversity, heterogeneity

The concept of adult learning is very broad, including some areas of higher education and VET as well, thus making difficult to define common characteristics and general aspects. Adult learning is diverse in terms of several aspects:

1. Adult learning covers all **types of learning** by adults. It includes learning for personal, civic and social purposes, as well as for employment, and can take place either in formal education and training systems or other settings.
2. **Structure:** Compared to other education and training subsectors (e.g. VET and HE), which have a vertical structure and are more visible, adult learning is complex and diverse and has a horizontal structure with a wide range of provision and types of learning.
3. **Providers:** Broad diversity of providers in terms of organisational structure, size and operational rules. The wide range of institutions includes folk high schools, community colleges, community institutions, regular educational institutions, private and public organisations and more informal venues, delivering learning to adults with different needs.
4. **Stakeholders:** A wide variety of needs are covered by adult learning systems, and there is a wide diversity of stakeholders in the policy-making process.
5. **Learning contexts:** Adult learning has its own culture and traditions reflected in its diversity, varied age profile, range of delivery methods, teaching and learning styles, which are reflective and practical, materials and the relevant support required to encourage participation and retain adults in education and training.
6. **Policies,** priorities, legislative frameworks, governance arrangements and funding mechanisms.
7. Training and learning **content**.

#### Attitude of learners

1. As a point of departure for the work on quality assurance, it is assumed that **the adult is interested in learning** and that **adults' learning is most successful when they find the learning meaningful**. Adults learn best when the subject matter is relevant, useful, builds on prior learning, and is meaningful to their life context.
2. In contrast to learners of initial education, the emphasis for adult learners is on **“engaged” learning**, instead of traditional learning.<sup>42</sup>
3. Adult education embodies the opportunity to **use (and validate) the experiences of each individual adult** as a point of departure and to apply them to the educational process. By doing this, **each adult**

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<sup>42</sup> School Reform and Student Diversity - September 1995 (Op Cit see footnote n° 20)

**becomes an important contributor to quality** in the educational process and this in itself is both a challenge as well as an opportunity.

4. **Motivation** for adult learners is triggered by their needs and desires. Many adults attend courses to become more marketable, more employable, more skilled and more prepared for their professional goals. They're looking to earn within a certain income range, they're looking to qualify on higher levels and thus the role of self-learning is higher than in other educational sectors. Increasing their willingness to learn is embodied in the instructional execution, lets them know how the knowledge and skills will work for them and keeps them involved in their learning processes.

#### *2.2.4 Participation of adults in lifelong learning in European countries*

The participation of adults in lifelong learning is unsatisfactory. In 2011, the proportion of people aged 25 to 64 in the [EU-27](#) participating in some form of education or training in the four weeks preceding the labour force survey was 8.9 %; a share that was 0.4 percentage points lower than the corresponding share for 2006 (see Table 4).

As Table 4 below shows, **participation in adult learning** varies significantly between EU countries: from 1.4% to 31.6% (2012 figures), and the overall trend is that the numbers in some countries increasing (e.g. AT, PT, MT) , in other countries decreasing (e.g. IT, HU, FR), but **in total declining. Participation rates are especially disappointing for low-skilled and older adults.** The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training adopted in May 2009 sets a number of benchmarks to be achieved by 2020, including one for lifelong learning, namely that an average of at least 15 % of adults aged 25 to 64 years old should participate in lifelong learning. In 2012, average participation in lifelong learning was only 8.9% and only 5 EU countries had reached the target rate.

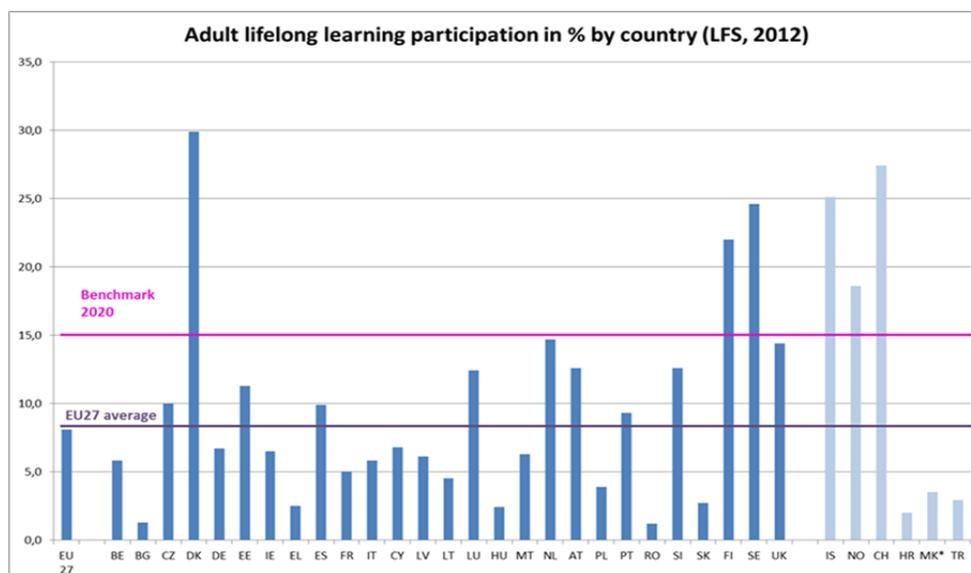
Table 4 - Lifelong learning, 2006 and 2011 (1) (% of the population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training)

	Total		Male		Female	
	2006	2011	2006	2011	2006	2011
EU-27	9.5	8.9	8.6	8.2	10.4	9.6
Euro area (EA-17)	7.9	8.2	7.6	7.8	8.3	8.6
Belgium	7.5	7.1	7.4	6.7	7.6	7.4
Bulgaria	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4
Czech Republic	5.6	11.4	5.4	11.2	5.9	11.6
Denmark	29.2	32.3	24.6	25.6	33.8	39.0
Germany	7.5	7.8	7.7	7.9	7.2	7.7
Estonia	6.5	12.0	4.2	9.2	8.6	14.5
Ireland	7.3	6.8	5.9	6.4	8.7	7.2
Greece	1.9	2.4	2.0	2.6	1.8	2.3
Spain	10.4	10.8	9.3	10.0	11.5	11.6
France	6.4	5.5	5.9	5.2	6.8	5.9
Croatia	2.9	2.3	3.1	2.3	2.8	2.3
Italy	6.1	5.7	5.7	5.3	6.5	6.0
Cyprus	7.1	7.5	6.5	7.3	7.8	7.7
Latvia	6.9	5.1	4.1	3.8	9.3	6.2
Lithuania	4.9	5.7	2.9	4.3	6.6	6.9
Luxembourg	8.2	13.6	7.6	14.2	8.7	13.0
Hungary	3.8	2.7	3.1	2.6	4.4	2.9
Malta	5.5	6.5	5.5	6.2	5.5	6.8
Netherlands	15.6	16.7	15.3	16.5	15.9	16.9
Austria	13.1	13.4	12.2	12.2	14.0	14.5
Poland	4.7	4.4	4.3	3.9	5.1	4.9
Portugal	4.2	11.6	4.1	11.1	4.4	12.1
Romania	1.3	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.3	1.5
Slovenia	15.0	15.9	13.8	13.7	16.3	18.2
Slovakia	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.4	4.4	4.4
Finland	23.1	23.8	19.3	19.9	27.0	27.7
Sweden	18.4	24.9	13.3	18.5	23.7	31.6
United Kingdom	26.7	15.8	22.2	14.0	31.3	17.5
Iceland	27.9	25.9	22.4	22.8	33.7	29.0
Norway	18.7	18.2	17.2	17.1	20.2	19.2
Switzerland	22.5	29.9	21.7	31.0	23.4	28.7
FYR of Macedonia	2.3	3.4	2.4	3.4	2.3	3.3
Turkey	1.8	2.9	2.1	3.0	1.5	2.7

(<sup>1</sup>) Refer to the internet metadata file ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_SDDS/en/trng\\_esms.htm](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/en/trng_esms.htm)).  
Source: Eurostat (online data code: trng\_lfse\_01)

Source Eurostat<sup>43</sup>

Table 5



(Source: ppt presentation of Martina Ni Cheallaigh, European Commission, titled European Agenda for Adult Learning, Brussels, 6 May 2013)

<sup>43</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Lifelong\\_learning\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Lifelong_learning_statistics)

### 2.2.5 The challenges of the low qualified population: lower level of intention and access to learning opportunities

The aim of the 2015 report of Eurydice network<sup>44</sup> was to support policy level decision making by presenting existing and possible policies and measures that increase access to learning opportunities for adults whose skills and qualifications do not fully correspond to current labour market and societal requirements.

The main findings of the report<sup>45</sup> are based on the information collected from the national Eurydice units as well as on several research reports and the analysis of international survey results.

- One in four adults in Europe have completed lower secondary education at most – differences between countries and age groups are significant
- Around one in five adults have low literacy and numeracy skills, and nearly one in three have very low or no ICT skills
- Adults with the greatest education and training needs and learning difficulties have the least opportunity to benefit from lifelong learning.
- The low qualified are less interested in learning than medium or high qualified people.
- Older and immigrant (foreign-born) population suffer more from low educational attainment.
- While countries' policy agendas commonly place emphasis on access to lifelong learning for adults lacking basic skills or sufficient qualifications, they rarely specify definite targets to be reached
- Drop out rate is very high in the case of low skilled adults, because they usually do not tend to follow a direct or uninterrupted learning path. This means that for them it is easier to attend shorter courses or even part of a course.
- Lowering the barriers to adult participation in learning calls for modes of delivery that help overcome time constraints; yet even when they are available, there is little evidence on how well used they are by low-qualified adults, because it difficult to evaluate participation levels (in distance or flexible learning) within this group
- Efforts are being made to encourage the provision of flexible learning routes, but in most European countries access to a particular level of education is still dependent on completing the previous level
- While there has been significant progress on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL), enabling the most vulnerable groups to access this service is still a challenge: less than one third of countries report that low-qualified adults are among the main user groups
- Face-to-face guidance for adults offered outside public employment services is limited; yet countries have been investing in the development of self-help and online tools
- Co-funding instruments specifically for low-qualified learners exist in only a few European countries
- Specific financial incentives to encourage employers to provide learning opportunities for low qualified workers are not very common.

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<sup>44</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, (2015). Op Cit

<sup>45</sup> *Idem*, pp 7-13

## Chapter 3 - Special features of quality assurance in Adult Learning

As quality of adult learning is a priority among the EU2020 goals, two major and comprehensive reports have been compiled – in parallel and in cooperation with each other - about the topic recently: the Panteia report (2013) and the Final report of the Thematic Working Group (TWG, 2013). Both reports aimed to provide recommendations for policy makers regarding the quality assurance system(s) currently used or to be developed for adult learning.

### **Panteia report (2013)<sup>46</sup>:**

This comprehensive study provided empirical evidence as a significant contribution to the TWG report focusing on mapping the existing policy practices in 30 European states. It also presented a number of interesting practices, which can serve as inspiration for improving and developing quality assurance systems.

### **Final report of the Thematic Working Group (2013):**

The Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Quality in Adult Learning had been established in 2011 by the European Commission under the *Europe 2020* work programme. The members of the group represented different stakeholders from 22 European countries. The aim of their final report was to contribute to the debate on policy development in adult learning by providing recommendations - primarily to policy makers at EU and national level but also to all stakeholders. Based on an analysis of recent relevant reports, studies and policy papers (especially the Panteia report and findings of the QALL network<sup>47</sup>) the TWG report also provides practical tools which can be used as inspiration or starting point for further developments.

## 3.1 General conclusions regarding the QA of AL in Europe

Though both studies make country-specific statements and recommendations, they also highlight some general trends and characteristics.

### *3.1.1 Main challenges of quality assurance in adult learning*

*(on the basis of Panteia Report, 2013)*

- fragmented approach to quality assurance in adult learning, which “does not necessarily lead to a lack of quality as such, but makes it difficult to stimulate quality development”: lack of comparability;
- lack of overarching quality assurance systems in the adult learning sector, and especially for the non-formal part of adult learning;
- several European countries are lacking an overarching legal framework in the field of adult learning and an overarching lifelong learning strategy;

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<sup>46</sup> European Commission/DG EAC/Panteia (2013). *Developing the adult learning sector. Quality in the Adult Learning Sector*

<sup>47</sup> In the period of 2009-2012 the QALL thematic network examined the good practices of LLP-funded projects on quality assurance in VET and adult education <http://www.qall.eu>

- lack of cooperation between stakeholders (e.g. Ministries, social partner, and learning providers) and between regional and national stakeholders;
- existing quality assurance systems for HE, VET and secondary schools usually do not take into account the basic principles for adult learning (see section 2.1);
- while quality assurance systems are in place for formal adult learning, this is not the case for the non-formal part of adult learning, and more specifically where it is privately funded;
- no specific qualifications are required for becoming an adult educator; staff requirements for the non-formal sector are less developed, and need further attention;
- most countries do not have systems for assuring the quality of accreditation of prior learning;
- there is very limited (monitoring) information available on provision, learning outcomes and quality standards in place in non-formal adult learning;
- lack of a quality assurance culture among providers:
  - lack of willingness to continuously improve and develop quality;
  - the outcomes of quality assurance systems are rarely used to improve standards and procedures;
  - providers are often reactive instead of being proactive;
  - lack of human resources qualified to develop and implement quality assurance systems.

### *3.1.2 Characteristics of quality assurance in AL according to the types of adult learning*

#### **QA in formal learning:**

- public provision of adult learning is for the most part integrated into the public system of initial education, at basic, secondary, and tertiary level and the same quality approaches and standards apply as in initial education.
- Usually, no specific principles, criteria or indicators referring to adult learning / adults are found in such systems, procedures or requirements. Hence, it is up to the institutions themselves to make specific reference to adult learning in their quality plans.

#### **QA in non-formal learning:**

- quality in non-formal adult learning, i.e. outside the institutional system, is not usually addressed by authorities through policies or frameworks.
- Quality measures often depend on **bottom-up initiatives** by the sector or providers themselves.
- Their common features are their **voluntary** nature, their strong role in relation to **consumer protection and marketing** and their potential role in satisfying **requirements** for receiving **public funding**.
- For privately-funded adult education, consumer satisfaction is an important driver for quality assurance, since the laws of the market mean that providers can be penalised directly by complaints or negative publicity from clients.
- In addition to grassroots initiatives, providers of non-formal learning opportunities may also apply some form of quality assurance model such as ISO, EQM, TQM or EFQM.

### 3.1.3 Further features of QA systems used in AL

- The content of quality assurance systems in place in the HE, VET and non-formal adult learning sector, especially regulations regarding organisational requirements, however, do not differ to a great extent.
- Type and intensity of quality assurance systems differ in formal and non-formal adult learning (see table below).

*Table 6 - System level quality assurance in different types of learning*

	Formal adult learning, HE and VET	Non-formal learning
Output	state regulated qualification included in the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF)	no state regulated qualification
QA applied	standards defined in the NQF	bottom-up approaches (e.g. sectoral quality labels)

- The quality assurance systems studied have common descriptors. Four broad categories of quality descriptors can be identified: organisational issues; quality of the didactics and the learning process; quality of staff; and quality of measuring results.
- System, or sector level monitoring systems including an adult learning-tailored set of indicators are scarce (acknowledging the specific goals of adult learning, the wide diversity of providers, learning environments, and socio economic actors involved, but also endorsing some basic principles on adult learning as identified in the literature, such as that adult learning should be tailor made, learner centred, and attuned to specific learning needs of the adult learner, and should be offered in a flexible manner).

## 3.2 Essential factors for the quality assurance of AL provision

Considering the characteristics of AL described in Chapter 2, we can state that there are some **areas the quality of which are even more important in AL** information and guidance,

- needs analysis,
- relevant learning content matching learners' needs and labour market's demands,
- quality delivery,
- learning support,
- appropriate assessment approaches,
- recognition, validation and certification of competences.
- In particular teaching methods and materials need to take into account the specific needs and learning approaches of adults.

The key findings of the **Panteia study** (2013) identify the following generic factors of the success of QA systems' implementation:

- 1) The focus of the quality assurance system is on the learner/consumer;

- 2) The QA system is transparent for all stakeholders;
- 3) The QA system is organisationally strongly backed (the responsible authorising body possesses authority in the sector and the QA system has the commitment of the management and employees of the training provider);
- 4) The QA system should be affordable in relation to the volume of adult learning provision and the context it takes place;
- 5) The QA system should be relevant for the given context (no one-size fits all) or sufficiently broad to embed different forms of adult learning provision;
- 6) The development/ acceptance of QA system takes a certain period of time.<sup>48</sup>

A 2005 study on local learning centres and partnerships<sup>49</sup> defined the following conditions to achieve a minimum level of quality at provider level:

- learner-centred **needs assessment** is a starting point;
- there are opportunities for the acquisition of multiple competences;
- the **learning environment** is rich and supportive;
- provision is **tailor-made**;
- the knowledge and experience of the adult are a resource in the learning process;
- staff have adequate competence and upskilling opportunities;
- provision is **flexible**;
- **prior** and new learning are **validated** / certificated as appropriate;
- guidance is available at all stages of the learner's journey.

The most important quality factors of AL according to a report issued by the Nordic Council of Ministers (2008)<sup>50</sup>

- the **inclusion of the experiences of participants** in the learning process
- the participant, as a result of the learning process, improves his/her ability to act either in his private life or at work
- the ability of the participants to **have some responsibility in the learning process**, i.e. to apply their own personal and qualitative resources in the learning process.

### 3.3 Differences and common characteristics of the QA in the different educational sectors (on the basis of Panteia Report 2013)

A comprehensive approach that crosses education and training sectors is an ambitious objective, however, existing instruments provide not only inspiration and expertise, but also a tangible basis for it. In order to map how these tools could be used in the course of this development process, the Panteia

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<sup>48</sup> European Commission/DG EAC/Panteia (2013). Op Cit pp 75-76

<sup>49</sup> Research voor Beleid (2005). *Developing local learning centres and learning partnerships as part of Member States' targets for reaching the Lisbon goals in the field of education and training. A study of the current situation.* <http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A2993>

<sup>50</sup> Nordic Council of Ministers (2008). *Systematic quality assurance in adult learning. Nordic tiles in a mosaic.* [http://www.nordvux.net/Portals/0/\\_dokumenter/2013/rapport\\_kvalitet\\_eng\\_upd.pdf](http://www.nordvux.net/Portals/0/_dokumenter/2013/rapport_kvalitet_eng_upd.pdf)

report provides an overview of the different and common characteristics of the non-formal adult learning sector compared with the development of quality assurance systems in VET and higher education.

Table 7: Overview of the differences and common characteristics of the QA in the different educational sector

Issues:	HE	General education	VET	Non-formal
<b>Provider level Quality assurance</b>				
Provider level quality assurance system	In place, left to the autonomy of the HEIs	In place, demanded in system-level inspectorates	In place, but large differences between providers	Not well developed
Staff quality	Requirement based on educational attainment levels	Requirements based on qualifications	Requirements based on subject knowledge/skills, sometimes no didactical qualifications	Requirements based on a variety of factors. Often less attention to didactical qualifications.
<b>System level Quality assurance</b>				
Regulation	Highly regulated	Highly regulated	Regulated, but less unified	Less or not regulated
System level QA	In place	In place	In place	Often lacking
Measuring outcomes/ monitoring systems	In place, clear sets of indicators	In place, clear sets of indicators	In place, clear sets of indicators	No uniform set of indicators
<b>European level developments</b>				
European frameworks	ESG	Quality in school education: sixteen quality indicators	EQAVET	None

Source: Panteia (2013)

**The main conclusions of this comparison** are the following:

- Quality assurance in adult learning at provider level is less developed compared to VET, general and higher education; in many cases a larger variety of types of requirements are used in AL.
- At system level the AL sector is less regulated, often lacking a system level quality assurance system and has no uniform set of indicators to monitor progress.
- At European level, the HE and VET sector have already years of experience in developing a European framework for quality. Comparing the QA systems of VET (EQAVET) and HE (ESG) it can be concluded that the EQAVET framework is better suited to be applied to the wide variety of adult learning domains than ESG, however, both of them have elements that can be relevant and irrelevant for AL.
- The indicators for quality in school education describe a sector, which is very different from the adult learning sector and hence this framework is less relevant to draw lessons from.

Table 8 - Relevance of the experiences/tools of EQAVET and ESG<sup>51</sup>

	<i>Relevant elements</i>	<i>Elements less relevant or to be modified</i>
EQAVET	- System indicators are applicable to AL. - Indicative descriptors at providers' level are generally applicable to adult learning providers (e.g. Plan, Do, Act, Evaluate quality cycle).	- Quantifiable indicative indicators are too much focused on VET. - Further relevant indicators need to be taken into account to make the current EQAVET list of indicators more applicable to monitor the quality in adult learning (Adult Education Survey, PIAAC Eurostat social inclusion statistics etc.)
ESG	- Provider level guidelines are clearly relevant for AL .	- The guidelines for external evaluation might be too restrictive.

## 3.4 Recommendations for the future

### 3.4.1 Recommendations of the Panteia report (2013)

- Quality assurance systems, especially for the non-formal adult learning sector need to be improved.
- Such improvements should be based on comparable information, relevant statistics on adult learning provision, especially for the non-formal part of adult learning.
- The results of the study provide arguments for the development of a reference framework for quality in adult learning at the European level to serve as reference that Member States could use to develop standards for the whole sector.
- As there is a plea for an integrated approach for quality in lifelong learning, an AL reference framework can be a first step finally leading to a future quality assurance framework for lifelong learning, being an inspirational model for all educational sectors (also including HE and general education).

### 3.4.2 Key messages of the Thematic Working Group on the QA in AL

(on the basis of the developments, studies and recommendations up to 2013, including the Panteia report)

1. Assuring the quality of adult learning provision requires a comprehensive approach that crosses **all education and training sectors**.
2. More systematic **evidence-based evaluation** of quality approaches and tools in adult learning is needed to inform / enable further development.
3. The long-term goal is to achieve **an overarching European QA framework for all education sectors** – still applicable to the specific needs of the various education and training sectors. A comprehensive approach to quality assurance in lifelong learning can be best achieved by pursuing **three strands of action**:

<sup>51</sup> The table is compiled according to the content of Panteia report

(1) **Short-term actions** providing practical results in 1-2 years:

- bring together, complement and adjust existing quality models, instruments and experiences to better address issues relevant to adult learning;
- to provide guidance on how such action could be taken, the report provides a toolbox as well
- financial and organisational framework for this work: partnerships within Erasmus+ programme

(2) **Medium-term developments** providing results not earlier than 2016

- exploring how the EQAVET model could be developed in such a way that it can support the quality of outcomes of both vocational and non-vocational adult learning, in closer coordination with the provision of lifelong guidance and opportunities for validation of prior learning;
- result: a reformed and extended European Quality Assurance Framework
- organisations carrying out this work: the European Commission and the relevant national authorities involving the EQAVET network and stakeholders from adult learning and VET

(3) **Long-term developments** with the target date of 2020:

- to explore the potential for an overarching reference framework of principles, criteria and guidelines for lifelong learning quality assurance;
- development of a comprehensive lifelong learning quality framework acting as a bridge across education and training sectors aiming at ensuring the quality of outcomes of all learners and in line with the need to recognise all learning;
- organisations and bodies participating in this development process in collaboration: the relevant adult education, initial education, VET and higher education stakeholders at European and national levels.

## Chapter 4 - State of the art of quality assurance of adult learning in EU and some of the PRALINE partner countries

### 4.1 Characteristics QA systems in place in the EU countries

1. All EU countries – and as such, all PRALINE partner countries – have quality assurance systems in place for formal adult learning.
2. Three groups of countries are identified according to the type of quality assurance system in place for non-formal adult learning.
3. In reviewing the quality assurance systems in place, the Panteia report identified three groups of countries:

Table 9

	Category	Examples	Further characteristics
1.	countries that have <b>elaborated quality systems in place at macro level for adult learning</b> , formal as well non-formal learning often determined in a specific strand	AT, BE, CH, DK, EE, FI, HU, IE, LU, LV, NO, SE	Most of them are also the better performing countries in terms of participation in adult learning and have higher educational attainment levels (except BE, HU, IE)
2.	Countries that have <b>fragmented quality systems at macro level for non-formal adult learning</b> , while having quality systems in place for formal adult learning	DE, EL, ES, CZ, IS, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, UK	
3.	Countries <b>with no or limited quality systems</b> in place at macro level for nonformal learning, while having quality systems in place for formal adult learning	BG, CY, FR, HR, IT, LT, RO, SK, TK	Overall, these countries are lacking quality systems for the non-formal part of adult learning and, at the same time, show a relatively low performance on the ET2020 benchmarks

The table above shows that from among the PRALINE partner countries

- Austria and Hungary have elaborated quality assurance systems for non-formal learning,
- Malta and Portugal have fragmented quality assurance systems for non-formal learning, and
- France, Italy and Lithuania have no or limited quality assurance systems for non-formal learning.

4. Countries in the first group with comprehensive quality assurance systems for adult learning (formal and non-formal) generally perform better (except HU, BE, IE):
  - Higher participation to lifelong learning
  - Higher educational attainment
5. High diversity of responsible bodies and monitoring systems, but similarity in quality criteria and descriptors.
6. Need for comparable data on adult learning provision.
7. Plea for an integrated approach to quality in lifelong learning – building upon EQAVET can provide the basis for action in the short/medium term. Developing and extending EQAVET to better promote quality in adult learning (which includes continuing VET).
8. The long-term objective should be developing principles, standards and guidelines valid across all sectors of education and training.<sup>52</sup>

## 4.2 Characteristics of QA systems in place in EU countries

Country reports presenting up-to-date information regarding quality assurance systems and practices are attached to the present analysis (see Annex 1). Some of these reports (IT, MT and HU) were compiled by the partner institutions of PRALINE project, by completing and updating the information published in the Panteia Annex Report (2013). 3 of these reports (LT, FR and AT) are extracted from the Panteia Annex Report, as the partners representing these countries reported that there had been no changes on this field in last 2 years. The reference year of the present study is 2014.

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<sup>52</sup> Source: European Commission/DG EAC/Panteia (2013) Op Cit and ppt presentation by Maike Koops “QUALITY IN ADULT LEARNING” EQAVET national reference points' meeting, 26 November 2013

## Chapter 5 – Main conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions of the desk analysis

#### *Special features of adult learning*

Provision of adult learning opportunities covers all sub-systems of education and training, takes diverse forms and has a strong non-formal dimension. This draws attention to the fact that **adult learning “requires a comprehensive approach that crosses all education and training sectors”**<sup>53</sup> and that in the long term future developments and EU tools should be planned following a lifelong learning approach.

The **6 main characteristics that distinguish AL from other educational sectors** include:

- **diverse background** of learners,
- significant role and proportion of **non-formal** and informal learning,
- heterogeneity of the **types of providers**,
- the **‘engaged’** and motivated attitude of learners,
- the specific competences needed for AL (teaching & management) **staff** and
- the need for **flexibility** in terms of duration, time, and place of learning.

Some of the features of AL listed and presented in this report are often identified as challenges, however, some of these **challenges can also be interpreted as opportunities**, e.g., the prior learning experience of adult learners allows learners to become active contributors to the training and QA of the learning process, or the low level of governmental regulation makes non-formal AL providers open to bottom-up approaches as well as to apply self and external evaluation tools such as European Peer Review.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, **societal challenges** - which are increasingly present in every country, though to a varying extent – **can be considered as transversal**, connecting to most of the features listed above. Adult participation in learning is lower than expected and declining at European level. The most alarming trend of this phenomenon is that participation of vulnerable groups is especially low, thus **adults with the greatest education and training needs** – elderly population, people with low level basic and transversal skills, migrants etc. - **have the least opportunity to benefit from lifelong learning**<sup>55</sup>. Finding solutions for these problems of course falls outside the competence of education policy. Nevertheless, provision of learning opportunities for adults can be one of the most effective means of enhancing social integration of vulnerable groups.

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<sup>53</sup> European Commission DGEAC (2013). Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report. Op Cit p 6

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.peer-review-network.eu/>

<sup>55</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, (2015). Op Cit

### Special features of the QA of adult learning

The main challenge identified regarding national instruments and practices in place in the field of QA of AL is the **lack of overarching QA systems in adult learning**, especially for the **non-formal** part of the AL sector. Further challenges are the **lack of attention to adult learning specific elements** in quality assurance systems for **formal adult learning** (VET and HE), the lack of requirements regarding adult learning **staff**, lack of quality assurance systems and standards for **guidance** and **prior learning assessment** provision, as well lack of sufficient **monitoring** data.

## 5.2 EU developments to be considered

In October 2013 the **Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Quality in Adult Learning** established by the European Commission published its final report summarizing the conclusions of a 2-year-long research, mapping and consultation process. One of the key conclusions of the working group is that **a common QA framework has to be developed encompassing all education sectors** while remaining applicable to the specific needs of the single education and training sectors.

This ambitious goal, however, requires development work of long years in an extended cooperation. Therefore, meanwhile, **parallel to this process**, two other “strands of action” are recommended, which can provide valuable inputs into long-term developments as well. One of these “strands” is the **collection and improvement of existing quality assurance models** and instruments in order to enable them to better address the specific needs of adult learning. Another “strand” is the **adaptation of EQAVET to the specific needs of adult learning**.

## 5.3 Recommendations of the desk research for “PRALINE” project

The **aim of the PRALINE project** is to provide contribution to the first “strand” of short-term goals: to collect and adjust existing QA instruments.

The main recommendations of this study for the actions to be implemented in the frame of PRALINE project:

1. When speaking about adult learning it is easy to forget that the main difference distinguishing this education sector from the others is not only the age cohort of the target group, but also the aims and types of this kind of learning. Consequently, the main directions and aspects of the **adaptation process of the European Peer Review** method to AL **should be defined on the basis of the principal characteristics of AL**: diversity of learners’ background, non-formal dimension, ‘engaged’ attitude of learners, specific staff competences and flexibility.
2. It is worth to put emphasis on and **exploit the opportunities provided** by some of the **specific features of AL**: e. g. motivation of learners (better involve learners in the process of quality improvement), the necessity of self-financing /co-funding (take into account and build on the

fact that providers are interested in ensuring learner-centred and quality training) etc., see Table below for further examples.

3. **Developments have to focus on non-formal types** of adult learning (also because several instruments and frameworks have been developed for formal learning), thus implementation of this aspect should be continuously checked: “Will these changes/issues/tools serve the needs of the very heterogeneous types and aims of the non-formal learning?”
4. One of the increasingly important target groups of AL is **vulnerable people**, so developments in the PRALINE project have to **take into account the needs** of programmes improving basic skills and in general: the responsibility of adult learning in **enhancing social integration**.

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- Faurschau, K, 2008. **Systematic quality assurance in adult learning, Nordic tiles in a mosaic**. Nordic Network Quality in Adult Learning. [http://www.nordvux.net/download/3115/rapport\\_kvalitet\\_eng\\_upd.pdf](http://www.nordvux.net/download/3115/rapport_kvalitet_eng_upd.pdf)

### 2.3. Websites / platforms / databases

- ADAM database, project descriptions within the thematic network called QUALLL (Quality Assurance in LifeLong Learning with a Focus on VET and Adult Education) <http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/thematicgroup/QALLL#.VG9gZvmG-UY>
- EST (European Shared Treasure) database <http://www.europeansharedtreasure.eu/index.php#>
- DGEAC: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm)
- DG Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and labour Mobility: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en>
- Eurostat: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>
- EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe): <http://ec.europa.eu/epale/> .

### 3. Relevant EU projects (completed and ongoing)

- SEALLL (Self Evaluation in Adult LifeLong Learning) project. Main project product - handbook: tools, methods, practical guide for self-evaluation [www.SEALLL.eu](http://www.SEALLL.eu)

- EQUAL (Evaluation and Quality Assurance in Adult Learning) project <http://www.qualityinlearning.net/>
- QUALC (Quality Assurance Network for Adult Learning Centres) project <http://www.qualityfoundation.org/qualc/>
- AL/CVET working group of EQAVET (ongoing)
- (EU study on Adult Learners in Digital Learning Environments (currently being drafted by Ecorys)
- Several FP7 research projects addressed CVET and adult education. Cf: “*Adult and continuing education in Europe. Using public policy to secure a growth in skills*”, European Commission 2013.
- BELL (Benefits of Lifelong learning. What is adult education for?) <http://www.bell-project.eu/cms/>.

## II. NATIONAL REFERENCES

### Austria

- Accreditation framework for the Initiative Erwachsenenbildung <https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/Anerkennungskriterien.pdf>

### France

- Le Guide de Bonnes Pratiques "Etablissements publics d'enseignement technique agricole - la qualité en formation" AFNOR (2012)

### Hungary

- Eszter Bükki et al. Hungary VET in Europe – Country Report 2013, Cedefop
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### Italy

- ISFOL document on Quality and Accreditation, finalized in 2013 [http://isfolo.isfol.it/bitstream/123456789/784/1/Isfol\\_Qualita%20e%20Accreditamento.pdf](http://isfolo.isfol.it/bitstream/123456789/784/1/Isfol_Qualita%20e%20Accreditamento.pdf) (see pp 37 and 38 for correspondences between EQAVET and regional systems).
- DISCIPLINA DELL'ACCREDITAMENTO DEI SOGGETTI CHE EROGANO ATTIVITÀ DI FORMAZIONE E DI ORIENTAMENTO NELLA REGIONE ABRUZZO. Qualità, merito e semplificazione. (Introduction of different indicators within the Criterion D, among which a special focus is on the percentage of expenditure on communication and technological innovation - at least 5%) [http://www.regione.abruzzo.it/fil/docs/entiAccreditati/All1\\_NUOVA\\_DISCIPLINA\\_ACCREDITAMENTO.pdf](http://www.regione.abruzzo.it/fil/docs/entiAccreditati/All1_NUOVA_DISCIPLINA_ACCREDITAMENTO.pdf)
- ISFOL (2014). National Plan for Quality Assurance within the Vocational Education and Training system.

<http://www.isfol.it/eqavet/menu-rpn/the-national-reference-point-nrp>

#### Malta

- Referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) - [http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/uploads/filebrowser/Malta Referencing Report 2012 .pdf](http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/uploads/filebrowser/Malta%20Referencing%20Report%202012.pdf)
- The National Commission for Further and Higher Education – Malta - <http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/>
- EQAVET Malta - <http://www.eqavetmalta.org.mt/>
- ESF 1.227 Making Quality Visible - <http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/content/home-corporate-services-and-eu-projects-making-quality-visible/51675136/>

#### Portugal

- National project „Implementation of an European Agenda por Adults Education in Portugal 2012-2014”, financed by the EACEA (Guide with main conclusions) –in PORTUGUESE [http://www.agenda.anqep.gov.pt/np4/%7B\\$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=2752&fileName=eguia.pdf](http://www.agenda.anqep.gov.pt/np4/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=2752&fileName=eguia.pdf)
- Impact evaluation studies regarding the New Opportunities Initiative <http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx>
- Order n.º 230/2008, of 7 March together with Order n.º 283/2011 of 24 October - defines the general legal status and framework for Adult’s Education and Training Courses in Portugal including rules to organise the training and assess the learning outcomes achieved <http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx>
- „Guia de operacionalização de cursos de educação e formação de adultos” published by ANQEP including guidelines for the operationalisation of Adults Education courses in Portugal and including not only guidelines regarding the assessment of LO but also a chapter on how the monitoring of those courses happens (quality assurance?) <http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx>
- Guia da Certificação de Entidades Formadoras. Sistema e Requisitos de Certificação.  
Ministério da Economia e do Emprego Direcção-Geral do Emprego e das Relações de Trabalho  
Direcção de Serviços de Qualidade e Acreditação , 2011 <http://certifica.dgert.mtss.gov.pt>
- Guia de Referencia para a Garantia da Qualidade nos Centros para a Qualificacao e o Ensino Profissional. CQEP, ANQEP, 2014. <http://www.anqep.gov.pt>

## Annex 1 – Background information on Quality Assurance in Adult Learning in PRALINE partner countries

### AUSTRIA

#### A) Quality assurance systems: an overview

A new Federal Act for Quality Assurance in Higher Education sets a common frame for quality assurance in all sectors of higher education in Austria (public universities, universities of applied sciences, private universities). Part of the new law is the establishment of the trans-sectorial "Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria" by the 1st of March 2012. The new agency will unify the functions of AQA, FH Council and Accreditation Council for the private universities. AQA will operate until 2013 and progressively integrate its activities into the new agency.

**VET** The Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ARQA-VET), was established October 1st, 2007. It serves to cross-link stakeholders of Vocational Education and Training in Austria and to play an active role to promote European networking.

**Non-formal** (1) Ö-Cert provides registration as one of the Quality Providers of Adult Education in Austria. For transparency, simplified administration and to promote an overall strategy of quality, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture developed the Ö-CERT (AT-Cert) - in cooperation with leading Austrian experts, representatives of the nine Austrian provinces and providers of Adult education. Ö-CERT is implemented at macro-level (policy) and the target is to assure the quality of providers all over Austria. Ö-CERT is focussed by the Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to assure and to improve the quality of structures of Adult Learning (Adult Education).

(2) Academy of Continuing Education (wba) is a system for the qualification and recognition/accreditation of adult educators. ([www.wba.or.at](http://www.wba.or.at)) Founded in 2007 the Academy of Continuing Education has a new approach to recognising acquired competences of adult educators in that it acknowledges previously acquired qualifications and offers guidance as far as the acquisition of missing skills is regarded.

(3) Another interesting case is Austria, where institutions that want to take part in the "Initiative Erwachsenenbildung 2012 - 2014", providing basic skills, have to apply for an accreditation which consists of several rounds of quality procedures including external evaluation (one of the whole programme) and monitoring (on the level of the programme primarily - not the individual institutions).

## **B) Further elaboration on quality assurance in the country**

### **Legal framework**

In 1973 the Federal Act on the Promotion of Adult Education and Public Libraries established a legal basis for the federal funding of adult learning institutions in Austria. In March 2009, the "Leistungsvereinbarungen" (contract management) were concluded between the Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and the associations within the Conference of Adult Education in Austria (KEBÖ). These agreements define the Ministry's obligation to cover structural funding of these institutions (increasing the existing budget at the same time), for a period of three years.

The Austrian Adult Education is characterized by a great number of heterogeneous providers (about 3.000) and subsequently of the diversity of offers. Different Quality Management Systems and Quality Assurance Procedures are in use. This complex situation characterized by a great number of diverse providers employing different systems difficult to compare easily at a glance urged for a solution. To complicate it even more during the last 10 years some of the nine Austrian provinces created their own external Quality Assurance Procedure (as a basis for subsidies for course participant). Providers with offers all over Austria or in various provinces were (still are) obliged to pass and pay for the admission to several provinces Quality Assurance Procedures. The result was (to some extent still is) a very time-consuming and expensive procedure. In 2011 the Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture invited all stakeholders of Adult Education providers in Austria to promote, develop and to agree upon an overall framework of quality for adult education in Austria, the "Ö-Cert". Legal format and organization of Ö-Cert (AT-Cert): The Austrian Constitution regulates the contracts and cooperation between the Federal Republic and the Provinces (Länder) by the article 15a B-VG. The Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture signed a contract of cooperation with the Provinces (Länder) to create the Ö-Cert (AT-CERT). Starting in 2012 and under the administrative roof of the Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifeb)) the Ö-CERT- Office opened and the LOGO was registered. <http://oe-cert.at/>

### **Quality Concepts of HE and VET in Austria**

A new Federal Act for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Hochschul- Qualitätssicherungsgesetz) sets a common frame for quality assurance in all sectors of higher education in Austria (public universities, universities of applied sciences, private universities). Part of the new law is the establishment of the trans-sectorial "Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria" by the 1st of March 2012. The new agency will unify the functions of AQA, FH Council and Accreditation Council for the private universities. AQA will operate until 2013 and progressively integrate its activities into the new agency. AQA staff will take care of the current procedures in the proven manner and AQA meet all of its obligations. <http://www.aqa.ac.at/>

**"Initiative Erwachsenenbildung 2012 - 2014"**: The Austrian initiative for adult education arose from a cooperation of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the nine Austrian provinces. Its objective is to enable adults who lack basic skills or never graduated from a lower secondary school to continue and finish their education. The innovative approach of this project is due to two characteristics. First of all, the implementation of consistent quality guidelines for courses of this program in all parts of Austria and, secondly, the fact that all courses are free of charge. The initiative for adult education has been formed over nearly three years of negotiations and concept development. During this process the partners have been representatives of the ministry and the nine

Austrian provinces as well as experts of adult education. Their achievements are an official agreement of the ministry and the Austrian provinces in regard to the financing as well as a document describing the projects' intentions, the quality standards and the main structure and procedures during the realization. The agreement was finally signed at the end of 2011. Operations started at the beginning of 2012 and will be secured until the end of 2014. Further negotiations about the future of the initiative will be taken up then.

The Austrian National Agency recognizes the following quality attestations when it comes to eligibility of Adult Learning Centres in Grundtvig: ÖNORM EN ISO 9001:2008, ISO 29990:2010, EFQM, LQW, QVB, EduQua, OÖ-EBQS, CERT-NÖ, S-QS, wien-cert. Since February this year the Ö-Cert plays a major role when it comes to eligibility of Adult Learning Centres in Grundtvig (Link to PDF [Formale Kriterien Grundtvig](#)).

Moreover the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) that acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, and thereby facilitates lifelong learning, becomes with its national implementation NQR increasingly important for quality approaches also in the field of Adult Learning. In this context the National Coordination Point for the National Qualification Framework in Austria has organized together with the NAs Grundtvig team 'Fit for NQR<sup>2</sup>: study outcome orientation in adult learning' (March 8<sup>th</sup> 2012).

The Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ARQA-VET), was established October 1st, 2007. It serves to cross-link stakeholders of Vocational Education and Training in Austria and to play an active role to promote European networking. (<http://www.arqa-vet.at/qualitaet/DE/>)

## **Quality approaches**

### **Providers**

Ö-Cert (AT-Cert) provides registration as one of the Quality Providers of Adult Education in Austria. The provider has to fulfil basic requirements (= criteria, if it is a provider of adult education): general basic requirements; basic requirements concerning the organization of the provider; basic requirements concerning the offers of the provider; basic requirements concerning principles of ethics and democracy; basic requirements concerning quality assurance.

The provider must have one of the valid Quality Management Systems or Quality Assurance Procedures - according to the Ö-Cert-List, which itemise nine accepted QMS and Quality Assurance Procedures. The most important selection criterion: they all must have an External Audit. Actually these are: ÖNORM EN ISO 9001:2008 (International Organisation for Standardization); EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management: "Committed to Excellence" and "Recognised for Excellence"); LQW (Lernerorientierte Qualitätstestierung); QVB (Qualitätsentwicklung im Verbund von Bildungseinrichtungen); EduQua (Schweizerisches Q-Zerifikat für Weiterbildungsinstitutionen); and also four Quality Assurance Procedures of Austrian provinces: OÖ-EBQS (Upper Austria), CERT-NÖ (Lower Austria), S-QS (Salzburg), wien-cert (Vienna).

### **Staff development**

The Academy of Continuing Education is a system for the qualification and recognition/accreditation of adult educators. [www.wba.or.at](http://www.wba.or.at) Founded in 2007 the Academy of Continuing Education has a new approach to recognising acquired competences of adult educators in that it acknowledges previously

acquired qualifications and offers guidance as far as the acquisition of missing skills is regarded. While adult education in Austria is still a heterogeneous field and difficult to compare, the Academy of Continuing Education sets standards and strengthens the professionalization of Austrian adult education. WBA does not offer further education programmes itself but accredits suitable further education programmes offered by various adult education institutes throughout Austria. Practical experience in the field of adult education is a prerequisite for a certification by the Academy of Continuing Education. The Academy of Continuing Education is directed towards individuals from one of the four main professions in adult education who are actively involved in adult education in Austria and beyond and want to take part in a certification process. Suitable work fields would be managerial positions in institutes of vocational and non-vocational adult education, responsibility for educational matters, the planning, organising and accompanying of learning processes, teaching, counselling or librarianship. Furthermore it is also directed towards adult education institutions that want to have their offers of further education accredited by the Academy of Continuing Education.

The Academy of Continuing Education awards two degrees: a certificate and based on the certificate a diploma. In a two-level modular curriculum the relevant competences are described. While the certificate attests a person's basic competences in all four fields of adult education, the diploma stresses the specific field of adult education the graduate is working in. That could be either Teaching, Guidance/Counselling, Educational Management or Librarianship and Information Management.

The Academy of Continuing Education develops and ensures quality standards. It constitutes an important step toward the professionalization of Austrian adult education because it enables those taking part in its certification process to obtain a degree widely recognised within the profession. To sum up here are the top-characteristics of the Academy of Continuing Education:

- Four target groups of the Academy of Continuing Education correlate with the four main professions in the field of Austrian adult education: teachers/trainers, educational managers, counsellors and librarians/information managers.
- The Academy of Continuing Education recognises existing formal qualifications as well as non-formally or informally acquired skills.
- The Academy of Continuing Education acknowledges a broad range of documents as evidence of competence (certificates, confirmations, equivalents, assessments etc.).
- Compulsory three-day-assessment at the wba-certificate-level.
- The Academy of Continuing Education offers individual educational counselling and career counselling by trained counsellors.
- The Academy of Continuing Education's two-level modular curriculum is based on competence profiles.
- The Academy of Continuing Education awards two different types of degrees: a) Certificate for certified adult educators (rated at 30 ECTS); b) Diploma for graduated adult educators (rated at 60 ECTS).

The Academy of Continuing Education in accrediting educational offers, sets a standard for quality and assures the quality of the offers accredited.

## Challenges

The Austrian Adult Education is characterized by a great number of heterogeneous providers (about 3.000) and offers. Different Quality Management Systems and Quality Assurance Procedures are in use. During the last 10 years some of the nine Austrian provinces created their own external Quality Assurance Procedure (as a basis for subsidies for course participant). Providers with offers all over Austria or in various provinces have to pass and pay for the admission to several provinces Quality Assurance Procedures.

Key factors for AL are the quality of staff, systems of guidance and information management (knowledge management). The KEBÖ with the Federal Institute of Adult Education and the Austrian Ministry of Education, Art and Culture established a "Quality Consortium": WBA (Weiterbildungsakademie).

The very nature of the adult learning sector allows for flexibility and change. This context is a fertile ground in which to develop appropriate QA systems and methodologies. QA standards in this sector must take account of the diverse range of providers and learners, many of whom come from disadvantaged groups or persons with special needs. Whilst leadership is also important in the field of AL a greater emphasis on the grassroots, 'bottom-up' approach is appropriate in this sector in order to develop trust, a shared understanding and greater stakeholder ownership.

General (non-vocational) Adult Education is characterized by a diverse and colourful landscape of institutions, NGO's, programs and projects. With the exception of the area of formal education (access to basic education for adults) there are no defined curricula with formally accepted qualifications and formally accepted professional profiles comparable to Higher Education and VET. Lifelong Learning seems to vanish the frontier between General Adult Education, VET, Higher Education, Further Education or Continuing Education, but on the other hand it erects new corridors between formally / non-formally / informally acquired competencies. These competencies appear learner-centred (learning outcomes) and comparable (standardized and testable) in a framework (EQF/ NQF). The programs of non-vocational Adult Education have to accept the disadvantage in relation to those of VET and HE. Nevertheless a big chance exists in a new role of non-vocational Adult Education in the contexts of Community Education.

To perform good governance the Austrian Ministry of Education, Art and Culture agreed with the nine Austrian provinces (*Länder*, Federal Republic) to sign a law that regulates quality of delivery and financing programs of Adult Education. Important support to focus the issue of quality came in the last decade from European programs like ESF and Grundtvig as well as LLP. The challenge now is to translate the outcome of projects (project development) into a regular culture of quality in the field of AL.

## FRANCE

### A) Quality assurance systems: an overview

<b>HE</b>	<p>Quality in adult learning is partially covered by the legal framework regulating the quality of initial (primary, secondary, tertiary, higher) education. The quality of VET and higher education is to a large degree guaranteed by the state since it either directly manages the relevant institutions or exercises oversight on these institutions. At the national level France has two inspection authorities who fall directly under the minister of National Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Research. The General Inspection for National Education (Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale: IGEN) and the the General Inspection for the Administration of National Education and Research (Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche: IGAENR) monitors, studies, and evaluates the functioning and efficiency of the educational system. The jurisdiction of IGEN and IGAENR is limited to institutions for national and higher education under the responsibility of the two ministries (colleges, lycées, institutes of higher education). In addition to these authorities, an autonomous administrative authority for the evaluation of research and higher education has been created in 2007. This Agency for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur: AERES) evaluates institutes for higher education and their educational programmes and diplomas, and validates these institutions' procedures for the evaluation of staff.</p>
<b>VET</b>	<p>Quality in adult learning is partially covered by the legal framework regulating the quality of initial (primary, secondary, tertiary, higher) education. A National Commission on Professional Certification establishes certification requirements and evaluation methods for each certificate that has been registered in the National Inventory of Professional Certifications. Regular degrees are issued and controlled by the state. The General Inspection for National Education (IGEN) and The General Inspection for the Administration of National Education and Research (IGAENR) evaluate the national educational system, institutions, and personnel. External evaluation in the institutes for initial (primary, secondary, tertiary, higher) education is performed by IGEN, IGAENR, and AERES. SAIA evaluates the quality of alternating training in each académie. The Offices Pôle Emploi evaluate the training programmes that they financé and, in particular, AFPA training. Sectoral agencies such as the National Observatory on Farming Education monitor the quality of (continuing) vocational education and training in their respective sector.</p> <p>Formal education and training for adults is provided in the <i>Gretas</i>, the vocational secondary schools, the institutes of higher education, the AFPA centres, the CFAs and the CFPPAs. All these organizations fall under the direct responsibility or oversight of either the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Agriculture, or the Ministry of Employment They have to track and evaluate their programmes and are submitted to evaluations by the Ministry.</p>

<p><b>Non-formal</b></p>	<p>The <i>Greta</i>, vocational secondary schools, and CFAs fall directly under their respective ministries and are inspected by agencies operated jointly by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (IGEN and IGAENR).</p>
	<p>The label Lycée des Metiers ("Vocational Secondary School") has been created in 2001 by the Ministry of National Education and is offered to vocational and polyvalent schools for secondary education who combine the vocational and technological tracks. Its creation was driven by four objectives: (1) to promote the attractiveness of the vocational route, (2) to push the regional networks of VET providers towards quality, (3) to reinforce synergies between the vocational and technological routes of training, and (4) to restructure regional training provisions to make them more consistent. The label is seen as an important approach to create a dynamic towards quality and excellence in VET and to promote accountability against common criteria for quality.</p>
	<p>The label cannot be obtained by regular or technical schools for secondary education (Lycées d'enseignement général et technologique), unless they sign a partnership with a vocational high school. The initial number of criteria for accreditation was four and has been increased to nine in 2005. The key demands of the label are that the Lycée has to offer a coherent rangé of vocational training around a consistent group of jobs and to develop narrow relationships with local and regional employers. While the Lycées des Metiers have a lot to do with initial vocational education and training, they are also relevant from the perspective of continuing VET, since one of the demands is that the school provides vocational education to a variety of target groups including adults. The label Lycée des Metiers is attributed by the rector of an académie (region) by means of a regional committee in charge of labelling. The label is valid for a period of five years. At this moment about 800 Lycées have been awarded the label.</p>
	<p>(1) Quality label as Greta Plus (public adult learning including second chance and VET) and (2) Lycee der Metiers (vocational secondary school) serves as measure to boost quality. (3)The label Lycée des Metiers ("Vocational Secondary School") For the non formal learning, only label regarding the quality of language education.</p>

## **B) Further elaboration on quality assurance in the country**

### **Legal framework**

The French adult learning sector can be divided into a public sector (which has a market share of about 20 percent) and a private sector (which has a market share of about 80 percent). The main elements of the public sector are the (1) *Gretas*, (2) the institutes for higher education, (3) the National Association

for Adult Vocational Training, and (4) the National Centre for Distance Education<sup>56</sup>. The private sector exists of about 48.000 establishments and individual consultants. A large part is made up of non-profit associations and profit-making companies, while independent trainers play a relatively smaller role. Especially noteworthy are the network of secondary chance schools and the popular universities.<sup>57</sup>

Different types of programmes are provided. In general, one can distinguish between collective programmes, individual programmes, alternating training, and integral training organized in cooperation with employers. In addition people can obtain a degree through the validation of professional experiences. The French public adult learning sector is managed jointly by the state, the regions (referred to as "*académies*"), and the social partners (representatives of labour organisations and employers' organisations). These actors operate within the boundaries set by the Code on Education and the Code on Employment, and more specifically by the *Loi Delors* of July 1971, the *Loi sur la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie et la dialogue sociale* of May 2004, and the *Loi relative à l'orientation et à la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie* of November 24th 2009.<sup>58</sup>

In France there exists a clear policy on adult learning (*formation continue*) which is part of a broader policy regarding lifelong learning (*formation tout au long de la vie*). However, while much attention is paid to quality improvement, no broad policy has been designed for quality assurance.

Formal education and training for adults is provided in the *Gretas*, the vocational secondary schools, the institutes of higher education, the AFPA centres, the CFAs and the CFPPAs. All these organizations fall under the direct responsibility or oversight of either the Ministry of National Education, the

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<sup>56</sup> The main public educational institutions are: A) The Greta (groupements d'établissements) are structures that group together public educational establishments that cooperate to provide continuing training. These structures consist of vocational secondary schools (lycées professionnels), general and technical secondary schools (lycées) and lower secondary schools (colleges). The current number of Gretas in France is about 270, counting 6.500 separate training grounds. B) The Vocational Secondary Schools (lycées de métiers) are vocational and polyvalent schools for secondary education who combine the vocational and technological tracks and meet a number of quality criteria. One of the criteria is that they have to offer education and training to both pupils and adults. C) The institutes for higher education (universities and the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers: CNAM) provide continuing education programmes that are directed by departments of continuing education. D) The National Association for Adult Vocational Training (Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes: AFPA) provides continued vocational education and training leading to a professional qualification. The AFPA falls under the authority of the Ministry of National Education but operates as a semi-autonomous governing body. It has a mandate to develop the government's policies in the relevant field (this is referred to as an association gestionnaire). E) The National Centre for Distance Education (Centre national d'enseignement à distance: CNED) provides about 3.000 courses via mail or internet, ranging from kindergarten level to university level. Its relation to the government resembles that of the AFPA. F) Centres for Alternating Training (Centres de formation d'apprentis: CFAs). These centres are created jointly by the state, the academies, the professional chambers, companies, and public and private educational institutions. They are either private or public institutions. In the latter case they are operated at the national level (Ministry of National Education) or at the académie level. G) Centres for Vocational Training for Adults (Centres de formation professionnelle et promotion agriculture: CFPPAs). These centres are public institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture and provide vocational education for adults in the field of agriculture.

<sup>57</sup> The main private educational institutions are: A) The Popular Universities (universités populaires) provide a wide range of courses for adults. They are united in the Association of French Popular Universities (Association des universités populaires de France). B) The schools of second chance (écoles de deuxième chance), all part of a single foundation, offer education and training courses of between nine months and one year to youth between 18 and 25 years of age who have dropped out of initial education without obtaining a qualification.

<sup>58</sup> Not all laws are relevant for the issue of quality assurance in adult learning.

Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Agriculture, or the Ministry of Employment. They have to track and evaluate their programmes and are submitted to evaluations by the Ministry. The *Greta*, vocational secondary schools, and CFAs fall directly under their respective ministries and are inspected by agencies operated jointly by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (IGEN and IGAENR). An autonomous administrative authority has been established in 2007 to evaluate institutes for higher education (AERES). The CFPPAs fall directly under the Ministry of Agriculture and are supervised by this ministry. The *AFPA* and *CNED* operate as semi-autonomous governing bodies and have substantial freedom in their (quality management and quality assurance) policies. Apart from inspection and evaluation, the French state has attempted to improve and assure quality of formal education and training through the creation of a national vocational certification register (*répertoire nationale des certifications professionnelles*: RNCP) and the establishment of a number of labels.

Non formal education and training is provided by the CNED - which falls under the oversight of the Ministry of National Education - and a range of private organisations and establishments such as the Popular Universities and the schools of second chance. No formal policy concerning the quality of non-formal education and training exists, except for a label regarding the quality of language education. Several labels have been developed by non-governmental organisations and are used in the private sector as well as the public sector.

### **Difference between VET, HE and NVAL**

The quality of VET and higher education is to a large degree guaranteed by the state since it either directly manages the relevant institutions or exercises oversight on these institutions. Quality label such as *GretaPlus* and *lycée des métiers* serve as measures to boost quality. The quality of non-formal / non-vocational adult learning is not guaranteed by the state, and the state has no direct control over or oversight on the relevant institutions, with the exception of the CNED. Except for the *qualité français langue étrangère* label no state-sanctioned quality labels exist for this sector.

### **Instruments**

*Certification*: All regular diplomas (the BAC, DAEU, etc.) are issued by the Ministries of National Education and of Higher Education and Research. In addition, France has developed a National Vocational Certification Register (RNCP), which is largely in line with the European Qualification Framework. This inventory is managed by the National Commission on Professional Certification. The CNCP establishes certification requirements and evaluation methods for each vocational certification that has been registered.

*Inspection and evaluation*: At the national level France has two inspection authorities who fall directly under the minister of National Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Research.

The General Inspection for National Education (*Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale*: IGEN evaluates educational programmes, monitors and evaluates personnel (including regional - académie level - inspectors), and plays an important role in the development of educational programmes and exams. The General Inspection for the Administration of National Education and Research (*Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche*: IGAENR) monitors, studies, and evaluates the functioning and efficiency of the educational system. The jurisdiction of IGEN and IGAENR is limited to institutions for national and higher education under the responsibility of the two

ministries (colleges, lycées, institutes of higher education. In addition to these authorities, an autonomous administrative authority for the evaluation of research and higher education has been created in 2007. This Agency for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (*Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur*: AERES) evaluates institutes for higher education and their educational programmes and diplomas, and validates these institutions' procedures for the evaluation of staff. The idea behind AERES is that independent authorities provide trustworthy information that leads to enhanced competition between institutes of higher education in the field of quality. The organisation was created by the *Loi de programme de la recherche* of April 18<sup>th</sup> 2006. Finally, the Ministry of National Education disposes of a Regional Service for the Inspection of Alternating Training (*Service académique d'inspection de l'apprentissage*: SAIA) in each *académie*.

At the *académie* level regional councils also perform quantitative and qualitative monitoring of the training policies they set up. A complementary evaluation system is set up by the employer-employee organisations (*Offices pole emploi*) in each region.<sup>59</sup> They evaluate the training programmes that they finance and perform quality controls on AFPA training. Finally, there are sectoral agencies that monitor quality. The National Observatory on Farming Education (*Observatoire national de l'enseignement agricole*: ONEA) is mentioned most frequent in the literature. ONEA is placed under the Ministry of Agriculture en Fishing and produces an annual quality report.

### **Agreements between regions and educational institutions**

At the *académie* level regional councils sign quality charters (*Chartes de Qualité*) with professional organisations in specific sectors, or with training bodies that sign contracts with the *académie*. The charters contain sector specific agreements pertaining to the quality of management and services.

*Labelling: GretaPlus:* The GretaPlus label has been developed by the department for the continuing education of adults of the Ministry of National Education to certify *Gretas* and promote higher quality. Traditionally the *Gretas* have been covered by a set of different labels for quality assurance, and some of them possessed ISO certification. Since 2001 these different labels have been replaced by a single reference label, which covers the same demands as made by the previously existing labels. This GretaPlus label is related to a common reference framework which contains identical demands for all *Gretas*. In 2009 a new reference norm was developed in cooperation with the French Association for Standardization (*Association Française de Normalisation*: AFNOR) and linked to the GretaPlus label. This reference on good practice (*Référentiel de bonnes pratiques*) is referred to as BP X50-762 and is intended to strengthen the legitimacy of the *Greta* system. The new reference norm contains twenty-six commitments which are categorised under seven key demands.

The single most important demand is that the *Greta* provides tailor-made training (*formation sur mesure*). As such, the label should guarantee that training takes account of a student's demands, goals, and current level of skills and knowledge. Other demands are that the *Greta* provides extensive

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<sup>59</sup> The Pole Emploi is the government agency for the re-integration of jobless into the labour market. Offices are based in each region.

information, assistance in orientation, and counselling, and that the student's progress is monitored and validated<sup>60</sup>.

Each *Greta* can individually decide to apply for the GretaPlus label, and this label is not a prerequisite for executing its functions. Before applying the *Greta* should have at least one year of working experience with the national quality approach. After a *Greta* has applied for the label, a number of "blank" audits are organised by the relevant académie, followed by an audit by auditors from the Ministry of National Education. During the audit the inspectors evaluate whether the *Greta* meets the requirements of the reference on good practice. A National Committee on Labelling (*Comité National de Labellisation: CNL*) provides a recommendation on the attribution of the label, on the basis of the audit results. On this basis the Minister for National Education decides whether or not to grant the label. The quality label is given for a period of three years but the regional inspection has to undertake an internal audit report every year to monitor implementation of the quality objectives in the *Greta*. Only 50 out of 220 *Gretas* had obtained the GretaPlus label in 2011.

*Lycée des Metiers*: The label *Lycée des Metiers* ("Vocational Secondary School") has been created in 2001 by the Ministry of National Education and is offered to vocational and polyvalent schools for secondary education who combine the vocational and technological tracks. Its creation was driven by four objectives: (1) to promote the attractiveness of the vocational route, (2) to push the regional networks of VET providers towards quality, (3) to reinforce synergies between the vocational and technological routes of training, and (4) to restructure regional training provisions to make them more consistent. The label is seen as an important approach to create a dynamic towards quality and excellence in VET and to promote accountability against common criteria for quality. The main criteria are listed in annex A.

The label cannot be obtained by regular or technical schools for secondary education (*Lycées d'enseignement général et technologique*), unless they sign a partnership with a vocational high school. The initial number of criteria for accreditation was four and has been increased to nine in 2005. The key demands of the label are that the *Lycée* has to offer a coherent range of vocational training around a consistent group of jobs and to develop narrow relationships with local and regional employers. While the *Lycées des Metiers* have a lot to do with initial vocational education and training, they are also relevant from the perspective of continuing VET, since one of the demands is that the school provides vocational education to a variety of target groups including adults. The label *Lycée des Metiers* is attributed by the rector of an *académie* (region) by means of a regional committee in charge of labelling. The label is valid for a period of five years. At this moment about 800 *Lycées* have been awarded the label.

Qualité Français Langue Étrangère: The label *Qualité Français Langue Étrangère* is provided by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture and Communication, by means of the Inter-ministerial Committee on Labelling (*Commission*

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<sup>60</sup>The document with detailed quality criteria can be found at: [http://media.education.gouv.fr/file/Formation\\_continue\\_adultes/84/1/Gretaplus\\_livret-referentiel\\_112841.pdf](http://media.education.gouv.fr/file/Formation_continue_adultes/84/1/Gretaplus_livret-referentiel_112841.pdf)

*Interministérielle de Labellisation*: CIL). The label can be awarded to public and private educational institutions who provide French language training and meet a number of criteria<sup>61</sup>.

Labels by non governmental organisations: Both public and private educational institutions have made and continue to make use of three types of labels or standards issued by private organisations. First, use is made of the standard ISO-9001, which specifies requirements for a quality management system (1) where an organization needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide product that meets customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, and (2) where an organization aims to enhance customer satisfaction through the effective application of the system, including processes for continual improvement of the system and the assurance of conformity to customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. Secondly, use is made of quality labels provided by the Professional Office for the Qualification of Training Establishments (*Office professionnel de qualification des organismes de formation*: OPQF). This organisation has been created by the initiative of the Federation for Vocational Training (*Fédération de la formation professionnelle*) and is recognized by the state. The qualification certificate provided by the OPQF certifies that the establishment (1) possesses the competences and resources that are necessary to perform its activities, (2) makes these competences suitable for use in its programmes, and (3) delivers high quality services, satisfying its customers<sup>2</sup>. Finally, the French Association for Standardization (AFNOR) issues two labels. First, the label "Marque NF Service" is a type of voluntary certification and is used to indicate that the quality of services is in line with French, European, and International norms. Secondly, a National Charter for the CFA and CFPPA (*Charte nationale des CFA et CFPPA*) has been developed in cooperation with these organisations. The label relates to the reception of students, the results of the centre, the development and implementation of training programmes, and the follow-up for the integration of young people. An audit is undertaken every three years.

*Education and qualification of training staff*: One can distinguish between teachers (who are employed in the Lycées) and instructors, which is a generic term for any player in continuing training. Training of teachers employed in the continuing education sector is given according to the same principles as apply to teachers employed in the initial education sector. It largely takes place in university-level institutes training teachers (*instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres*). Training has been overhauled and modernized in the past years and is based on a wide range of qualification programmes and programmes culminating in diplomas awarded by universities, and on a vocational degree awarded by the Ministry of Employment. Instructors in the *Gretas* are trained in their respective *academies* and by the Academic Centres for Vocational Education (*Centre académique de formation continue*: CAFOC). AFPA instructors benefit of a continuing training offer by AFPA's National Institute of Training Professions.

### **Responsible bodies**

There are a number of responsible bodies: 1) The National Commission on Vocational Certification (CNCP); 2) The General Inspection for National Education (IGEN); 3) The General Inspection for the Administration of National Education and Research (IGAENR); 4) The National Committee on Labelling (CNL); 5) Inter-ministerial Committee on Labelling (CIL); 6) International Standardization Organization

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<sup>61</sup> The criteria can be found at <http://www.labelqualitefle.org/images/stories/documents-a-telecharger/referentiel.pdf> <http://www.qualitefle.fr/>

(ISO); 7) Professional Office for the Qualification of Training Establishments (OPQF); 8) French Association for Standardization (AFNOR).

### **Challenges**

The main issue is the low degree of influence the state exercises on the (private) non- formal education sector. Multiple sources note that the high number of private establishments makes it difficult to form a clear picture of quality in the private sector.

## HUNGARY

Recent changes regarding quality assurance in adult education and training

### Higher education

In contrast to the previous act of 2005, the new Higher education act passed in 2011 does not include a chapter on QA. The new law has further compromised the nominal independence of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee by making it only a part of QA procedures not (as it used be) the initiator and decision-maker.

### Adult education within the formal school system

As of September 2013, tertiary (ISCED 544) level VET no longer falls under the scope of the VET Act, it can only be provided in HEIs and is regulated only by the Higher education act.

Pursuant to the new education act accepted in 2011, as of 1 January 2013 schools previously maintained by local governments were taken over by the State. While the new law (in contrast to the previous one of 1993) has not specifically provided for institutional level quality assurance in a separate paragraph, it has introduced a system of national pedagogical-professional inspection to be carried out by a group of at least 3 public education expert in all schools at least once in every 5 years. The objective is to inspect and evaluate the work of teachers and leaders based on external, uniform criteria, and it will also build on the results of the previously introduced self-assessment and other QA procedures of teachers and institutions. Teachers will also be evaluated within the framework of a professional development and career model that is divided into several phases, with each phase corresponding to specific career options, differentiated remunerations and promotional opportunities.

In the period 2009-2011 an integrated approach to quality management **in the VET sector as a whole** (comprising school-based upper, post-secondary and tertiary level VET and VET in adult training) in line with EQAVET was developed and piloted with ESF assistance. The Common Quality Management Framework for VET (*Egységes Szakképzési Minőségirányítási Keretrendszer, ESZMK*) was built on previous project results and good practices and complements self-evaluation with systematic and standardised external evaluation of training institutions. However, it has not eventually been introduced in all VET schools as originally planned (but did serve as the basis of the new QAF in adult training, see below).

### Adult training

In July 2013 a new Adult training act came into effect, bringing about significant changes regarding the regulation and quality assurance of adult training. In contrast to the previous act of 2001, the scope of the new law does not cover all types of adult training; its regulations apply only to providers that offer courses in one of these four categories:

- 1) vocational programmes that award a qualification listed in the National Qualifications Register (OKJ);
- 2) other vocational programmes that are financially supported from national/EU funds;
- 3) foreign language courses that prepare for a language proficiency exam or that are financially supported from national/EU funds;
- 4) other courses that are financially supported from national/EU funds (e.g., catching-up programmes, IT courses, etc.).

As of September 2013, the system of institutional and programme accreditation – that had long been criticised for not being differentiated enough and demanding too much unnecessary administration – was replaced by a new system of registration.<sup>62</sup> Training providers now have to apply for a permit of operation that specifies also the courses they can offer. This is awarded for an indefinite time by the National Vocational and Adult Office (*Nemzeti Szakképzési és Felnőttképzési Hivatal, NSZFH*), based on the opinion of an expert committee (chosen from the register of adult training and adult training programme experts maintained by the NSZFH and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, respectively). All providers have to operate a quality assurance system, which must be in line with a framework system defined in the 58/2013. (XII. 13.) Decree of the Minister for National Economy, assessed by a 6-member Adult Training Expert Committee (involving at least 4 adult training or adult training programme experts). This framework is based on self-assessment and follows the principles and structure of the ESZMK. Adult training providers also have to have an external evaluation at least once every two years. Similarly, every other year the NSZFH has to inspect all training providers.

Another new regulation relevant to quality assurance in adult training is the introduction of so-called adult training vocational and language programme requirements (*felnőttképzési szakmai, illetve nyelvi programkövetelmények*), on which curricula of (non-OKJ) vocational and foreign language courses that receive state/EU funding must be based. These are similar to the vocational and examination requirements of OKJ qualifications<sup>63</sup> and define outcome standards for each module (using the learning outcome terminology and National Qualifications Framework descriptors) as well as the NQF level of vocational programmes, the entry requirements/competences, minimum-maximum class hours, etc. Proposals for adult training vocational programme requirements are assessed by a 5-member committee with three members delegated by the MKIK (also responsible for maintaining the register of the vocational programme requirements), one by the Chamber of Agriculture and one by the responsible minister.

### **The Common Quality Management Framework for VET**

In the period 2009-2011 an **integrated approach to quality management in the Hungarian VET sector as a whole** (comprising school-based VET, CVET, adult VET and higher level VET) **in line with EQAVET** was developed and piloted.

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<sup>62</sup> However, previously accredited institutions could/can offer their accredited training programmes until 31 August 2014 or 31 March 2015, depending on whether they had been accredited before or after 1 January 2013.

<sup>63</sup> These are issued by the minister of the relevant sector and specify, among others (see the original factsheet), the identification number of the professional requirements modules the content of which is defined in a separate government decree (detailing the task profiles and the related professional, personal, social and methodological competences to be mastered). As the original country factsheet noted, these vocational and examination requirements are considered to ensure that OKJ qualifications issued at the national vocational exam have the same value and recognition irrespective of whether the training was provided within or outside the formal school system. In fact, however, there have long been concerns about the varying content and quality of adult training courses and in order to ensure the real equivalence of certificates obtained in school-based VET and in adult training, the minimum number of class hours of courses have been defined in the new OKJ of 2012. Also, from September 2013 OKJ courses offered in adult training will have to follow the same framework curricula as those issued for school-based VET.

The Hungarian Reference Framework which builds on the previous good practices and results of quality assurance and complements self-evaluation with systematic and standardised external evaluation of training institutions **was designed in 2009** within the New Hungary Development Plan Social Development Operative Programme 2.2.1. titled **“Improving the quality and content of training”** managed by the National Institute of VET and Adult Learning (NIVE)<sup>64</sup>. With this **Hungary was among the first EU Member States** to align the already existing quality assurance systems in the VET school system and adult training with the quality assurance framework of the European Union (EQAVET).

The **Common Quality Management Framework for VET** (in Hungarian Egységes Szakképzési Minőségirányítási Keretrendszer, **ESZMK**) is not a completely new system but based on the existing ones, utilizes their best practices, structures and approaches, while it is in compliance with the European Reference Framework and guidelines. This new quality assurance system would make institutions comparable, and enhance fresh graduates’ job opportunities in the national and international labour market. Comparability as a key aspect enables the institutions to get reliable feedback on the outcomes of their activities, and set a base for a fair and motivating competition among them, while it helps to improve the efficiency and quality of their training provision, too.

The developed **Common Quality Management Framework for VET (ESZMK)**

- Is applicable to all levels and types of VET.
- Is in-line with the EQAVET principles and criteria (indicative descriptors and indicators).
- Is a common toolkit providing a common base in quality management of VET and for comparison.
- Takes into account and manages the special features of the institutions (both of VET schools and institutions adult training providers<sup>65</sup>).
- Supports the institution-wide evaluations and the follow-up improvements.

As part of the **preparatory activities**, the developing experts revealed and analysed the quality management approaches used by VET and adult training institutions in Hungary, their compliance, common features, characteristics, and the Quality Management related legal regulations in place. They also examined the conformity of the presently applied quality management approaches with EQAVET and analysed in more depth how far the existing elements on providers’ level meet the EQAVET requirements. It was also analysed how the school-based VET and the adult VET could be brought together on the basis of quality management and in line with EQAVET.

**The established Framework consists of 4 main elements:**

### **1. Quality Policy**

A Quality Policy is to be elaborated to provide a focus to direct the organization. It determines the desired results and assists the organization to apply its resources to achieve these results. The quality policy provides a framework for establishing and reviewing the quality objectives. The quality

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<sup>64</sup> Since December 15th 2014 National Office of VET and Adult Learning

<sup>65</sup> VET outside the school system/formal education.

objectives need to be consistent with the quality policy and the commitment to continuous improvement, and their achievement needs to be measurable. The Quality Policy should cover the

- Definition of the mission and the vision of the VET institution.
- Definition of the set of institutional goals and the related indicators, definition of quality objectives of the organisation.
- Definition of the quality strategy, the aims of having a quality management system (QMS) in operation.
- Commitment of the management towards quality management and providing the necessary conditions for the operation of the QMS.

## 2. Quality Management System

The ESZMK Quality Management System has again 4 component parts:

1. The **Common process model for school-based VET and adult training** containing processes to be controlled in 5 Operational fields of the VET institution. These are:
  - I. Leadership - management.
  - II. Management of partnerships.
  - III. Management of human resources.
  - IV. Operation of the VET institution, provision and management of their other resources.
  - V. Education-teaching-training.

Based on the common process model the institutions define and describe (i.e. elaborate written procedures):

- the processes that are mandatory to regulate / describe,
- the other processes that have an important role in the operation of the institution and can be included in the group of regulated processes.

There were 17 processes identified that are mandatory to describe, most of them are applicable in both fields but there are some of them which are specific to the one or the other field (see the table below).

	Process to be described	School-based VET	Adult training
1.	Making the legal requirements known and observed	x	x
2.	Strategic planning	x	x
3.	Annual planning	x	x
4.	Assuring the internal procedure of the operation of the institution	x	x
5.	Management review	x	x
6.	Self-assessment of the operation of the institution	x	x
7.	Identification of partners, surveying their needs/demands and satisfaction	x	x

8.	Monitoring, study of suitability	x	x
9.	Customer service and handling of complaints		x
10.	Appraisal of teachers / staff performance	x	
11.	Planning of the local education – training offer	x	x
12.	Enrolment	x	x
13.	Career-guidance and orientation, assessment and recognition of prior learning	x	x
14.	Annual pedagogical planning	x	
15.	Provision of services related to adult training		x
16.	Development of methodological tools and culture	x	
17.	Assessment and evaluation of learner's performance	x	x

2. The **System of surveying partners' needs and satisfaction** includes activities such as

- Identification of partners.
- Controlling the communication with partners.
- Surveying the needs and satisfaction of the direct partners playing a key role in and from the point of view of the professional training.

The VET institutions can define the methods and tools of surveying partners' satisfaction on their own. The tools for measuring the partners' needs and satisfaction should be elaborated on the basis of the criteria 6 and 7 of the Common VET Self-assessment Model.

3. The **Common VET Self-assessment Model** (in Hungarian *Egységes Szakképzési Önértékelési Modell, ESZÖM*) is a complex tool for conducting self-assessment and identifying improvement opportunities within the VET institutions. The criteria of the Model are tailored to the tasks and operation of the Hungarian VET providers, their professional and operational characteristics. While taking the specific features of the VET institutions (IVET, CVET, adult training) into consideration, the Model focuses on the education-teaching-training activity of the VET institution throughout the entire SA process. The Model is fully compatible with EQAVET (incorporates the indicative descriptors and the indicators) and also with the self-assessment models used in other sectors of education in Hungary. The two levels enable the users to gradually introduce the model.

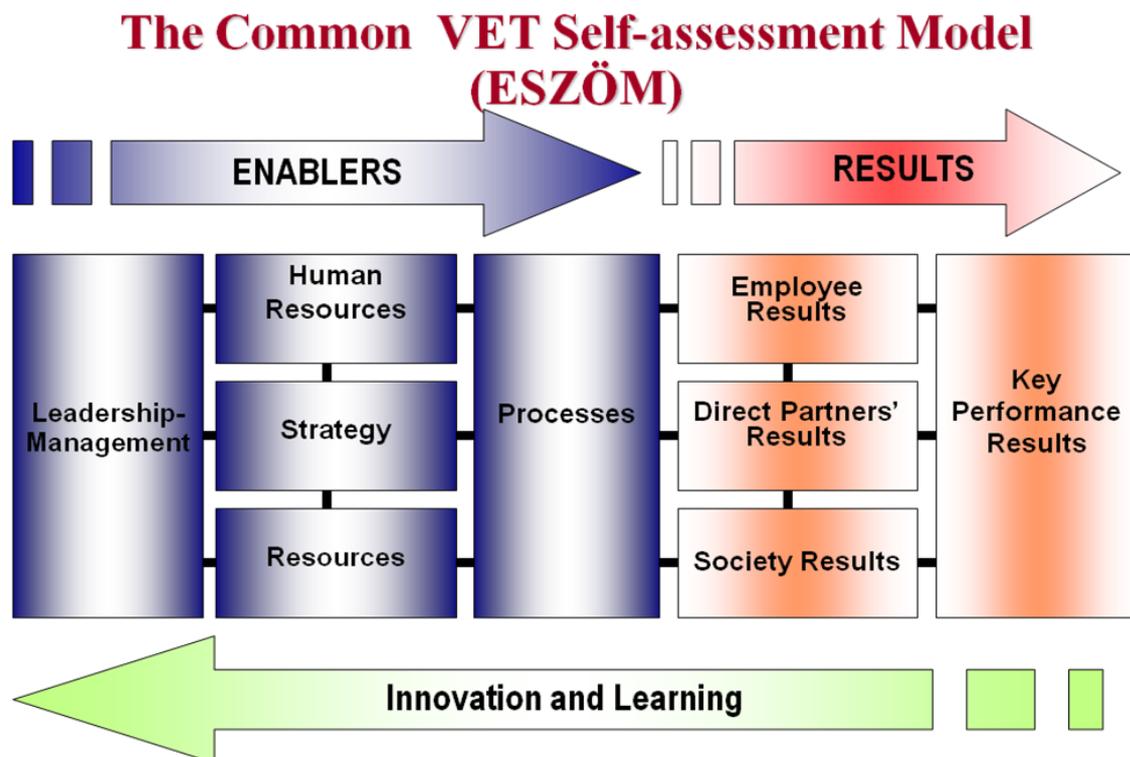
4. The **Common system / set of VET indicators** related to the Common VET Quality Management Framework (ESZMK) are included in the Common VET Self-assessment Model (ESZÖM) (criteria on the Results side). They include also the EQAVET indicators, the sectoral, regional and institutional indicators. The indicators are grouped in three groups:

- Key indicators (K) that are mandatory to measure and present in the self-assessment document.
- Recommended key indicators (AK) and
- Benchmarking (B) indicators that are recommended to measure.

The institutions develop and operate their own indicator systems based on these indicators which also include specific institutional indicators and indicators related to improvements.

In line with the special feature of the Hungarian approach to quality management in VET, i.e. that self-assessment and self-assessment based quality improvement is in the heart of the all institution-level quality management activities<sup>66</sup>, the core element of the Common Quality Management Framework for VET (ESZMK) is the **Common VET Self-assessment Model (ESZÖM)** which incorporates all the other elements of the Framework: the common process model, the system of surveying partners' needs and satisfaction and also the common VET indicator system.

The criteria of the Common VET Self-Assessment Model



**1. LEADERSHIP - MANAGEMENT**

*How does the management of the institution formulate the long-term plans and the set of values of the institution, and how does it set a good example for the implementation of these plans by its personal involvement? How does the management of the institution take part in*

<sup>66</sup> This applies to all sectors of education in Hungary including general/public education, VET and HE.

***the establishment and the maintenance of the order of operation in the institution, as well as in the continuous improvement activities?***

1. a) The personal involvement of the management in the formulation of long-term plans and set of values of the institution, and their role model conduct in the implementation of these plans and values
1. b) The personal involvement of the management in the establishment, running and continuous improvement of the internal operational system of the institution
1. c) Cooperation of the management with the direct and indirect partners of the institution
1. d) The personal involvement of the management of the institution in the motivation of employees / staff members
1. e) The role of the management of the institution in the planning, managing and evaluating the development tasks / improvement actions

**2. STRATEGY**

***How does the institution work out and revise its strategy / strategic documents and other long-term plans, and how does it communicate and break down these plans into specific tasks for the academic year?***

2. a) Collecting and analysing information for the development and the modification / revision of the strategic documents and other long-term plans of the institution
2. b) Developing and reviewing the strategic documents and other long-term plans of the institution
2. c) Communicating the strategic documents and other long-term plans of the institution, and deploying (breaking down) them into annual plans through the framework of key processes

**3. HUMAN RESOURCES**

***How does the institution plan, manage and develop the activities related to its staff, for the support and efficient operation / implementation of its Pedagogical Programme, Training Programme and processes?***

3. a) Planning, managing and developing human resources
3. b) Assessing and developing the professional knowledge and skills of staff members
3. c) Involving and empowering staff members
3. d) Establishing and operating the internal communication system of the institution
3. e) Evaluating and recognising the performance of staff members, and caring for staff members

**4. RESOURCES**

***How does the institution manage and organise the partnerships with its indirect partners and the internal resources to achieve its objectives, and for the efficient operation of the institutional processes?***

4. a) Managing partnerships with the indirect partners of the institution
4. b) Managing the financial resources of the institution
4. c) Managing buildings, equipment and tools of the institution
4. d) Establishing and operating the internal information system of the institution, utilising staff members' knowledge accumulated within the institution

**5. PROCESSES**

***How does the institution plan, organise, implement and improve its processes, including the educational and training activities by considering the needs of its partners?***

- 5. a) Planning, operating and improving the institutional processes
- 5. b) Planning the educational and training activities of the institution
- 5. c) Organising and implementing the educational and training activities of the institution in the every-day operation
- 5. d) Evaluating and improving the educational and training activities of the institution
- 5. e) Managing and improving the direct partnerships

## **6. RESULTS RELATED TO THE SATISFACTION OF DIRECT PARTNERS**

***Compared to the preliminarily planned objectives and the results of other institutions, what results has the institution achieved in the area of the satisfaction of its direct partners, and how did these results have developed over the past years?***

*Under criterion 6, the institution's results related to the satisfaction of **direct partners other than staff members** (e.g. students, parents, employers, maintainer) have to be presented. Results related to the satisfaction of staff members belong to criterion 7 (next).*

### **6. a) Direct partners' perception/opinion about the institution and its performance**

1. Partners' perception/opinion about the educational and training activities of the institution
2. Partners' perception/opinion about the conditions of educational and training work
3. Partners' perception/opinion about managing the partnerships established with the direct partners
4. Partners' perception/opinion related to the employees / staff members of the institution
5. Partners' perception/opinion about the evaluation of the long-term plans of the institution

### **6. b) Indicators supporting the satisfaction of direct partners**

1. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of direct partners regarding the conditions of educational and training work
2. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of direct partners regarding the results and the efficiency of the contact maintained with them
3. Other indicators that are important for the institution and support the satisfaction of direct partners not included in the above points

## **7. RESULTS RELATED TO THE SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYEES / STAFF**

***Compared to the preliminarily planned objectives and the results of other institutions, what results has the institution achieved in the area of staff satisfaction, and how did these results have developed over the past years?***

### **7. a) Employees / staff members' perception/opinion about the institution and its performance**

1. Staff members' perception/opinion on the area of educational work
2. Staff members' perception/opinion on the evaluation of professional work
3. Staff members' perception/opinion on the in-service / further training system of the institution:
4. Staff members' perception/opinion on the area of leadership - management
5. Staff members' perception/opinion on the area of work conditions
6. Staff members' perception/opinion on the area of cooperation
7. Staff members' perception/opinion on the area of involvement
8. Staff members' perception/opinion regarding the evaluation of the (implementation of) other long-term plans of the institution

### **7. b) Indicators supporting the satisfaction of employees / staff members**

1. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of staff members with the educational and training work
2. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of staff members with the evaluation of the professional work

3. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of staff members with the in-service / further training of staff
4. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of staff members with the management
5. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of staff members with the work conditions
6. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of staff members with cooperation
7. Indicators supporting the satisfaction of staff members with involvement

## **8. RESULTS RELATED TO THE IMPACT ON SOCIETY**

*Compared to the preliminarily planned objectives and the results of other institutions, what results has the institution achieved in the area of the satisfaction of the society or organisations and bodies representing the society, and how have these results developed over the past years?*

*8. a) Perception/opinion of the society and the indirect partners about the institution and its performance as well as the impact of the institution on society*

*8. b) Indicators supporting the satisfaction of the society and the indirect partners*

*8. c) Indicators supporting the implementation of the principles of sustainable development*

*8. d) Indicators supporting the efforts made to prevent harm to the environment*

## 9. KEY (PERFORMANCE) RESULTS

*Compared to the preliminarily planned objectives, performance and the results of other, properly selected institutions, what results has the institution achieved, and how have these results developed over the last years?*

### 9. a) Key results of the institution

1. Key results of the institution in the realisation of the educational objectives set in the Pedagogical Programme / Training Programme
2. Key results of the institution in the achievement of the teaching - training objectives set in the Pedagogical Programme / Training Programme
3. Other key results of the institution

### 9. b) Indicators supporting the key results of the institution

1. Indicators supporting the results related to education
2. Indicators supporting the results related to teaching - learning - training
3. Indicators supporting the professional model role of the institution
4. Indicators supporting the operational efficiency of the institution
5. Indicators supporting the utilisation of the institution's capacity
6. Indicators supporting the financial results of the institution

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The concept / notion of direct and indirect partners was introduced by the COMENIUS 2000 Programme for Quality Improvement in School Education.

“Literature on quality traditionally differentiates between 'internal' and 'external' partners, depending on whether those concerned are to be found inside, or outside the organisation. The application of these categories for school education is clumsy, as the parents, for instance, are not members of a kindergarten, or school, yet they can be considered more as 'internal' than 'external' partners.

Naturally, also in the field of public education the partners should be grouped on the basis of the closeness of their contact with the institution. But a more precise classification – which is more sensitive to the specific features of the sector –, can be obtained if one speaks about direct and indirect partners.

The most important direct partners of the kindergarten, school and hostel are the primary actors of the learning and teaching process – children, pupils, teachers and the supporting staff –, as well as the direct commissioners of the institution, namely the parents and the maintainers, who set up expectations to and/or grant resources for the educational establishment. An institution of school education has further direct partners, for example the next level of education, or the labour market (the next stage in the life of the young person), or the direct or potential commissioner of the educational programme offered by the institution.

The indirect partners of the institutions of school education are those who express and/or mediate social and professional demands and expectations towards the institution through some kind of a regulatory system, such as the Parliament, or the Ministry. Further, indirect partners are the institutions who may assist the establishment in achieving its goals by their co-operation, for instance, civil organisations, social, cultural and economic organisations, churches, sport facilities, etc., or, which spell out expectations concerning the process of learning, teaching and educational activities and/or its results. The latter include, among others, the professional organisations, chambers, or employers' organisations, etc.”

**58/2013. (XII. 13.) Decree of the Minister for National Economy  
on the Quality Assurance Framework in Adult Learning  
and on the members, duties and the detailed rules  
of the Adult Learning Expert Committee  
(Extract)**

**2. § (1)** On the base of the adult training quality assurance framework (hereinafter referred to as *framework*) the adult training provider institution establishes its own quality assurance (QA) system in the course of which

- a) it develops a comprehensive QA policy and a related strategy in order to ensure the quality of its training activities,
- b) it establishes formal internal mechanisms regarding the approval, monitoring and regular internal evaluation of its training programmes,
- c) it develops procedures ensuring the CPD and the certification of the tutors/trainers,
- d) it provides the necessary resources to all of its training programmes,
- e) it takes charge of the collection, analysis and the exploitation / use of the information ensuring the effectiveness of its training programmes,
- f) on its homepage it regularly publishes up-to-date and objective information relating to its training activities.

(2) By implementing the below detailed principles of the framework the adult training provider ensures that its QA system

- a) reflects that its management processes focus on the quality improvement of the training,
- b) enhances the continuous improvement of the training conditions,
- c) is based on self-assessment
- d) reflects an attitude striving for the continuous development of the human resources and encourages the CPD and self-education of the trainers in favour of the quality improvement of the training,
- e) promotes that both the changes in the training activities and the improvement of the services are based on facts, figures and feedback,
- f) is based on the involvement of the internal and external participants of the training activities, and
- g) is consistent with the size of the institution and with the complexity of its training programmes.

(3) The QA system of the adult training provider consists of the following content elements of the framework:

- a) the QA policy document including
  - aa) the institutional QA strategy,
  - ab) the responsibility of the departments and of the employees of the institution on the field of QA,
  - ac) the method used to involve the training participants into the QA process,
  - ad) the method applied in the course of the implementation, the monitoring and the review of the quality policy
- b) the QA document related to the training programmes describing
  - ba) the procedure for planning and content review of the training programmes and learning materials,

- bb) the procedure applicable in the course of the provision of the human and material conditions as well as of the financial resources necessary to the implementation of the training programmes,
  - bc) the monitoring methods following the progress and the performance of the adult participants of the training programme,
  - bd) the procedure for the feedback of employers and other labour market organizations relating to the training programmes,
  - be) the procedure for the publicity of the training programmes;
  - c) the document on the professional competences of the tutors/trainers and on the continuous improvement of the trainers' competences defining
    - ca) the procedure and requirements related to the employment of the trainers,
    - cb) the methods related to the competence development of the trainers,
    - cc) the procedure related to the feedback on the trainers' performance
  - d) the information system of the institution including
    - da) the collection and analysis of the data related to the learning outcomes of the adult participants,
    - db) the collection and analysis of the data related to the satisfaction survey conducted among the adult participants,
    - dc) the collection and analysis of the data related to the performance of the trainers
    - dd) the collection and analysis of the data related to the resource management of the institution
    - de) the collection and analysis of the data related to the labour market utilization of the competences acquired in the training programmes,
    - df) the process related to the publicity of the activities of the institution;
  - e) the document on the methods applied in the course of the investigation and the handling of the complaints,
  - f) the document describing the process of correction of the non-conformances arising in the course of the operation of the QA system of the institution and the process of the preventive activities ensuring to avoid such situations.
  - g) the document describing the procedure of the self-assessment of the institution.
- (4) The adult training provider makes its own decision on the frequency of the self-assessment.

**3. § (1)** The adult training provider defines the quality features (indicators) connected to the content elements included in sections *b), ba), bb), bd), be), c), ca), cc), d), df)* and *g)* of 2. § (3) according to the following conditions:

- a)* the indicator should be suitable for representing the result(s) of the content element and
- b)* it is necessary that the indicators be assigned to the target value(s) intended to be achieved by the relevant content element, considering the quality targets defined in the applicable Government Decree (393/2013. (XI. 12.)).

(2) If the target value assigned to the indicator is not achieved, the training provider explores the reasons (cause-effect analysis) and conducts the correction process described in section *f)* of paragraph 2. § (3). This process includes the steps necessary to achieve the target value or the justified adjustment of the target value for the subsequent period.

## ITALY

### ADULT Learning and Quality Assurance

In Italy<sup>67</sup>, as in Europe, **adult learning takes place in the following institutions:**

- CPIAs (Centri Provinciali Istruzione Adulti – Provincial Centres for Adult Education)
- Other non-formal providers: NGOs working within the field of Adult Education, such as 1) Unieda, Unione Italiana per l'Éducazione degli adulti. Italian Association for the Education of Adults; 2) Cnupi, Confederazione Italiana delle Università Popolari - Italian Confederation of Folks Universities (Università Popolari); 3) Unitre (National Association of Università per la Terza Età)
- Universities promoting University LifeLong Learning (see RUIAP network, collecting 30 universities in IT)
- VET providers delivering both EU-funded training courses (such as under the ESF 2007-2013 “Human Capital” axis) and funded through admission fees
- Volunteering organizations, including elderly cultural associations
- Etc.

There are legal frameworks for the different education sectors in Italy. **Although the education sector is generally under the responsibility of the National Ministry of Education, Research and University (MIUR), it should be noted that the VET sector is the responsibility of the Regions, not of the National Ministries.** Within the university sector, the Universities act autonomously, also with regard to quality assurance.

The **legal framework for lifelong learning** has been set within the Law of 28 June 2012 no. 92 on 'Provisions for the reform of the labour market in the prospects of growth'<sup>68</sup>, in which also the non formal and informal learning are defined. Through a legislative decree, D. Lgs 13 del 16-01-2013<sup>69</sup>, the general rules and minimum standards for the process of **individuation, validation and certification of non formal and informal learning**. A technical document, still under discussion by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the social parts and other key stakeholders, will set procedures and provide common tools for the actual implementation of the above-mentioned regulation individuation, validation and certification of non formal and informal learning. Such document has to be adopted at latest by 2018, as required by the EU agreements. Looking at the overall EU picture, Italy can be considered at an intermediate stage of implementation, having already carried out piloting initiatives at regional level, which however did not impact/have not been embedded at system level.

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<sup>67</sup>Eurypedia:

[https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Italy:Adult\\_Education\\_and\\_Training](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Italy:Adult_Education_and_Training)

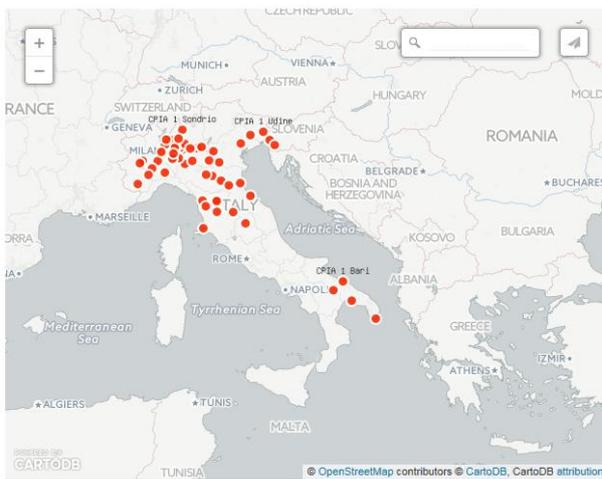
<sup>68</sup> [http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Strumenti/normativa/Documents/2012/20120628\\_L\\_92.pdf](http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Strumenti/normativa/Documents/2012/20120628_L_92.pdf) (in Italian)

<sup>69</sup> [http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/c08800ef-8627-4444-beaa-79771e49a615/avviso\\_250213\\_all.pdf](http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/c08800ef-8627-4444-beaa-79771e49a615/avviso_250213_all.pdf) (in Italian)

**The CPIAs are the most important entities in the formal adult education landscape in Italy.** They have been instituted to guarantee a wider educational and training offer, to better meet the different social requirements at national level. Their main aim is to give low skilled adults the opportunity to acquire a formal certification of first and second education level as well as literacy competences for foreign adults and training for prisoners. The responsible ministry is The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR).

There is not a specific quality assurance system for these entities. ISO certificates are used to rationalize processes at institution level.

**Geo-location of the CPIAs** activated for the 2014/2015 school year, showing **considerable disparities** across the country.



The Guidelines for Adult Education developed by MIUR within the P.A.I.D.E.I.A programme (Activity Plan for the Innovation of Adult Education)<sup>70</sup>, states that INDIRE (acting also as ERASMUS+ National Agency for Adult Learning) is in charge of the monitoring. The first monitoring report on the Activity Plan is expected for June 2015.

Various providers of **non-formal adult learning**, such as the Folk Universities, the Third Age Universities, the Volunteering Centres, have developed an own quality system. In some cases (e.g. UPTER) such system is based on self-evaluation.

Also, as a large portion of non-formal learning activities targeting adults are designed and delivered by VET providers, these extend their QA systems (Accreditation procedures, ISO Certification, etc.) to the AL activities.

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<sup>70</sup> Please find the official documentation (in Italian) at the following link: <http://ida.loescher.it/linee-guida-per-il-passaggio-al-nuovo-ordinamento.n2730>.

The **non-formal sector** does not have explicitly a quality assurance responsible institution at National level.

## **VET and Quality Assurance**

Coherently with the Ministerial Decree n. 166/2001 each Region is Responsible of the accreditation of regional VET providers as a part of a multiple quality assurance system also based on the National Evaluation System for Education<sup>71</sup>. Due to the Reform of the Title V of the Constitution (transfer of the central responsibility in the training system to the Regions and Provinces), the state cannot interfere with the local authorities.

**The accreditation system defines the minimum quality standards required to access public funds for VET. Each region has set up its own accreditation system referred to National common criteria** such as: Criterion A - Infrastructure and logistics resources; Criterion B - Economic and financial reliability; Criterion C - Management capacity and professional resources; Criterion D - Effectiveness and efficiency; Criterion E - Relations and networks within the territory.

The regional planning of VET activities also refers to specific training standards agreed and set, and later expanded, by the State and the Regions: minimum training standards related to the technical and professional skills of 21 professional qualifications (three-year pathways) and 21 diploma degrees, whose description is structured in skills, abilities and knowledge according to EQF schema.

Over the years, the mechanism of accreditation evolved from a perspective attentive to the management aspects of organizational and logistical support towards an **approach designed to focus on the quality of achieved performance**, with emphasis on the factors related to the educational product and its effects, rather than those related to the process.

In general the Italian system of accreditation uses various indicators<sup>72</sup> required by EQAVET Recommendation, although it seems necessary to coordinate the nomenclature, the objectives and the ways to achieve them so as to tighten the 'relationship' between the two models, with a view of improving and boosting the quality of VET services.

Furthermore, **the Accreditation systems have reached diverse implementation levels in the different regions**, creating nuanced regional quality environments and different degrees of attention for the impact of the training activities on learners. The Indicators identified in the EQAVET Recommendation are detailed by each regional authority according to the previous structure of the VET system and to its

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<sup>71</sup> Ministerial Decree 166/2001 in G.U. n. 162 of July 14 2001 - Supplement n. 185 entitled "Accreditation of training and headquarters centres"; 20/03/2008 Understanding between the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, University and Research, Regional Authorities and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano to define minimum standards for the accreditation system of training organisations and quality of services – GU n. 18 of 23 January 2009.

<sup>72</sup> The national accreditation system is based on five criteria:

- Criterion A - Infrastructure and logistics resources;
- Criterion B - economic and financial reliability;
- Criterion C - management capacity and professional resources;
- Criterion D - Effectiveness and efficiency;
- Criterion E - Relations within the territory

local specificities. Details of such differences can be found in the ISFOL document on Quality and Accreditation, finalized in 2013<sup>73</sup>.

In Umbria, for instance, the Criterion D of the adopted National Accreditation system is still suspended, despite the phase of regional experimentation of the system is already over. Other samples of regional declinations of the **Criterion D**:

- TUSCANY - '*credit performance system*' for maintaining the accreditation, introducing an awarding mechanism which incentives excellence and is monitored through data inserted into the regional information system and on-site visits;
- LOMBARDIA - implementation of a '*rating model*', which ranks accredited VET providers according to the efficacy of the delivered training and the features of the organisation in terms of staff competences, venues, financial situation, etc.;
- ABRUZZO - introduction of different indicators within the Criterion D, among which a special focus is on the percentage of expenditure on communication and technological innovation (at least 5%)<sup>74</sup>;
- AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF TRENTO – the Criterion D is considered a discriminating factor in both obtaining and maintaining the accreditation and assessed on annual basis through self-declaration, with possibility of spot checks.

External evaluation such as ISO 9001 is quite commonly being used and in some Regional Accreditation systems represent a short-cut to fulfill the criteria requirements.

At National level ISFOL, through the Quality Assurance National Reference Point (QANRP) is Responsible of Quality Assurance in VET and Adult Education, while INDIRE provides quality support exclusively for CPIAs and evening schools. This national system is built upon the EQAVET and takes into account the facilities, skills of the trainers, financial aspects, placement rate, etc. within institutes.

Recent developments in the field of VET is the National Plan for Quality Assurance of VET<sup>75</sup> This Plan, complying with the request of the EQAVET Recommendation, should undergo a further consultation with social partners as well as representatives of providers. The plan follows the general *Plan, do, check, act cycle* and is built upon existing practices.

In general, the initiatives on quality assurance and reforms within the education sectors are related to European developments and initiatives (for instance, Bologna process, EQF and EQAVET/EQARF).

**To increase the self-evaluation competences of VET providers, ISFOL has promoted two experimentations of the Peer Review methodology**, together with CIOFS-FP and CNOS-FAP, involving VET centres and schools in different Italian regions. This was part of the implementation of the National Plan on Quality Assurance.

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<sup>73</sup> [http://isfoloa.isfol.it/bitstream/123456789/784/1/Isfol\\_Qualita%20e%20Accreditamento.pdf](http://isfoloa.isfol.it/bitstream/123456789/784/1/Isfol_Qualita%20e%20Accreditamento.pdf), see pp 37- 38 for correspondences between EQAVET and regional systems.

<sup>74</sup> [http://www.regione.abruzzo.it/fil/docs/entiAccreditati/All1\\_NUOVA\\_DISCIPLINA\\_ACCREDITAMENTO.pdf](http://www.regione.abruzzo.it/fil/docs/entiAccreditati/All1_NUOVA_DISCIPLINA_ACCREDITAMENTO.pdf)

<sup>75</sup> [http://isfoloa.isfol.it/bitstream/123456789/400/1/Curzi\\_Meeting%20with%20Israeli%20delegation\\_22sett2011.pdf](http://isfoloa.isfol.it/bitstream/123456789/400/1/Curzi_Meeting%20with%20Israeli%20delegation_22sett2011.pdf)

In a context in which trainers and similar professionals acting in the educational sector do not belong to any national register, the so-called “professioni non organizzate” (“non-organized professions”) **professionals’ private associations** have been created, both profit and no-profit. In addition, with the Decree n. 4 of the 14 Jan 2013, it has been ruled that such associations can set qualitative standard requirements for the associated professionals, as a way to improve customers protection. Among the most long-running associations, there is the AIF – Associazione Italiana Formatori, which has developed professional profiles for Trainer, Training developer, Project manager, Institute manager and e-tutor (basic and specialist). Such professional profiles have been used over the year for their trainings but are not inserted into a national official register.

Although there are no strict regulations, in the accreditation system for VET ‘staff’ is included. However, there is nothing specific on competences for adult learning staff.

## **Challenges**

### **Self-evaluation and Peer Review**

Although the regional Accreditation devices are able to ensure a framework of clear and shared rules for access to public funds aimed at ensuring quality in VET, there is common understanding that to further develop a quality culture in Italy it is necessary to **encourage self-regulation and continuous improvement by accredited training agencies, through awarding mechanisms**. To this regard, the methodology of Peer Review, as stated in the National Plan for the Quality of Education and Vocational Training, may represent a viable and sustainable instrument to integrate the identified quality assurance criteria into the practice of VET providers. Under the coordination of ISFOL – National Institute for Vocational Training (hosting the Italian Quality Assurance National Reference Point), many piloting and experimentations have been implemented in this direction both at national and at regional level. One of the PRALINE’s project Italian partner, CIOFS-FP, has actively participated in the piloting at national level by providing some training courses for Peers and by coordinating all peer review visits amongst schools and VET centres across Italy. Umbria Region, in the framework of the piloting of Transnational Peer Review coordinated by FORMA.Azione, has approved by measures in order to encourage the dissemination of Peer Review among its accredited training agencies and has implemented pilot trainings of a group of trainers (DGR No 1424 of 12/11/2012).

### **Recognition and validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings**

Following the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01), Italy has defined the general rules and minimum standards for the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings, in the Decree n. 13 of the 13/01/2013. As already anticipated above, the implementation of this legal framework is still depending on the approval of a technical document.

In Umbria, for instance, the recognition of competences is only possible at the end of a formal training course and the recognition of credits only possible to comply entry requirements in the case of vocational training courses. Reality is far away from the framework proposed at EU level and adapted at national level.

### **National Qualifications Framework**

On February 2013, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education have approved the Agreement of the Conferenza Stato-Regioni (State-Regions Conferences) on referencing the Italian system of Qualifications to the European Qualification Framework. The way in which such process will be implemented will be included in the technical document presented for the previous challenge, due at latest by 2018.

A challenge is to **enlarge the National Plan for Quality Assurance to Adult Learning** at large, not only Formal Education. This could be done through the activation of the National Board for Quality established by the QANRP and never summoned yet. A first meeting is scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

## LITHUANIA

### A) Quality assurance systems: an overview

The Law on Science and Study (Mokslo ir studijų įstatymas, 2009) establishes science and study quality assurance principles, the award and recognition of higher education qualification and science degrees, science and study institutional management, activity organisation and monitoring, science and study financing. According to the law, there are two types of tertiary education institutions: universities (universitetas) and colleges (kolegija).

#### VET

The Law on Vocational Education and Training (1997, new edition 2007) sets out the structure and management of the VET system, design, management and award of qualifications, organisation and management of VET as well as VET funding. Based on this Law, the VET system in Lithuania covers initial VET, continuing VET, and vocational guidance. VET may be provided in parallel with general lower or upper secondary education. The Law shapes provisions for quality assurance by setting the principles for VET quality assurance. New impulse for the development of VET system was given after adopting the new edition of Law on VET in 2007. It sets principles for the VET system management and quality assurance, defines national qualifications framework, introduces apprenticeship and creates legal preconditions to bridge IVET and CVET.

On 24 November 2008, the Minister of Education and Science approved the Concept for Quality Assurance in Formal Education. The purpose of the Concept is to provide a conceptual framework for political and social arrangements regarding the understanding of education quality and methods for quality assurance in formal education, as well as to create preconditions for harmonisation of the quality assurance policy in education.

The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras, QVETDC (until January 2010 - Methodological Centre for VET) under the MES perform functions of Qualifications Management Institution as established in new edition of Law on VET (2007) including organisation of VET and qualifications standards development, research of qualifications demand and qualifications formation. It also develops VET quality and performs functions of Quality Assurance National Reference Point for VET and EQF National Coordination Point.

**Non-formal** Non available

### B) Further elaboration on quality assurance in the country

#### Legal framework

#### VET policies and LLL

The Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012 (Valstybinis švietimo strategijos 2003-2012 m. nuostatos, 2003) establish the key aims and key quantitative as well as qualitative outcomes to be used as the basis for the development of education and evaluation thereof in 2003-2012. The key aims of developing education includes to ensure quality of education which is in line with the needs of

an individual living in an open civil society under market economy conditions, and with the universal needs of society in the modern world.

New impulse for the development of VET system was given after adopting the new edition of Law on VET in 2007. It sets principles for the VET system management and quality assurance, defines national qualifications framework, introduces apprenticeship and creates legal preconditions to bridge IVET and CVET.

*VET:* The Law on Vocational Education and Training (Profesinio mokymo įstatymas, 1997, new edition 2007) sets out the structure and management of the VET system, design, management and award of qualifications, organisation and management of VET as well as VET funding. Based on this Law, the VET system in Lithuania covers initial VET (pirminis profesinis mokymas), continuing VET (tęstinis profesinis mokymas) and vocational guidance (profesinis orientavimas). VET may be provided in parallel with general lower or upper secondary education. The Law shapes provisions for quality assurance by setting the principles for VET quality assurance.

The amended Law has legitimated the internal and external assessment of the managerial and pedagogical performance of VET providers and defined the responsibilities for the quality assurance.

*HE:* The Law on Science and Study (Mokslo ir studijų įstatymas, 2009) establishes science and study quality assurance principles, the award and recognition of higher education qualification and science degrees, science and study institutional management, activity organisation and monitoring, science and study financing. According to the law, there are two types of tertiary education institutions: universities (universitetas) and colleges (kolegija).

*Non-formal education:* The activities of non-formal education are not coordinated in a centralized way.

## **Instruments**

*Formal education:* On 24 November 2008, the Minister of Education and Science approved the Concept for Quality Assurance in Formal Education. The purpose of the Concept is to provide a conceptual framework for political and social arrangements regarding the understanding of education quality and methods for quality assurance in formal education, as well as to create preconditions for harmonisation of the quality assurance policy in education.

Quality assurance in formal education is understood as an analysis of the overall education system, its components and interrelations to determine to what extent the fields under evaluation comply with the quality requirements or conceptual understanding of quality assurance in formal education. It also includes collection of relevant data necessary for undertaking other functions of evaluation: revealing, understanding and explaining the formal education processes, encouraging and teaching providers of formal education to work better, providing arguments for the new goals of formal education and improvement of its quality, gathering information about the activities of formal education providers, creating conditions for the transparency of these activities, and reporting on the work carried out.

In Lithuanian institutions of early childhood and school education and also formal adult education, evaluation processes are undertaken at the level of the evaluation of educational institutions (external evaluation and self-evaluation of their quality assurance) and at the level of the individual teacher evaluation (appraisal of teachers and school heads).

*Higher Education:* In higher education institutions, evaluation processes cover the external evaluation of higher education institutions' activities, evaluation of study programmes and evaluation of research and artistic production (activities).

*VET (all types):* In 2010 the preparation for implementation of internal quality management tools in VET institutions and for external VET quality assessment was ongoing. Additionally, in 2010 the national project for improvement of VET teachers' technological (subject) competences was started. Within the national-level project "Development and Implementation of a Common Quality Assurance System in Vocational Education and Training" (Vieningos profesinio mokymo kokybes uztikrinimo sistemos sukūrimas ir įdiegimas, 2005-2008) the Concept of VET Quality Assurance System in Lithuania was developed. The Concept is applicable both for initial and continuing (including the non-formal education) VET. The Concept was developed on the basis of the Study of Quality Assurance in VET in Lithuania and Other Countries (2007) and considering the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) for VET in Europe. In order to realise the concept and the measures of the Practical VET Resources Development Programme (cf. 2.1) it is foreseen to implement internal VET quality assurance mechanisms in VET institutions and to develop and pilot external assessment until 2014.

At the national level VET quality is assured by implementing the following measures:

- Development and approval of VET standards. VET standards are the basis for the development of VET programmes and assessment of the achievements of pupils and students. The VET standard is comprised of the following parts: general description of occupation; occupational purpose; areas of activity; competences and their range; training objectives; assessment of competences; key competences; and final assessment of qualification. After approval of new or amended VET standards, programmes must be revised accordingly.
- Development and registration of training programmes and issuing licences. A VET provider is entitled to implement a registered training programme if its resources are sufficient for implementation and if its teachers correspond to requirements set in the training programmes and legal acts.
- Supervision of training provision. Since the internal quality assurance system in Lithuanian vocational training institutions is still under development, an important role is assigned to the supervision of training quality. The respective departments at the Ministry of Education of Science are engaged in the supervision of the training process and performance.

The National Audit Office (Valstybės kontrolė) conducts selective examinations of training institutions, which include analysis of the efficiency of their performance. Other public bodies authorised to exercise control can also perform thematic inspections.

*Higher Education:* The principles for quality assurance of higher education level college programmes (ISCED 5) are set in the Law on Science and Study (2009). As stipulated in the Law, higher education institutions are responsible for quality of training, every higher education institution must have an internal system of quality assurance based on the provisions of quality assurance in studies of the European Higher Education Area and on the strategy of the improvement of the quality of performance as approved by the institution itself. In order to improve the quality of the activities of higher education institutions, external evaluation of study programmes and their accreditation and external institutional assessment are performed. Only accredited study programmes are carried out, the ones that are entered into Study and Training Programmes Register. The external evaluation of study programmes of higher education institutions is coordinated by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

## **Accreditation**

*Secondary education:* In 2004, the Minister of Education and Science approved the criteria of accreditation of educational programmes and the procedure for its implementation which establishes the goal of accreditation of the programmes of secondary education, the tasks, principles and criteria, organisation and performance of accreditation and the procedure for considering of appeals. The goal of accreditation of the programmes of secondary education is to ensure quality conditions to acquire secondary education for all the learners.

Accreditation is organised and performed by the Commission for Accreditation of Secondary Education Programme, the accreditation coordination commissions and assessment groups. Members of the assessment groups (accreditation experts) are prepared according to the programme for preparation of accreditation experts approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

*Non-formal education:* In the field of non-formal education, a great number of state institutions (most often within departmental activities) and non-governmental organisations are operating, but, due to insufficient monitoring and control of such activity, the quality and the results of such non-formal teaching and learning remain unclear.

## **Self evaluation**

*VET:* For assuring and improving VET quality it is foreseen to implement monitoring of VET on the basis of monitoring indicators approved by the minister of education and science, quality self assessment and external assessment, assessment of VET programmes and learning outcomes and supervision of VET implementation and qualifications awarding.

## **External evaluation**

One of the main tools employed by the state seeking to ensure quality is assessment, self-assessment and audit of training centres and schools for adults. This is a continual and thorough process of reflections involving all the subdivisions and employees of schools whose aim is to analyse the aspects of school activities, identify the advantages and disadvantages and draft plans for the improvement of school activities. The internal audit of a school covers 7 fields: the content of education, learning achievements, learning and education, assistance for learners, ethos (i.e. the environment at school, the relations between the teachers and learners, regulations of the school in respect of the conduct of learners and the subjects, etc.), resources, school management and quality assurance. On the basis of the results of the audit, a strategic plan of the school is drafted for a period of 3 years where a vision of the school is formulated, the goals and priorities are set, the tasks are formulated and a clear and specific procedure for their implementation is established. A municipality performs the external audit of a school. Independent experts may also be invited to carry out the external audit. Currently, the assessment of educational establishments performs the following functions: formative (when the assessment is made with a view to improving); generalising (when account of the performed works is given); administrative (when it is sought to better perform the management functions). The first function is performed by examiners from educational and scientific establishments seeking to find out the relevant issues in the field of education (for example, a thorough investigation of the activities of schools participating in the experiment of profiled teaching, the assessment of schools in the transition to 10- year basic education, etc.), the issues of efficiency and effectiveness of textbooks and educational programmes, the opinion of learners and the society about the development of education or changes in educational system. The Ministry of Education and Science together with the Education Departments of

municipalities (counties) regularly organise the assessment of the quality of education at schools of general education. Educational establishments themselves perform the second function when they account for their activities to a municipality, the county administrator, the Ministry (or the founder) in the form of various reports, questionnaires, etc. The third function - inspection - is carried out by the inspectors of Education Departments of the county governor's administration and specialists of respective departments of the Ministry of Education and Science. This is a systematic monitoring, analysing, control and assessment of the educational system, and the activities of its separate chains and separate establishments.

*Higher education:* The procedures for higher education institutions external assessment and accreditation and methods for the institutional assessment were approved in 2010. External assessment of colleges is foreseen to start in 2011. Only accredited study programmes are carried out, the ones that are entered into Study and Training Programmes Register. The external evaluation of study programmes of higher education institutions is coordinated by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

## **Need assessment**

### **VET**

A newly drafted VET programme is subject to approval by a competent employer organisation (e.g. the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts). Next, experts (vocational teachers, employers) evaluate the quality of the programme, and, in the case of positive assessment, the programme is entered on the Register of Study and Training Programmes.

## MALTA

### **A. Quality assurance systems: an overview**

#### **Higher Education/Vocational Education and Training/Further Education (HE/VET/FE)**

The MQC and the NCHE, which previously have been responsible to assure Quality for these sectors have merged and now are one entity with the title NCFHE: The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE).

The NCFHE was legislated by the revised Education Act, which came into force on the 1st August 2012 and the new entity was officially launched on the 14th September 2012. The NCFHE replaces and incorporates the Malta Qualifications Council, which was set up in 2005, and the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) both of which are referred to in the PANTEIA report.

The work plan of the new Commission is far-reaching and ambitious and thanks to the entry of the new legislation, the Commission will centre its remit on licensing, accreditation and quality assurance of further and higher education.

Further education refers to all formal education of persons above the compulsory school age, generally up to MQF level 5. Higher education includes activities and programmes of teaching, training and research at tertiary level at and above MQF level 6. The importance of quality assurance is not limited to this national legislation but is also ingrained in the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.

The Commission will also commence work in a number of sectors on the validation of informal and non-formal learning. So far, the validation of informal and non-formal learning was introduced at compulsory schooling level through the introduction of the revised school leaving certificate and profile which is pegged at Level 1 and Level 2 of the Malta Qualifications Framework.

The validation of informal and non-formal learning at further levels will enhance life-long learning and give value to all forms of learning. This will in turn facilitate mobility of students and workers.

With the coming into force of this legislation, all Further and Higher education providers will require a license to operate in Malta. This license will only be issued upon accreditation of the provider and its training programmes. This evaluation and accreditation of both provider and training programmes against local and internationally recognised standards will generate accountability. All licensed providers will subsequently be included in a national public register. Accreditation will only be awarded if the training providers have an internal quality assurance system in place. The Commission will further ensure that this quality assurance system is audited periodically.

In July 2014 the NCFHE was accepted as affiliate member by ENQA, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

#### **Higher Education**

The sector of Higher Education now included the University of Malta, MCAST (which is offering level 6 qualifications), ITS (offering level 5 qualifications), and other private institutions (which act as local branches of foreign Universities). These sectors while having their internal Quality assurance bodies are also to respond to the NCFHE as explained above.

## **Further Education**

In Malta further Education is mainly divided into two branches: Formal and Non-formal. Formal education is given by different entities such as the Directorate for Early School leavers and Lifelong learning. (Which replaced the Directorate for Lifelong Learning). The Directorate is setting up at the moment a Quality assurance branch. To be in line with the NCFHE requirements on internal Quality Assurance arrangements. Besides the Directorate for Early School Leavers and Lifelong Learning, which is the biggest service provider of Further Education, there are other private institutions which offer Formal Further Education learning.

The non-formal Further education courses, which are structured courses but that do not lead to a formal certification but usually are only attested by a certificate of participation are given by various institutions, the Directorate for Early School Leavers and Lifelong Learning is also a major service provider in this area but private institutions are also present. While the Directorate is, as mentioned, setting up its own Quality Assurance even for this area, the private institutions, which most of them are very small, usually depend on the NCFHE for their quality assurance.

## **VET**

VET courses are mainly offered in Malta by MCAST (Malta College for Arts, Science, and Technology) and by ITS (Institute for Tourism Studies) although there are few private institutions that offer VET courses. Both MCAST and ITS have their Quality Assurance departments, however are also subject to scrutiny from the NCFHE as discussed above.

## **B) Further elaboration on quality assurance in the country**

Mainly the description in the document are still standing, the only differences have been already outlined above and are mainly regarding the NCFHE which took the role of the MQC, mainly through one of its branches: the MQRIC but also through the Quality Assurance section set up within the NCFHE. Otherwise the other institutions mentioned (MCAST, Directorate for Quality and Standards, Directorate for Lifelong learning – now Directorate for Early School Leavers and Lifelong learning, University, ITS) still have the internal Quality assurance as mentioned. However one must note that at the moment a drive to strengthen these institutions' Quality Assurance is being taken and reforms are continuously being carried out.

## **Challenges**

As regards the challenges sector all the difficulties mentioned are at the moment being tackled. A series of reforms is currently underway and a strategy on lifelong learning is currently being worked on. The Setting up of both the NCFHE and the Directorate for Early School Leavers and Lifelong learning are the initial steps towards tackling the challenges mentioned in the PANTEIA document.

Meanwhile, on 26 July 2014, Malta's National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) submitted a proposal of a new National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education for public consultation. The framework includes a common set of standards for internal quality assurance (QA) and external quality audits for both further and higher educational institutions, bringing together the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for higher education and the EQAVET model of QA for vocational education. The framework refers to further, higher and adult formal education provision in both state and non-state sectors.

The framework was launched during a conference which opened a three-month consultation period (which ended in September 2014) in which selected ENQA members were invited to provide feedback on the proposed framework. Following the consultation period, the framework is now being finalised.

The National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education is a key deliverable of the ESF Project 1.227 'Making Quality Visible', which is led the NCFHE. The proposed QA framework in full detail is available here:

[http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/uploads/filebrowser/National%20Quality%20Assurance%20Framework\\_2.pdf](http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/uploads/filebrowser/National%20Quality%20Assurance%20Framework_2.pdf)

As can be seen from this short report, the situation presented by the PANTEIA document is becoming obsolete. Reforms are being carried out which are tackling the challenges listed. We have been in contact with institutions entrusted with these changes and as soon as we have more information (which as you can understand is currently in the pipeline) we will send it immediately so that you can keep an update of the situation in Malta.

## PORTUGAL

Several quality frameworks exist in Portugal depending on the kind of training provision.

The **national system of accreditation and certification of training providers (applicable to formal training no matter if targeted to young people or adults)** is one of the National Qualification System's **quality assurance mechanisms** that recognise the proper pedagogical practices for the training providers' development: the Quality Certification Referential defines which conditions Training Providers must comply with in order to assure a quality training intervention.

The Certification of the Training Provider can be granted to any private entity constituted and registered in Portugal and that develops training activities within the national territory. Its compulsory to Training Providers that want to promote certified training specially if accessing to public financed funds.

This Certification is only attributed to Public Entities or Private Entities with public objectives if they develop training activities which aren't foreseen in the respective organic law, creation diploma, homologation, etc, if they are foreseen in the respective organic law, creation diploma, homologation, etc they do not need to require this certification (it's the case of CECO, for instance).

The first step is the presentation of a Certification Request containing a set of resources and practices related to the Vocational Training organisation and development and that demonstrate the compliance with the Quality Certification Referential requirements.

The technical evaluation of this request is carried out through the analysis of the delivered documents and sometimes complemented with an audit which checks the competences and resources used by the entity to develop Vocational Training in the requested VET areas.

Regular audits of the certified Training Provider are carried out by DGERT (the public body that run the system) in order to assess the compliance with the Certification requirements and the continuous performance monitoring of the activity results.

This system can be described as the **most comprehensive system of quality assurance applicable to training in PT.**

Within this system there is Quality Certification Standard that defines certification requirements in general and quality requirements (find it enclosed – relevant from page 13 and followings).

Regarding the quality requirements the Quality Certification Standard defines quality dimensions (quality areas?) and for each one, requirements, criteria and verification sources are defined.

Quality dimensions focused on the internal structure and organization:

- Human Resources
- Facilities and Equipment

Quality dimensions focused on the training process development:

- Planning and management of the training activity
- Conception and development of the training activity
- Functioning rules
- Organization of the Technical and pedagogical files
- Training agreements
- Treatment of complaints

Quality dimensions focused on results and quality continuous improvement:

- Results analysis
- After training follow up and accompaniment

- Quality continuous improvement

Then a very exhaustive description of those quality areas, requirements, criteria and verification sources are provided.

On top of that and as far as **Adult (FORMAL) Education** is concerned there is a publication “Guia de operacionalização de cursos de educação e formação de adultos” published by ANQEP that includes guidelines for the operationalisation of Adults Education courses in Portugal and including not only guidelines regarding the assessment of LO but also a chapter on how the monitoring of those courses happens, and that can be seen as quality assurance mechanisms.

As far as **validation and recognition of non formal and informal learning (ADULT INFORMAL AND NON FORMAL EDUCATION RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION)** is concerned, there exists a quality framework that organisations wanting to operate in this area must accomplish.

Earlier the structures where people could go to go through the process of validation and recognition were called New Opportunities Centres and now they are called “Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional” (Centres for Qualification and Vocational Training) doing basically the same but including also guidance of young people (before only for adults) and a regional/local approach.

A new “REFERENCE GUIDE TO QUALITY ASSURANCE” for these new structures has just been published (that is available in PT).

#### **Google translation of the introduction:**

*The framework guide provides a set of indicators and standards reference that will allow:*

- a) To guide and direct the activity of CQEP, ensuring the quality of its intervention;*
- b) promote harmonization of procedures, so that the network CQEP act so coherent and coordinated among young people and adults;*
- c) monitor the activity of CQEP based on common indicators.*

*The analysis and assessment of compliance and / or diversion of each of the indicators presented here will be the responsibility of each CQEP. The ANQEP accompany and monitor the activity of CQEP, both through systematic consultation of the data recorded in SIGO (an electronic platform as referred and described in the PANTEIA study), holding meetings and follow-up visits (covering not only the consultation of the different stakeholders involved in the process, as well as consultation of the technical and pedagogical files).*

The framework defines a set of reference indicators and benchmarks, organized in 2 big categories:

- 2) the ones regarding organization and functioning requirements of the organisations/ structures providing those services
  - Team
  - Facilities and Equipment
  - Opening Hours
  - SIGO Integrated System for Management of the Double Certification Training Supplies – Indicators and benchmarks regarding the proper use of the information system
  - Technical and pedagogical files
  - Partnerships
  - Compliance Letters

- Monitoring and evaluation (including mandatory activities reports and application of self-evaluation instruments)
  - Availability of Complaints Book
- 3) the ones applicable to the different phases of the process
- Information and divulgation regarding the process towards the target groups
  - Welcome/Reception
  - Diagnosis
  - Information and orientation
  - Guidance
  - Monitoring
  - Recognition and validation of competences
  - Certification of competences

## Annex 2 – Definitions of formal and non-formal adult learning

Source	“Formal”	“Non-formal”
UNESCO - 1997	<p><b>Formal Education</b> as “...education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous “ladder” of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age of five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old. In some countries, the upper parts of this “ladder” are organised programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system: such programmes have come to be known as the “dual system” or equivalent terms in these countries.”</p>	<p><b>Non Formal Education</b> is defined as “any organised and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out of school children, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture. Non formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the “ladder” system, and may have a differing duration.”</p>
Eurostat - 2006	<p><b>Formal Education</b> The primary statistical unit for formal education remains the educational programme as defined by ISCED 97. The central or main SLA of formal education has to be taught learning (face to face and at distance). To classifying formal education learning activities educational programmes by level based on educational content is considered sufficient.</p>	<p><b>Non-Formal Education</b> The primary statistical unit for Non-Formal Education are institutionalised learning arrangements (organising frames) to learn one or more subjects. These arrangements could take the form of courses, non-formal education programmes or any arrangement where the central or main SLA is institutionalised and taught (face to face and at distance). Some Non-formal education learning activities are taken into account in ISCED97 classification of educational programmes by level, based on educational content.</p>
Cedefop – 2008	<p><b>formal learning</b> Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (e.g. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification.</p>	<p><b>non-formal learning:</b> Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view.</p>

<p>Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01)/</p>	<p><b>‘Formal learning’</b> means learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education.</p>	<p>The term <b>‘non-formal learning’</b> is understood as learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers. Common examples of non-formal learning include: in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills; structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources); and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public.</p>
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