



Adult Education and Training in Europe: Programmes to Raise Achievement in Basic Skills

*Country
Descriptions*

*Background document to the report
Adult Education and Training in
Europe: Widening Access to Learning
Opportunities*

Eurydice Report

*Education and
Training*



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INTRODUCTION

This inventory of adult basic education and basic skills programmes takes the form of 35 system descriptions, covering 32 countries (all EU Member States ⁽¹⁾ as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey). Its main goal is to support mutual understanding and dialogue between countries.

The document has been drafted on the basis of a standalone collection of data by Eurydice that took place in April and May 2014, with the school year 2013/14 as the main reference period ⁽²⁾. The data collection covered a range of areas related to learning opportunities for adults with low basic skills, or low level or no qualifications. One of the areas of enquiry was the existence of large-scale programmes intended to support adults in acquiring basic skills (in particular, the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology – ICT). Large-scale programmes were defined as those which operated throughout the whole country or across a significant geographical area, and were intended to run long-term with funding expected to continue over several consecutive years. On the basis of this definition, countries were asked to complete detailed questionnaires in order to provide the relevant information. In addition, the data collection also included questions about policy commitments relating to adult literacy and basic skills in Eurydice member countries. The following country descriptions are based on these elements.

In addition to the country descriptions, the information collected from the Eurydice Network was used as a basis for the comparative report 'Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities' (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). The country descriptions complement the comparative analysis, particularly the information on basic skills programmes.

⁽¹⁾ Belgium is covered by three separate descriptions, corresponding to three Belgium Communities. The United Kingdom is covered by two descriptions, one covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and another covering Scotland.

⁽²⁾ National statistics on programme participants often have different reference periods. The exact reference year of statistical data (if data is available) is indicated in each country sheet.

GUIDELINES FOR THE READER

The country descriptions follow the protocol order, i.e. alphabetical order of country names in their official languages. Each description starts with background information, which includes data from various international surveys, namely the EU Labour Force Survey (Eurostat; reference year 2013) ⁽³⁾, the Adult Education Survey (Eurostat; reference year 2011) ⁽⁴⁾ and the Survey of Adult Skills – PIAAC (OECD, reference year 2012) ⁽⁵⁾. The background section also provides details on whether the country has developed a specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. It is followed by the description of the main types of publicly subsidised provision to support the acquisition of basic skills, in particular the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Whenever possible, the text provides details on:

- large-scale programmes for mature learners that are closely related to the system of initial education, in particular, programmes for the completion of lower secondary education (ISCED 2) (for more details on educational levels, see Glossary);
- large-scale standalone programmes or programme frameworks designed specifically to deliver adult literacy and basic skills, which may be formal or non-formal.

Apart from the types of provision mentioned above, the text acknowledges that other frameworks also contribute to the acquisition of basic skills, in particular liberal (or popular) adult education, active labour market policies, short-term project-based initiatives, and vocational education and training. However, these are generally not analysed in any detail (except in cases where countries highlighted their particular relevance to the field of adult literacy and basic skills).

The reader should keep in mind that the text does not cover:

- regional or local programmes that do not exist throughout the whole country;
- programmes that are at the boundary between non-formal and informal learning (e.g. family literacy programmes);
- programmes targeting specifically the migrant population (in particular language and social integration programmes);
- programmes that only target young adults (up to the age of 25);
- programmes designed to support adults complete upper secondary education (even if conceived explicitly as 'second chance' programmes);
- programmes for the validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- outreach and awareness-raising campaigns (even if focused on literacy and basic skills).

These descriptions are intended to be read on an individual country basis, rather than from a comparative perspective. Readers interested in a comparative overview are invited to consult the report 'Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities', Chapter 3, Section 3.2. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

⁽³⁾ Data on the adult population with the educational attainment below upper secondary education (ISCED 3), can be consulted on the Eurostat website, online code *edat_lfs_9903* (data extracted September 2014). Data on the adult population with educational attainment below lower secondary education (ISCED 2) was extracted and calculated by Eurostat for the purposes of the comparative report mentioned above (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

⁽⁴⁾ Data on the participation of adults in education and training according to educational attainment level can be consulted on the Eurostat website, online code *trng_aes_101* (data extracted September 2014).

⁽⁵⁾ Data taken from the comparative report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

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Belgium – French Community

Background information

In Belgium, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 27.2 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary), while 11.4 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 15.2 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The French Community of Belgium has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

In the French Community of Belgium, literacy (*alphabétisation*)⁽⁶⁾ is an area of education which, from a policy perspective, is extremely heterogeneous. Various education frameworks, which fall under the responsibility of different administrations⁽⁷⁾, are involved in the literacy area. However, overall coordination is ensured by the Permanent Committee for Adult Literacy (*Comité de pilotage permanent sur l'alphabétisation des adultes*), which conducts regular surveys of literacy providers across the French Community of Belgium. According to the most recent data, in 2010-2011, literacy provision was delivered by around 500 providers (*Source: Comité de pilotage permanent sur l'alphabétisation des adultes, 2010-2011*).

Main types of provision

Adult literacy and basic skills programmes receive funding under a dozen education frameworks. The most significant are 'permanent education' (*éducation permanente*) and 'education for social advancement' (*enseignement de promotion sociale*). Some provision is also ensured by other public bodies such as Forem (the public employment service of Wallonia) and *Bruxelles Formation* (the public employment service of the Brussels region).

The framework 'education for social advancement' (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) includes the provision of 'second chance' programmes at various levels (lower secondary, upper secondary and higher education). It leads to certificates comparable to those obtained in the system of initial education for young people, as well as qualifications specific to the system of adult education.

Bruxelles Formation and Forem are public organisations focusing mainly on programmes for unemployed people living in the Brussels area and Wallonia. They provide various standalone programmes designed to support the acquisition of basic skills, including a 'basic training programme' (*formation de base*) for low-skilled unemployed people. The programme includes elements of literacy and numeracy, but can also include the preparation of a candidate's 'vocational project'. The duration of the programme varies between four weeks and two years. This type of provision is delivered either directly by *Bruxelles Formation* or Forem, or by their partners (i.e. sub-contractors that are mainly non-profit organisations). The funding comes from public sources, commonly combined with sectoral funding. The 'basic training programme' does not lead to any formal certificate, but enables learners to follow additional training, including programmes leading to recognised qualifications.

A detailed description of all the programmes contributing to the literacy area (*alphabétisation*) but delivered under other frameworks is beyond the scope of this overview.

⁽⁶⁾ See: <http://www.alphabetisation.be/> (Accessed 26 January 2015).

⁽⁷⁾ These are Federation Wallonia-Brussels (*Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*), the French Community Commission of Brussels – Capital Region (*Commission communautaire française de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale* – COCOF) and Wallonia (*Wallonie*).

Belgium – German-speaking Community

Background information

In Belgium, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 27.2 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary), while 11.4 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 15.2 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The German-speaking Community of Belgium has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

All formal qualifications up to upper secondary level – i.e. including those at lower secondary level – can be obtained through an external examinations system (*Schulexterner Erwerb von Abschlüssen*) coordinated by the Ministry of the German-speaking Community. Within this system, students follow a course of education where the curriculum is comparable to that of initial education for young people. The duration of the course varies across institutions and depends on the qualification studied. Generally, it lasts between one and two years and includes between 570 and 1 080 hours of tuition. Participants are expected to pay fees, both for the tuition (which is optional for learners) and for the external examinations. According to the statistics of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community, in 2014, only two participants took an examination for a certificate below upper secondary level (other candidates took an examination at upper secondary level, which is beyond the scope of this description) (*Source*: Ministry of the German-speaking Community, 2014).

Adults, who wish to improve their skills in various areas, including ICT, languages, etc., can follow courses in evening schools, which are affiliated to secondary schools (*Kurse in Abendschulen, die an Sekundarschulen angegliedert sind*). This type of provision falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community. It can lead to certificates corresponding to the system of initial education as well as to various certificates specific to the system of adult education (e.g. upon completion of short ICT courses). The duration of programmes varies. Although this provision is publicly subsidised, learners are expected to pay fees, which vary across institutions and courses. Official data on the number of participants is not available.

There are also 13 publicly subsidised adult education institutions recognised by the Ministry of the German-speaking Community providing courses in various areas, including literacy, numeracy and ICT (*Unterricht in anerkannten Erwachsenenbildungseinrichtungen*). These courses have a non-formal character and their duration and content vary significantly across programmes and institutions. They generally do not lead to any certificate or qualification. Although provision is publicly subsidised (funding sources are national as well as European), learners are expected to co-finance their tuition. Official data on the number of participants is not available.

Finally, there are various project-based initiatives. For example, between 2010 and 2014, the Ministry of the German-speaking Community coordinated the programmes 'Perspective IV', targeting the unemployed (in particular, the long-term unemployed), under-qualified people, those with disabilities and workers with reading and writing difficulties. These included non-formal literacy courses as well as language courses in German and French. Around 200 people could have benefited from the programme between 2010 and 2014 (*Source*: Ministry of the German-speaking Community, 2014).

Belgium – Flemish Community

Background information

In Belgium, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 27.2 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary), while 11.4 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 15.2 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 14 % of adults in the Flemish Community of Belgium have low literacy skills and 13.4 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

The Flemish Community of Belgium has developed a strong literacy framework. At present, it is guided by the Strategic Plan to Raise Literacy 2012-2016 (*Strategisch Plan Geletterdheid Verhogen 2012-2016*) (Vlaamse overheid, 2012), which includes explicit references to the adult population.

Main types of provision

There are 13 basic adult education centres (*Centra voor Basiseducatie*) offering programmes designed in cooperation with the central authorities. These centres are run by private non-profit organisations funded by the Flemish Government (the provision is free for participants). They provide basic skills courses in subjects such as Dutch, mathematics, languages, ICT and social orientation (the list is non-exhaustive; for more details, see below). Most programmes have a modular structure.

- Dutch: this area focuses on four skills (reading, writing, listening and oral interaction/speaking) and comprises three programmes. The programme 'Dutch – Social Functioning' contains 600 teaching periods. 'Dutch – Social Participation' and 'Dutch – Moving On' (building on the first programme) contain, in total, respectively 1 100 and 1 050 teaching periods. Between April 2012 and March 2013, 2 741 participants were registered in this area of study (*Source*: AHOVOS, 2012/13).
- Mathematics: this area is divided into three sub-programmes, building on each other: 'Mathematics – Social Functioning', 'Mathematics – Social Participation' and 'Mathematics – Moving On'. Depending on the number of modules taken, the duration varies between 360 and 630 teaching periods. Between April 2012 and March 2013, 3 347 participants were registered (*Source*: *ibid.*).
- Information and communication technology: this programme lasts 190 hours and offers basic ICT skills. Between April 2012 and March 2013, 5 356 participants were registered (*Source*: *ibid.*).
- Social orientation: aims at increasing the ability of low-qualified adults to act in diverse situations of personal and social life. It includes areas such as communication, culture, health, housekeeping, lifelong learning, mobility, dealing with changes, rights and duties, living together, technology, work, etc. The programme is divided into sub-programmes of 90 to 360 teaching periods. Between April 2012 and March 2013, 5 271 participants were registered (*Source*: *ibid.*).

The main provider of publicly subsidised vocationally-oriented courses for adults, including basic skills courses, is the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB). VDAB organises programmes mainly for unemployed people (courses are provided by VDAB itself or by one of its partners). Yet, it also offers programmes for individual employees and companies. The provision leads to various types of certificates, which generally differ from those delivered in the system of initial education. Certain programmes focus on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In 2013,

67 545 people took a training course in a VDAB skills centre (*Source*: VDAB, 2013). During the same reference period, there were 15 641 VDAB-funded training activities provided in the workplace ⁽⁸⁾ and 1 197 people took part in ESF-funded actions to strengthen their competences, which were provided by external contractors based on tendering procedures (*Source*: *ibid*).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of project-based initiatives.

Bulgaria

Background information

In Bulgaria, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 18.2 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 3.5 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 12.3 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). Bulgaria has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Since 2012, courses for mature learners (aged 16 and above) with limited prior school experience have been available. They are developed under the Operational Programme 'Human Resource Development', scheme 'Adult Literacy', and are known as '*Nov shans za uspeh*' ⁽⁹⁾. Their main target group are people who have not completed 'basic education', i.e. education up to the end of lower secondary level. They cover various fields, including Bulgarian language and literature; mathematics; English language; geography and economics; history and civilisation; chemistry, physics and biology; information technology; physics and astronomy; and biology and health. The courses are delivered by schools that also provide initial education for young people; their duration varies between 324 hours for courses covering the last three grades of lower secondary education and 12 hours for courses such as ICT or physics and astronomy, covering only the last grade of lower secondary education. Upon successful completion of lower secondary education, participants can follow upper secondary general or vocational programmes. The courses are co-financed from the European Social Fund and learners are not expected to pay fees. Up to March 2013 (i.e. the end of the pilot phase of the initiative), there were around 7 000 participants (*Source*: MEN, 2013). The second phase is expected to involve the participation of around 3 500 additional people.

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

⁽⁸⁾ VDAB-funded training activities provided in the workplace included around 13 000 actions falling under the on-the-job basic skills training scheme known as 'Individual Company-Based Vocational Training Contract' (*Individuele beroepsopleiding in de onderneming* – IBO). This scheme provides subsidies for a specific employment contract allowing jobseekers to combine work and basic skills training. Moreover, they also offer other types of provision, e.g. guidance from careers advisors.

⁽⁹⁾ See: <http://novshans.mon.bg/> (Accessed 26 January 2015).

Czech Republic

Background information

In the Czech Republic, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 7.2 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 0.2 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 10.5 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 11.8 % of adults in the Czech Republic have low literacy skills and 12.9 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Mature learners who have not completed lower secondary education (i.e. the 9th grade of the single-structure 'basic school') can follow a course leading to the completion of this level (*kurz pro získání základního vzdělání*). The content and examinations are designed to meet the requirements of the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. This provision is publicly subsidised, is free for learners and leads to the acquisition of the lower secondary school leaving certificate. During the school year 2013/14, 374 people were registered in the programme (*Source: MŠMT, 2013/14*).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding. They mainly focus on digital competences for adults, especially the use of ICT.

Denmark

Background information

In Denmark, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 21.7 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary), while only 0.5 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 38 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is well above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 15.7 % of adults in Denmark have low literacy skills and 14.2 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Adults who wish to improve their basic skills' level can follow a programme known as 'Preparatory Adult Education' (*Forberedende voksenundervisning – FVU*), which falls under the responsibility of the

Ministry of Education. It is intended to support the acquisition of basic skills, in particular, reading, writing and numeracy. The main aim is to prepare mature learners for further education and training, and strengthen their participation in society. The FVU programme is free for participants and includes between 120 and 240 hours of tuition divided into several 'steps' (reading has four steps of 30-60 hours; and maths has two steps of 30-60 hours). It does not lead to any certificate or qualification. In 2012/13, 24 755 people participated in the FVU programme (8 716 were aged below 29; 12 069 were aged between 30 and 49; and 3 970 were over 50) (*Source: Danmarks Statistik, 2014*).

The FVU programme can be continued in 'General Adult Education' (*Almen voksenuddannelse – AVU*), which also falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The programme targets people aged 18 and above who have not completed lower secondary education or who need to supplement their basic education. General Adult Education is provided as single subject courses. It leads to an examination which qualifies the holder for progression to further education and training (i.e. it corresponds to the completion of lower secondary education). The certificate obtained follows national standards for lower secondary education, but it is for specific subjects. The programme is mostly offered in the centres for adult education (*Voksenundervisningscentre – VUC*). It represents around 60 hours of tuition per subject and most subjects are divided into three levels of proficiency. Participants are generally expected to pay fees, which vary between DKK 120 to DKK 1 170 (between EUR 16 and 160) and partly depend on the participant's prior learning achievement (i.e. participants with a higher prior learning achievement are expected to pay higher fees than those with a lower level of achievement). In 2012/13, 22 251 people participated in the AVU programme (13 745 were aged under 29; 5 775 were aged between 30 and 49, and 2 731 were over 50) (*Source: Danmarks Statistik, 2014*).

There are also publicly subsidised institutions (non-profit organisations) under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture providing programmes which contribute to adults' acquisition of basic skills. These are:

- Folk high schools (*Folkehøjskoler*), which provide boarding courses lasting between one week and one year (the most common duration is between four and five months). Upon successful completion of a course, the learner receives a diploma which is not part of the qualification structure, but can be used for validating non-formal and informal learning (the process known as 'real competence' assessment). The fee is generally the same for all participants, but schools are entitled to reduce it for certain groups or special cases. In 2012/13, 5 209 learners attended a folk high school lasting 40 weeks (however, as not all the courses take that long, the overall number of participants is higher in reality) (*Source: Lange Analyser, 2014*).
- Evening schools (*Aftenskoler – voksenundervisning*), which offer a wide range of courses. The duration of these courses is variable. Central-level authorities do not have exact data on participation levels.
- Day folk high schools (*Daghøjskoler*), which mainly focus on adults who are not in employment. They offer a wide range of courses. Central-level authorities do not have exact data on the participation numbers.

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, the system of Adult Vocational Training Courses (*Arbejdsmarkedetsuddannelser – AMU*), which consists of short-term courses designed to meet the needs of the unskilled as well as skilled workers. The AMU system falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, which is advised by councils with a strong input from the social partners.

Germany

Background information

In Germany, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 13.7 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary), while 3.3 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 27 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 17.5 % of adults in Germany have low literacy skills and 18.4 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale. Moreover, in 2010, Germany conducted its own survey (The Level One Study), showing that functional illiteracy affects 14.5 % of working-age people (aged 18-64), which corresponds to 7.5 million functionally illiterate adults.

Germany has developed a strong adult literacy framework. Its current priorities are defined in the Agreement for a Joint National Strategy for Literacy and Adult Basic Skills in Germany 2012-2016 (*Vereinbarung über eine gemeinsame nationale Strategie für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener in Deutschland 2012 – 2016*) (BMBF et al., 2012). The agreement involves a dozen stakeholders. It covers a wide range of measures, including the setting up of courses, guidance services and awareness-raising activities, as well as support for research in the field.

Main types of provision

The provision of adult literacy and basic skills courses is mainly regulated by further education legislation in the *Länder*. It follows that at the Federal level, there is only a limited amount of information on individual programme providers and the courses they offer. However, certain types of provision exist throughout the whole country.

Adults with limited prior school experience can follow courses at lower secondary evening schools (*Sekundarbereich I, Abendschulen*). These last between one and two years (generally full-time) and are intended for adults without a lower secondary school leaving certificate (e.g. *Hauptschulabschluss*) or those who want to obtain a higher qualification at the lower secondary level (mostly *Realschulabschluss*). The main providers are non-profit institutions active only in the field of adult education (e.g. *Volkshochschulen*). Upon successful completion, the learner receives a certificate/qualification that is equal to those awarded in the system of initial education, i.e. to *Hauptschulabschluss* or *Realschulabschluss* (ISCED 2). While funding falls under the responsibility of the *Länder*, courses are usually publicly subsidised (learners are generally expected to contribute to their tuition). In 2012/13, 1 195 people followed *Abendhauptschulen* and 19 555 *Abendrealschulen* (*Source*: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2013).

In addition to the above, there is a range of literacy courses provided by various organisations. A recent study (Ambos and Horn, 2013) shows that the major literacy providers are adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*). While these are publicly subsidised institutions, they may charge small fees for their courses, including literacy and basic skills courses. According to the available data, 140 963 learners enrolled in *Volkshochschule* courses for basic education, literacy and school leaving qualifications in 2013 (*Source*: Huntemann and Reichart 2014, p. 28).

It is also noteworthy that certain initiatives related to adult literacy take place at the federal level. In particular, a framework for courses has been recently developed by the German Adult Education Association (DVV), which is the representative body of the adult education centres and state

associations of the adult education centres at the federal level. The framework refers to the areas 'Writing', 'Reading', 'Basic Numeracy', 'Metal Working' and 'Basic Geriatric Care' and offers guidelines to tutors for the delivery of literacy and basic skills courses. It contains examples of exercises at different levels of literacy proficiency (so called 'Alpha-Levels') and instructions for tutors. Training for tutors who want to work with the framework is also offered. The whole initiative was financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Alongside face to face courses, literacy provision is also delivered through on-line tools, in particular the e-learning portal 'ich-will-lernen.de' that has been developed by the German Adult Education Association with the BMBF funding. The learning portal is Germany's biggest open learning portal. It provides online exercises for literacy and basic education free of charge. Learners can use it anonymously, e.g. as an additional support for learning in courses at continuing education institutions. The portal also includes modules to prepare learners for courses that lead to school-leaving certificates. There are exercises in German, maths and English as well as reading numeracy and financial literacy, personal organisation and communication. Another portal ('ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de') targets citizens whose first language is not German. The learning portal offers courses in German at levels A1 to B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In addition to learning German there are special exercises for those who have difficulties with reading and writing as well as learning German in a workplace context. This portal is also funded by the BMBF and its use is free of charge.

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. In particular, there are courses that cover basic skills in a broader sense. For example, there are preparatory programmes for formal education programmes, e.g. *Hauptschulabschluss* or *Realschulabschluss*. Moreover, there are also courses in areas such as numeracy, English and German as well as personal, social and life skills (e.g. everyday skills, financial skills, health literacy, etc.), vocational guidance, basic social skills and active citizenship. Furthermore, there is a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and various project-based initiatives.

Estonia

Background information

In Estonia, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 9.4 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary), while only 0.8 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 22.9 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is slightly above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 13 % of adults in Estonia have low literacy skills and 14.3 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

There is a programme known as 'basic education for adults' (*Põhiharidus täiskasvanutele*) designed to help adults complete lower secondary education, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of

Education and Research. *Põhiharidus täiskasvanutele* is open to all people aged 17 and above who have not completed 'basic education' (i.e. lower secondary level). The programme can be followed in general education schools for adults (adult gymnasiums) or in specific departments established in schools for young people. It takes between one and three years (depending of the starting level of the participant), and includes between 15 and 24 hours of weekly tuition. The programme is funded from national sources and is free for all participants. In 2013/14, 712 people took part in the programme (*Source: HTM, 2013/14*).

There is also a vocational lower secondary programme (*Põhihariduse nõudeta kutseõpe*) open to mature learners who have not completed 'basic education' (i.e. lower secondary level). It falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research and is open to all students over the age of 17, regardless of prior learning achievement. The programme leads to a vocational qualification and may be combined with 'basic education for adults' (see information on *Põhiharidus täiskasvanutele* above). However, it is also possible to acquire only a standalone vocational certificate. Depending on the course, *Põhihariduse nõudeta kutseõpe* includes between 15 and 120 Estonian vocational education credit points, where one credit corresponds to 26 hours of student workload. Funding comes from national sources and the provision is free for learners. In 2013/14, 371 people took part in the programme. Among them, 148 were aged 0-19; 73 aged 20-24 and 150 were over 25 (*Source: HTM, 2013/14*).

In addition to the above provision, there is the EU-funded programme 'State-Commissioned Work-Related Training for Adults' (*Täiskasvanute tööalase koolituse riiklik koolitustellimus*). This falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research and mainly targets low-qualified adults or adults with outdated qualifications. While employed people are the main target group, the unemployed represent around a quarter of all participants. Courses offered generally last around 50 hours, but can differ depending on the school and course. The main providers are schools delivering initial education to young people. On completion, participants receive a non-formal certificate. The funding combines national and European sources, and courses are free for learners. In 2013, 2 616 people took part in state-commissioned work-related training. In the first semester of 2014, 212 courses for 2 737 people were commissioned (*Source: HTM, 2013/14*).

Furthermore, there are also non-formal education and training courses (*vabahariduslikud koolitused*), which allow students to develop their creativity and social skills and are usually linked to people's interests and hobbies. Some of these courses target key competences such as learning skills, digital competences, language competences, etc. The duration depends on the individual course and/or provider. The most common providers are private non-profit organisations, including training centres, adult education centres and cultural centres. Learners generally do not receive any certificate upon completion, but non-formal certificates are sometimes issued. This type of provision may be publicly subsidised (national and European funding). However, learners are generally expected to pay fees, which are usually the same for all people. According to available data, between 2008 and 2013, 33 892 people participated in publicly subsidised non-formal courses, which were delivered within the ESF-funded programme 'Adult Education in Non-formal Education and Training Centres' (*Source: Eesti Vabaharidusliit 2013, p. 4*). The courses included various key competences such as mother tongue, foreign language skills, communication skills, use of ICT, entrepreneurship, etc.

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding (different from those outlined above).

Ireland

Background information

In Ireland, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 23.3 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 8.6 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 10.8 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 17.4 % of adults in Ireland have low literacy skills and 25.2 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

Ireland has developed an adult literacy framework ⁽¹⁰⁾. Central authorities support a non-government organisation – the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) – which focuses specifically on the promotion of adult literacy. In addition, SOLAS, the central level Further Education and Training Authority, was established in 2013 to co-ordinate and fund further education and training including adult literacy services.

Main types of provision

Adult literacy services are funded through the framework programme 'Adult Literacy'. It includes courses in reading, writing and numeracy, and ICT. The priority groups are low-qualified adults and those whose literacy and numeracy skills are below Level 3 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). As it is recognised that there are some adults with upper secondary qualifications who do not have adequate literacy and numeracy skills (i.e. their skills are lower than or equivalent to NFQ Level 3) these adults may also enrol in literacy programmes. Adult Literacy courses at local level are mainly provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) but non-profit organisations are also active in this field. Most courses do not have a set number of tuition hours. However, they commonly include between two and six hours per week. The Adult Literacy framework is funded by the Department of Education and Skills (i.e. the central-level authority responsible for education) through SOLAS (see above). The provision is co-financed from European funds and is free for learners. In 2012, around 57 000 people participated in courses provided under the Adult Literacy framework (*Source*: DES, 2012).

Another education framework under which adults may gain basic skills is 'Community Education'. This service provides programmes that are generally outside the formal education sector. It seeks to improve learning, empower individuals and contribution to the well-being of civic society. The funding and organisation of Community Education follows the pattern of the Adult Literacy framework (see above). The nature and extent of provision varies greatly. It includes a range of educational, personal development and leisure-related courses. These are generally short in nature (between 10 and 15 weeks), but longer courses up to one year are also provided. The number of tuition hours per week ranges from two to four hours. The programme is funded by the Department of Education and Skills, through SOLAS and the ETBs organise provision locally. Some ETBs provide tuition directly themselves; some allocate all their funding to local providers through an annual applications process; while other operate a combination of both types of provision. Community Education is funded solely

⁽¹⁰⁾ For more details on adult literacy in Ireland, see the Review of ALCES funded Literacy Provision (DES, 2013) that seeks to inform and develop future policy in relation to adult literacy provision.

from national public sources (Exchequer funding). Courses are free for learners. There were around 55 000 participants in 2012 (*Source*: DES, 2012).

Both Adult Literacy and Community Education (see above) are funded and administered under the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES).

There is also a wide range of other programmes that include courses or components of courses intended to support the acquisition of basic skills. These include the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Bridging Foundation courses and the 'Momentum' scheme. The main target group of all these schemes are unemployed jobseekers. They can be therefore seen as a part of active labour market policies (ALMP).

Greece

Background information

In Greece, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 32.8 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 19.4 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 3.2 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). Greece participated in the second round of the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) but these results are not yet available.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

People aged 18 and above who have not completed lower secondary education can follow programmes provided by 'second chance schools' (*Scholeio Defteris Efkeirias* – SDE). At present, there are 58 second chance schools throughout the country (eight operate in prisons). Their curriculum differs from that of initial education for young people. It is open and flexible, focusing largely on learners' interests and experiences. Teaching methods take into account the needs of adult learners. Second chance schools also provide guidance services (there is a psychologist and a career counsellor in every school). The programme lasts 18 months (i.e. two school years) and includes 25 hours' tuition weekly. The provision is offered on a full-time basis; it is not modularised or credit-based. It is publicly funded from national and European sources and free for learners. In the school year 2012/13, second chance schools registered 4 187 participants (*Source*: GSLLL, 2013).

Adults can also improve their basic skills in Lifelong Learning Centres (*Kentra Dia Viou Mathisis* – KDVM). These are established by municipalities or private providers. They provide a range of programmes and services, including general and vocational non-formal courses, and vocational guidance and counselling. Learners are generally expected to pay fees, as only some programmes delivered by the Lifelong Learning Centres are publicly subsidised, and in this case European funding is commonly involved. The centres as such are co-funded by national, EU and/or private resources. By 2013, 271 municipalities had established a Lifelong Learning Centre (*Source*: GSLLL, 2013).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active

labour market policies (ALMP) (e.g. ICT courses for the unemployed), VET-oriented initiatives (e.g. a system of vocational training examinations coordinated by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP)) and project-based initiatives using European funding (different from those outlined above).

Spain

Background information

In Spain, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 44.5 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 14.4 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 22.5 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is slightly above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 27.5 % of adults in Spain have low literacy skills and 30.6 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Adults who have not completed primary education can follow a basic education programme (*Enseñanzas Iniciales de educación básica para personas en edad adulta*). This programme targets those over 18 years old, but in exceptional circumstances is available to young people when they reach age 16. The programme is intended to support the acquisition of basic skills, allowing learners to access lower secondary education for adults (see below). The main providers are public institutions focusing specifically on adult education as well mainstream schools (i.e. primary and secondary schools), where the programme generally takes the form of evening classes (although day-time options also exist). Moreover, it is sometimes delivered in approved private centres, but the number of adults following this programme in these institutions is low. In most Autonomous Communities, the programme takes two years to complete and is divided into two sub-levels of proficiency. However, the exact duration may differ, depending on the needs of students and their learning pace. Upon successful completion, students receive a diploma allowing access to lower secondary education for adults. If they do not complete the entire programme, they may receive a certificate specifying the units completed. The provision is funded from national sources and is free for participants (if followed in public or private publicly-subsidised institution). In 2011/12, 93 548 learners were registered (34 652 on the level 1 programme and 58 896 on the level 2 programme) (*Source*: MECD, 2014).

Adults who have not completed lower secondary education can follow a programme allowing them to do so (*Educación Secundaria para Adultos*). It is open to those over 18 years of age (exceptionally to 16-year-olds). Alongside the age requirement, candidates must fulfil at least one of the following conditions: to have completed the 6th grade of primary education, or equivalent; to have finished initial basic education for adults (see above), or to sit an entrance examination in order to prove that they have attained the goals established for initial basic education. The programme is provided mainly by mainstream schools, generally in the form of evening classes (although day-time options also exist). There are also private authorised centres, but the number of learners in private organisations is low. The programme generally takes two years. However, the exact duration may differ, depending on the

needs of students and their learning pace. Upon successful completion, they receive the lower secondary school leaving certificate. The provision is funded from national and European sources, and is free for participants (if followed in public or private publicly-subsidised institution). In 2011/12, 236 369 learners were registered (*Source: MECD, 2014*).

There are also other types of programme that are intended to support the acquisition of basic skills, including a programme known as 'Aula Mentor', which provides a range of distance learning courses. Moreover, there is a range of vocational programmes and qualifications, including the 'Preparatory programme for the entrance examinations to intermediate-level vocational training' (*Pruebas de acceso a Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio*); 'Vocational training for employment, leading (or not) to certificates of professional competence' (*Formación para el empleo (no) vinculada a la obtención de certificado de profesionalidad*); 'Employment workshops' (*Talleres de Empleo*); 'Basic vocational training' (*Formación profesional básica*); 'Initial vocational qualification programmes' (*Programas de Cualificación Profesional Inicial*)⁽¹¹⁾.

France

Background information

In France, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 24.9 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 9.2 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 28 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 21.6 % of adults in France have low literacy skills and 28 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills. There is also a central-level body to combat illiteracy in French society (*Agence Nationale de Lutte Contre l'Illettrisme*)⁽¹²⁾.

Main types of provision

Adults who want to improve their level of basic skills can follow the programme 'Key Competences' (*compétences clefs*) that has been developed with the support of the National Agency for Combatting Illiteracy (*Agence Nationale de Lutte Contre l'Illettrisme*). It covers a set of key competences as defined within European policy⁽¹³⁾. The programme is coordinated by the ministry responsible for employment and mainly targets unemployed people. The duration is around six months comprising around 100 hours of tuition. The programme is funded from national sources combined with European funding and is free for participants. In 2011, 50 100 people took part in the programme. Among them, more than 90 % were unemployed (*Source: DARES, 2013*).

⁽¹¹⁾ Initial vocational qualification programmes will be replaced by 'Basic Vocational Training Programmes' in the coming years.

⁽¹²⁾ Despite the fact that there is a central level body addressing the issue of illiteracy in the French society, these questions are being progressively transferred to regional bodies.

⁽¹³⁾ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC), OJ L 394, 30.12.2006.

Other types of publicly subsidised provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within current employment policies (ALMP) (other than the above programme). Indeed, France has developed a variety of schemes targeting the unemployed, some of which may involve training in basic skills: Vocational contracts (*les contrats de professionnalisation*); Future jobs (*les emplois d'avenir*); Job application training (*les actions de formation préalables au recrutement*); Preparing to work in the public sector (*la Préparation Opérationnelle à l'Emploi Collective*). Most of these schemes pay specific attention to unemployed young people.

Croatia

Background information

In Croatia, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 20.3 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 3 % have a lower level of educational attainment. Croatia has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Mature learners who have not completed education up to lower secondary level can follow a programme at 'primary schools for adults' (*Osnovna škola za odrasle*). Content-wise, the programme is similar to the programme of initial education delivered by single-structure education institutions, i.e. institutions covering primary and lower secondary education. It also leads to the same certificate, which enables the holder to follow upper secondary education. The programme can be delivered by public institutions focusing their provision on adult learners (e.g. public colleges) as well as by private profit-making or non-profit organisations (e.g. open universities). It can be provided on a full- or part-time basis and has a modular structure. The programme is financed from national public sources and the provision is free for participants. Around 6 700 participants registered in 2013 (*Source: MZOS, 2012*).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) (e.g. ICT courses for the unemployed) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

Italy

Background information

In Italy, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 41.8 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 9.1 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 19.2 % of low-qualified

adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 27.7 % of adults in Italy have low literacy skills and 31.7 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

A system of adult education has been running since 1997 (Ministerial Ordinance 455/1997), under which public subsidies are provided for programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills. However, in 2012, a new system was introduced which is gradually being phased in (Presidential decree 263/2012) ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Main types of provision

Under the 1997 system, which is being phased out, people with a limited prior school experience (below lower secondary education) have been able to follow courses delivered in Territorial Permanent Centres (*Centri territoriali permanenti* – CTPs). CTPs are not autonomous institutions but are generally linked to lower secondary schools (e.g. they have the same school head). Their provision includes programmes leading to qualifications equivalent to those obtained in the initial education system for young people. In particular, mature learners can participate in courses corresponding to primary level (*Corso di alfabetizzazione culturale di scuola primaria*), followed by lower secondary level courses. At the end of these, students take a final examination which leads to the lower secondary school leaving certificate (*Diploma di licenza conclusiva del primo ciclo di istruzione*). Both levels of courses are open to people aged 16 and above, but can also be followed by pupils at risk of leaving school prematurely from the age of 15. This type of provision is funded from national sources and is free for participants. In 2011/12, 35 557 people participated in primary level courses and 34 104 followed a lower secondary education course (*Source*: INDIRE, 2011/12).

Under the Ministerial Ordinance 455/1997, Territorial Permanent Centres (CTPs) may offer functional literacy courses (referred to as *corsi brevi e modulari di alfabetizzazione funzionale*). CTPs are free to decide how these courses are to be organised, including the minimum number of teaching days and hours. The certificate issued upon completion (if any) ranges from a simple certificate of attendance to one which makes reference to a skills framework. Functional literacy courses are open to people aged 16 and above. They are funded from national and European sources and are free for participants. In the school year 2011/12, 119 993 learners were registered (*Source*: INDIRE, 2011/12).

The 2012 reform of the adult education system that has been gradually phasing in, introduces changes to both the centres providing adult education as well as to the courses provided. The Territorial Permanent Centres (CTPs) will be progressively replaced by Centres for Adult Education (*Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti* – CPIAs). At the beginning of 2014/15, there were 56 CPIAs. The reform should be completed by August 2015, so that starting from the school year 2015/16 only CPIAs will be operational.

In contrast to the Territorial Permanent Centres (CTPs), the new centres (CPIAs) are autonomous education institutions organised in local networks. They have the same degree of autonomy as mainstream schools, meaning that they have their own premises, staff and governing bodies. Courses provided by CPIAs are open to people aged 16 and above (those aged 15 can participate in exceptional circumstances). CPIAs provide programmes corresponding to initial education up to the completion of compulsory education as well as language courses for immigrants. They offer 'first-level courses' which are divided into two terms: the first term is equivalent to lower secondary education

⁽¹⁴⁾ During the main reference period of these descriptions, i.e. 2013/14 (see the Introductory section), the two systems were operating in parallel (one phasing out and the other one phasing in). The description therefore outlines both systems.

and includes 400 hours of tuition; the second term has an overall teaching time of 825 hours and leads to the certificate of basic competences acquired at the end of compulsory vocational and technical education. Unlike to CTPs, CPIAs do not provide primary education courses as such, but learners who have not completed primary education can follow an additional 200 hours' provision to acquire the basic competences associated with primary education. All courses in CPIAs are organised in a flexible way, allowing personalised study paths and the recognition of prior learning. Students can take up to 20 % of the total required tuition time via distance learning. The system falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, University and Research. This type of provision is funded from national sources and is free for participants. Data on participants are not yet available.

Apart from the provision of CTPs and CPIAs (see above), other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

Cyprus

Background information

In Cyprus, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 21.5 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 11.2 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 16.9 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 11.8 % of adults in Cyprus have low literacy skills and 15.5 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Mature learners (aged 15 and above) who have not completed lower secondary education or who wish to follow upper secondary education on a part-time basis can study at evening schools (*Esperino Gymnasio kai Likeio*). There are five such schools. With regard to lower secondary education, they offer part-time courses lasting two years leading to the lower secondary school leaving certificate. Funding relies on national public sources and the provision is free for participants. In 2012/13, evening schools counted 651 participants, among whom 104 followed a lower secondary programme (MOEC, 2013).

Alongside the provision outlined above, there are two types of publicly subsidised institutions that provide a range of non-formal courses in various areas, including basic skills (e.g. ICT):

- First, there are adult education centres (*Epimorfotika Kentra*) that fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture and offer a variety of interdisciplinary courses focusing on foreign languages, arts and crafts, health and other issues of general interest, as well as vocational skills. The courses last one year (from November to May) and generally include 36 hours of tuition (delivered within 24 90-minute sessions). Most courses are divided into three levels of proficiency. Upon successful completion of each level, the participant receives a

certificate. Whilst this provision is publicly funded, most learners are expected to pay fees, which are up to 60 euros per year. Yet, there are reductions for various categories of learners (e.g. those from rural areas, people aged 65 and above, etc.) and there are also courses provided free of charge for certain target groups (e.g. people with literacy difficulties, people with special needs, prisoners, elderly people, etc.). In addition, Turkish language courses are offered free of charge to Greek Cypriots. More than 31 000 people attended these adult education centres during the 2012/13 school year (*Source*: MOEC 2013, p. 380).

- Second, there are 41 state institutes for further education (*Kratika Institouta Epimorfosis*) that also fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. They offer a variety of publicly subsidised courses, some of them designed to provide basic skills (e.g. ICT). Courses are offered twice a week and last 90 minutes. Learners are required to contribute between 225 and 410 euros per year. This type of provision attracts more than 15 000 learners every year (*Source*: MOEC 2013, p. 472). However, although courses in the state institutes for further education are open to adults, they are mainly targeted at young people who are still engaged in their initial education.

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

Latvia

Background information

In Latvia, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 10.6 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 0.6 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 10.6 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). Latvia has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Mature learners who have not completed 'basic education' (i.e. lower secondary education) can take a programme (*vispārējā izglītība, pamatizglītības otrais posms*) which, although it is open to all those who have not completed this level of education, is mainly targeted at young people who have left school prematurely. While the model of the programme is set by the Ministry of Education, the provision is organised and delivered by local governments. The content is similar to that provided in initial education for young people, however, it is organised as evening programmes or on a part-time basis. The main providers are municipal schools, either those providing initial education or those set up specifically for adult learners. The programme takes up to three years and leads to the lower secondary school leaving certificate. It uses national funding and is free for participants. In 2013/14, 1 584 students aged 15 and above participated in this type of provision (1 196 were aged 18 and above) (*Source*: IZM, 2014).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active employment policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding. For example, unemployed people can acquire a vocational qualification or improve their transversal skills within the ESF-funded project (2009-2015) 'Training for the unemployed and jobseekers in Latvia'. Another ESF-funded project (2010-2014), namely 'Lifelong Learning Measures for the Employed' provides an opportunity for employed adults to improve their skills in various areas, including ICT, language skills, entrepreneurial skills, social and civic skills, and learning to learn. Both projects are coordinated by the State Employment Agency.

Lithuania

Background information

In Lithuania, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 6.6 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 0.8 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 7.2 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). Lithuania participated in the second round of the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) but these results are not yet available.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Mature learners with limited formal education can follow a primary education programme for adults (*Suaugusiųjų pradinio ugdymo programa*). The programme aims to provide general and digital literacy. It can be followed by all those aged 18 and above, and is delivered by adult education centres, adult schools or mainstream schools providing adult classes. While the content corresponds to around 4 years' tuition, mature students can complete it within a period of less than one year, depending on their needs, life experiences, etc. The programme uses national public funding and is free for participants. According to official data, in 2013/14, 60 adults (18+) participated in the programme (*Source: ŠVIS, 2014*).

Alongside the provision outlined above, there is also a general lower secondary (or basic) education programme for adults (*Suaugusiųjų pagrindinio ugdymo programa*). This programme aims to provide general and digital literacy comparable with the end of lower secondary education. It can be followed by all those aged 18 and above, and is delivered by adult education centres, adult schools or mainstream schools providing adult classes. While the content corresponds to around 6 years' tuition, mature students can complete it within a period of less than one year, depending on their needs, life experiences, etc. The programme uses national public funding and is free for participants. According to official data, in 2013/14, 3 802 (aged 18+) participated in the programme (*Source: ŠVIS, 2014*).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

Luxembourg

Background information

In Luxembourg, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 19.5 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 7 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 55.3 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is well above the EU average (21.8 %). Luxembourg has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

Since 1991, basic education for adults (*Instruction de base des adultes*) is defined by law as one of the responsibilities of the Department for Adult Education of the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth (MENJE). It follows that there are publicly funded courses that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Courses provided within the legal framework of adult basic education (*Instruction de base des adultes*) target literacy (German and French) and numeracy skills. They are coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth (MENJE) – the Department for Adult Learning. Provision is largely assured by MENJE and delivered through local providers. Other providers are the National Language Institute, as well as the municipalities and NGOs that have received accreditation (quality label) from the ministry. Quality standards include a requirement that only teachers accredited by the MENJE can deliver this type of provision. Another general quality requirement states that providers must offer a personal statement of learning outcomes (*bilan descriptif*) to learners who require one. In 2013, the MENJE published a reference framework that sets out the skills and competences for adult basic education (MENJE, 2013). The provision is funded from national sources, as well as European funding; it is free for participants. In 2013/14, 340 learners participated in adult basic education (Source: MENJE, 2014).

The framework of adult basic education (see above) also includes ICT courses. These are part of the wider programme 'e-Luxembourg' that was set up in 2000 and seeks to close the digital divide between younger and older people and between poorly- and highly-qualified citizens. The provision includes most basic ICT operations (a 20-hour course known as the 'Internet driving licence' (*Internetführerschäin*))⁽¹⁵⁾ as well as word processing, using spread sheets, digital photography, etc. While these courses are publicly subsidised, learners are generally required to pay a fee of between 60 and 100 euros. However, certain target groups are eligible for reductions (e.g. unemployed people). In 2012/13, these ICT courses attracted 1 748 participants (Source: MENJE, 2014).

There is also a second chance education framework known as the 'Second qualification pathway' (*2e voie de qualification*), which was established as early as 1979. While this provision is mainly targeted at the completion of upper secondary education, it also provides programmes at lower secondary level. Programmes corresponding to lower secondary education can be followed by all those who are no longer subject to full-time compulsory schooling, but have not completed this educational level. The provision uses national public funding and is free for learners. In 2012/13, 518 enrolments were

⁽¹⁵⁾ This initiative is different from the international computer skills certification programme – the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). For more details on the reference framework, see SFA/CTIE, 2013.

registered in lower and upper secondary education provided through the 'Second qualification pathway' (Source: MENJE, 2014).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding. For example, since 2014, the Ministry of Education has been implementing the EU project 'Learn for Success (L4S)', which provides a personalised training programme through individual learning workshops lasting between 50 and 100 hours, in languages (French, German and English), mathematics, office skills and general and civic knowledge. The training is delivered by qualified teachers and the content, duration and learning pace are adapted to learners' needs.

Hungary

Background information

In Hungary, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 17.5 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 1.3 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 24.7 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is above the EU average (21.8 %). Hungary did not participate in the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC).

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Mature learners with limited school experience can follow a programme leading to the completion of grades 1-4 of primary education (*Általános iskola 1-4. évfolyam (felnőttoktatás)*). The programme normally takes two years to complete and is provided on a part-time basis. It uses national public funding and is free for participants. In 2011/12, 271 learners were registered on the programme (Source: ISCED mapping 2013 – Hungary, 2013).

There is also a programme to enable people to complete lower secondary education (*Általános iskola 5-8. illetve gimnázium 5-8. évfolyama (felnőttoktatás)*), which is open to those aged 16 and above. The programme takes up to four years to complete and is provided on a part-time basis. It uses national public funding and is free for participants. In 2011/12, 2 041 learners were registered on the programme (Source: ISCED mapping 2013 – Hungary, 2013).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding. The most relevant initiatives are:

- 'Open Learning Centres (NYITOK)' (*NYITOK Tanulási központok programjai*) that, since 2010, have been providing learning opportunities for adults with low levels of basic skills and qualified below ISCED level 3, living in the least developed regions. These centres (currently around 50) deliver four state-accredited programmes: English language, German language, computer skills

and everyday finance. Moreover, the project has developed various life-skills programmes (e.g. seeking employment, starting a business, using public administration, health, self-management, the green household, and using smart devices).

- An ALMP scheme known as 'I am Learning Again' (*Újra tanulok*) is organised by the National Employment Service together with the metropolitan and county level government offices. It offers courses in basic and vocational skills targeted mainly unemployed people with qualifications below ISCED level 3.
- A project-based programme (2012-2014) is providing remedial and vocational courses for Roma women ('Nő az esély' – foglalkoztatásba ágyazott képzés).
- A project-based initiative 'Actively for skills' (*Aktívan a tudásért!*) (2013 onwards) includes general courses in life skills, learning to learn, numeracy, literacy, mother tongue, mental health improvement, general knowledge and communication. It also includes pre-vocational courses in agriculture and the construction industry.
- A national project (2012-2014) for developing the foreign language and ICT competences of the adult population aims to reach 100 000 people and has established a network of 800 mentors responsible for the promotion and recruitment of participants.

Malta

Background information

In Malta, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 59.4 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 11.5 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 22.6 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is above the EU average (21.8 %). Malta has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Adults, who need to improve their skills in various areas, including literacy, numeracy and ICT, can follow courses offered by the Lifelong Learning Department. These are provided on an annual basis and held between October and May. Courses may be short (around 14 weeks) or long (around 32 weeks). The provision is publicly subsidised and funded solely from national funds but participants are expected to pay tuition fees, which vary between around 20 euros to around 60 euros (depending on the duration of the course).

There are also courses offered by the Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology (MCAST). These cover different industry sectors and can be offered on a full-time (around 170 courses) or part-time basis (around 300 courses). They commonly lead to a nationally recognised qualification (i.e. a qualification with an NQF accreditation). Some of the courses provide basic skills, in particular ICT skills (e.g. the course 'Basic Computer Skills for Parents and Guardians'). The provision is publicly subsidised and funded solely through national funds. Participants undertaking foundation (basic)

courses at MCAST do not pay any tuition fees. Participants for higher level courses, although not paying any tuition fees, need to pay a registration fee when the board issuing the final certificate is a foreign board.

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) (in particular by the Employment and Training Corporation – ETC) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

The Netherlands

Background information

In the Netherlands, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 24.2 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 6.8 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 33 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is well above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 11.7 % of adults in the Netherlands have low literacy skills and 13.2 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

The Netherlands has developed a policy framework for adult literacy. It includes the Action Plan on Illiteracy 2012-2015 (*Actieplan laaggeletterdheid 2012-2015*) (OCW, 2011) and the Agreement on Illiteracy for the period 2007-2015 (*Convenant laaggeletterdheid voor de periode van 2007-2015*) (OCW, 2007). The latter document has a target to reduce the number of working people who are illiterate from approximately 420 000 in 2007 to below 168 000 by 2015.

Main types of provision

Adults who need to improve their basic skills' level can follow courses known as 'Dutch language and numeracy training' (*Opleidingen Nederlands en rekenen*), which are positioned at the Entry Level (*Basiseducatie 1*) of the National Qualifications Framework. Courses in the Dutch language and numeracy generally take between one and three years to complete (depending whether they are provided on a part-time or full-time basis). Provision is assured by the municipalities and, at present, the Regional Training Centres (ROCs) are the only providers. However, a legal framework is currently in preparation that should enable municipalities to choose between different suppliers. This is expected to facilitate a customised offer for different target groups. The provision is funded from national sources. Learners' contributions to costs vary: in some cases they are required to pay tuition fees, whereas in other instances courses are provided free of charge – municipalities have a significant amount of freedom in this area. There are no participation statistics at central level.

Adult general secondary education (*Voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs – VAVO*), provides 'second chance' education for mature students who left initial education and training without a mainstream qualification. Candidates should normally be at least 18 years old, but 16- or 17-year-olds can also be admitted. Two programmes are offered, leading either to the completion of lower secondary education (VAVO-VMBO TL) or upper secondary education (VAVO-HAVO and VAVO-VWO). The VAVO programme can be provided on a full- or part-time basis and generally takes between one and three years to complete. The programmes are usually provided by the Regional

Training Centres (ROCs). They are publicly subsidised, but part-time students and those over 18 years of age (part-time or full-time) are expected to pay fees. In 2013, 13 400 students followed a programme within the VAVO framework. Among them, around 2 000 participated in VAVO-VMBO TL, i.e. the programme leading to the completion of lower secondary education (*Source*: OCW, 2014).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

Austria

Background information

In Austria, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 16.9 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 0.9 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 24.8 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 15.3 % of adults in Austria have low literacy skills and 14.3 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

The Initiative for Adult Education (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung*) was introduced in 2012. It focuses on the provision of basic skills courses and programmes for the completion of lower secondary education. It is a joint *Länder – Bund* strategy, pooling the resources of the Federal States and the Federal Ministry (each party contributing 50 %). It is governed by a steering committee, comprising representatives of the Federal States, the Federal Ministry, social partners, educational institutions and other experts.

Main types of provision

Under the Adult Education Initiative, an accreditation committee decides which educational institutions and what type of provision will qualify for financial support. As mentioned above, two main types of provision fall under the framework of the Adult Education Initiative: basic skills courses and lower secondary school leaving certificate courses.

Basic skills courses (*Basisbildung*) include literacy, numeracy and ICT, as well as learning skills. They do not have centrally-set curricula and it is up to providers – which may be large education institutions as well as small organisations – to decide what content will best meet the learning needs of their target group. Therefore, basic skills programmes include a wide range of courses that differ in content and practical implementation. In order to qualify for funding, programmes must be accredited. There are a number of general curriculum requirements, including the obligation to establish distinct competence levels (up to five) for the areas of literacy, numeracy and ICT. At the end of the programme, participants receive a certificate that provides details of the competence level reached. During the school year 2012/13, the programme registered 5 851 new entrants (*Source*: Initiative Erwachsenenbildung, 2013).

The lower secondary school leaving certificate courses (*Vorbereitungskurse auf den Pflichtschulabschluss*) are designed for mature learners who have not yet obtained this level (ISCED 2) of qualification. The curriculum comprises mainly general subjects (including mathematics, languages, sciences and technology, health/social matters, etc.), but it also includes elements of vocational/

educational guidance. The course lasts one year and includes around 1 000 teaching periods. It may be provided by various institutions, including large educational providers as well as small organisations. On successful completion, learners receive the lower secondary school leaving certificate, which allows them to progress further in the formal education system. During the school year 2012/13, the programme registered 1 839 new entrants (*Source*: Initiative Erwachsenenbildung, 2013).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

Poland

Background information

In Poland, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 9.9 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 0.7 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 5.8 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 18.8 % of adults in Poland have low literacy skills and 23.5 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Adults with very limited formal schooling can follow a programme in an 'adult primary school' (*Szkoła podstawowa dla dorosłych*), which generally takes one year to complete and includes elements of the curriculum similar to the last year of primary education (which normally covers six years of schooling). The provision is funded from public sources and is free for participants. In the 2013/14 school year, there were four primary schools for adults (two run by the Ministry of Justice and two by non-public institutions); 77 persons participated in these courses (*Source*: SIO, 2014).

Adults who have not completed lower secondary education can participate in a three-year programme leading to the lower secondary school-leaving certificate, which is funded from public sources and is free for participants. In the 2013/14 school year, there were 200 lower secondary schools for adults, 83 of which were run by local government units or ministers; and 117 by other bodies, institutions or individuals. During this same school year, 14 555 learners participated in these courses (*Source*: SIO, 2014).

Since the reform of vocational and continuing education in 2012⁽¹⁶⁾, Poland has been operating a programme known as 'general competence course' (*Kurs kompetencji ogólnych*), which is based on selected parts of the core curriculum for general education (ISCED 1-3). This provision is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and provided largely by public institutions. The minimum course duration is 30 hours, however, this, like other aspects of provision, is flexible and can be adjusted to local needs and circumstances. The general competence course does not lead to any formal certificate or qualification. It is not systematically publicly subsidised; participants are generally expected to pay fees, which are determined by the head of the institution (although they cannot exceed the expenses

⁽¹⁶⁾ The reform introduces various types of courses for adults, vocational as well as general courses.

incurred for running the course). During the first year of implementation, which was the school year 2012/13, 11 306 learners participated in this type of provision (among them, 4 526 were unemployed) (Source: SIO, 2014).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding. For example, there is an on-going ESF project 'Lighthouse Keepers of Digital Poland' to provide digital education for the 50+ generation. The project falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Administration and Digitization and has reached around 206 000 participants since the beginning of 2013 (Source: Stowarzyszenie Miasta w Internecie, 2014).

Portugal

Background information

In Portugal, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 60 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 38.9 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 32.3 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is well above the EU average (21.8 %). Portugal did not participate in the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012).

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Most programmes and qualifications for adults with low basic skills and/or very limited prior school experience are listed in the National Qualifications Catalogue (*Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações – CNQ*) that includes the professional profile and the qualification standard for each listed qualification.

Since 2010, adults who wish to improve their skills in reading, writing, numeracy and/or ICT have been able to follow a training programme in basic skills (*Programa de Formação em Competências Básicas*). These courses are provided in public schools and in professional training centres. Those provided in public schools fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. The basic skills courses provided in professional training centres fall under the responsibility of the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), which is a public body under the supervision of the Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security. The programme includes between 150 and 300 hours' tuition but does not lead to any qualification level. Basic skills courses are financed from national sources, combined with some European funding; they are free for participants. According to provisional data for 2013, during this reference period, 6 845 adults started a basic skills course and 5 704 completed it (Source: SIGO, 2014).

Since 2001, mature learners with very limited prior school experience (i.e. without primary or lower secondary education) have been able to participate in primary and lower secondary courses, known as 'EFA courses' (*Ciclo do Ensino Básico – Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos*). Primary education comprises two cycles: B1 and B2 (recognised as ISCED 1 and EQF 1; see Glossary). They include, respectively, 790 and 840 tuition hours. Lower level secondary education (recognised as

ISCED 2 and EQF 2; see Glossary) comprises one cycle – B3 – that includes 900 tuition hours. All basic level EFA courses (i.e. B1, B2 and B3) also comprise an additional 40 hour module on 'learning with autonomy'. B3 EFA courses can also include 1 000 hours of vocational education and training (VET). Courses combined with vocational elements lead to nationally recognised VET qualifications, which are the same as those for young people and adults. The EFA courses are delivered either during the day-time or in the evening. They lead to certificates that have the same legal value as those awarded in the initial education and training system. Courses that are financed from public sources (national and/or European) are free for participants. In 2013, 6 782 adults completed a basic level EFA course (B1, B2 or B3). Among these, 5 496 also took a vocational training course (*Source: SIGO, 2014*).

Learners who wish to complete a partial EFA course (see above) or learners not interested in undertaking a full qualification programme, can follow 'certified modular training' (*Formação Modular Certificada – FMC*). This allows learners to study individual modules based on standards set out in the National Qualifications Catalogue. Teachers responsible for general education subjects within the EFA courses and/or certified modular training must be accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science. Trainers responsible for the VET component of EFA courses and/or VET certified modular training must be accredited as trainers by the Institute for Employment and Professional Training. Both the EFA courses and certified modular training fall under the responsibility of the National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP), which is a public body under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy. In 2013, 388 certificates were awarded through the system of 'certified modular training' (*Source: SIGO, 2014*).

A separate series of modular courses has been developed for unemployed people and is known as the 'Active Life Programme' (*Programa Vida Ativa*). The programme is under the responsibility of the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding (different from those described above). Furthermore, the return of adults to education and training is facilitated by provision of the Qualification and Vocational Training Centres (CQEP), coordinated by ANQEP (see above). These centres provide guidance services, tutorial services as well as services to validate non-formal and informal learning.

Romania

Background information

In Romania, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 23.7 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 3.7 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 1.4 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). Romania has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Mature learners who have not completed primary or lower secondary education can follow 'second chance' programmes (*Programul 'A doua șansă'*). These were developed in 1999 within a PHARE project and revised in 2009. At present, the programme is a part of the national education system and its curriculum, which is modular, falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The programme leading to the completion of primary education has a standard duration of two years. However, this is flexible and can be adapted to suit the individual needs of learners. Students who complete primary education can continue their studies at lower secondary level. This combines general and vocational elements (the VET component starts in the 2nd year of the programme). The standard duration of the lower secondary level programme is four years. Yet, here again, it can be adapted to learners' needs. At the end of the lower secondary 'second chance' programme, students are considered as having completed compulsory education and can continue their studies at upper secondary level. If graduates continue practical VET sessions for six months and succeed in their final exam, they receive a certificate. The programme is financed from national sources and is free for all participants. In 2011/12, 9 202 learners enrolled in this type of provision (3 079 in primary education and 6 123 in lower-secondary education) (*Source: INS, 2013a, INS, 2013b*).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding (different from those described above).

Slovenia

Background information

In Slovenia, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 14.5 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 1.1 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 13.2 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). Slovenia participated in the second round of the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) but these results are not yet available.

While there is no standalone policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills, this area is referred to in the Strategic Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2013-2020⁽¹⁷⁾, and there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Mature learners who have not completed single-structure education (i.e. education covering primary and lower secondary level) can follow a programme allowing them to finish this stage (*Program osnovne šole za odrasle*). It is provided by various public education organisations, mainly those focusing specifically on adult learners. The programme includes around 2 000 teaching periods and is fully publicly funded (i.e. free for participants). During the school year 2013/14, 1 088 learners participated in the programme (*Source: MIZS, 2014*).

⁽¹⁷⁾ See: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=RESO97> (Accessed 27 January 2015).

In addition, there is a range of short programmes providing education in a range of basic skills. Central authorities have been involved in the development of the curriculum and some of the programmes have been adopted by the minister responsible for education at the suggestion of the Council of Experts for Adult Education. The sources of funding include national and European sources. The provision is generally free for participants, except for ICT courses, for which fees may be charged. This type of provision includes the:

- 'Education programme in digital literacy for adults' (*Računalniška pismenost za odrasle*), which was introduced in 2005 and focuses on basic knowledge of ICT. It includes 60 hours of tuition and is delivered by various providers. In 2012, 1 745 learners participated in the programme (Source: ACS, 2014).
- 'Education programmes for success in life' (*Usposabljanje za življenjsko uspešnost*), which includes several programmes established between 2003 and 2006. These are: 'Me and my workplace' (*Jaz in moje delovno mesto*); 'Reading and writing together' (*Beremo in pišemo skupaj*); 'Bridge to education' (*Most do izobrazbe*); 'Challenges of rural life' (*Izzivi podeželja*); and 'My steps' (*Moj korak*). While all of the programmes include elements of basic skills, they target different groups. For example, the programme 'Me and my workplace' (*Jaz in moje delovno mesto*) targets employees with low levels of basic skills and aims to improve not only their literacy and numeracy, but also their digital, social and foreign language skills. In addition, the programme teaches learning skills and encourages active citizenship. The programme 'Reading and writing together' (*Beremo in pišemo skupaj*) aims at raising literacy and basic skills levels among parents of children in the first three grades of primary education. The programme 'Challenges of rural life' (*Izzivi podeželja*) targets adults living in rural areas and focuses on the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge, which will enable participants to gain greater individual autonomy. In 2012, all the sub-programmes involved around 1 000 learners (Source: ACS, 2012).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding (different from those described above).

Slovakia

Background information

In Slovakia, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 8.1 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 0.5 % have a lower level of educational attainment. The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 11.6 % of adults in Slovakia have low literacy skills and 13.8 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Adults who have not completed lower secondary education can take courses (*kurzy na doplnenie nižšieho stredného vzdelania*) to enable them to finish this level of education. The courses fall under the responsibility of municipalities and are delivered by schools providing initial education to young

people. These courses usually last one year, and upon successful completion, participants receive a certificate that allows progression to upper secondary programmes. The courses, which are not modular, are provided on a full- or part-time basis. The provision is financed from national sources but sometimes European funding is also used (in particular, when the target group is Roma people). It is free for all participants. In 2012/13, there were 610 students enrolled (MŠVVŠ, 2013).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

Finland

Background information

In Finland, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 14.1 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 4.9 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 34.5 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is well above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 10.6 % of adults in Finland have low literacy skills and 12.8 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Adults who have not completed 'basic education' (i.e. single-structure education including primary and lower secondary education) can follow a programme leading to the completion of this level (*Perusopetus*). This falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and can be delivered in general upper secondary schools for adults as well as folk high schools. The curriculum includes knowledge and competences corresponding to the last three grades of lower secondary education, but it is designed specifically for adults. *Perusopetus* can be provided on a full- or part-time basis, and has a modular structure. In some cases, it is credit-based. The provision is financed from national sources and is free for all participants. In 2011, there were 2 400 participants (*Source*: Statistics Finland, 2011).

In addition to the above, adults can improve their basic skills within the sector of 'liberal adult education' taking place in adult education centres, folk high schools and summer universities. Liberal adult education generally does not lead to qualifications, but the studies completed may be taken into account in preparatory training for competence-based qualifications and when making an individual plan for completing competence-based qualifications.

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and project-based initiatives using European funding.

Sweden

Background information

In Sweden, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 16.8 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 3.3 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 44.2 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is well above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 13.3 % of adults in Sweden have low literacy skills and 14.7 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Adults lacking the knowledge normally acquired during compulsory education may follow 'basic adult education' (*Grundläggande vuxenutbildning – Komvux*). It is open to all people aged 20 and above who are residents in Sweden and lack the knowledge associated with initial education up to lower secondary level. The syllabuses for most courses are decided by the National Agency for Education. Municipalities, in their turn, are responsible for ensuring sufficient provision. Basic adult education is provided on a part-time basis and courses generally last two years. They have a modular, subject-based structure and are sometimes credit-based. There are also opportunities for distance learning. The system is financed from national public sources and is free for participants. In 2012, 34 122 people took part (*Source: Skolverket, 2012*). The subject-based nature of courses makes it possible to quantify the number of adults who took part in reading and writing courses (*Grundläggande vuxenutbildning – läs- och skrivinlärning – Komvux*). The figure corresponds to around 25 % of all participants, i.e. around 8 500 people (*Source: ibid.*).

Another sector that contributes to the acquisition of basic skills is the sector of 'liberal adult education' (*folkbildning*). *Folkbildning*, which refers to provision in the folk high schools (*folkhögskolor*) and the 'study associations' (*studieförbund*), i.e. the organisations that make up the non-formal and voluntary education sector. Although the state provides grants, the sector is not subjected to close national supervision. Each folk high school (150) and study association (10) draws up its own goals and work plan, therefore, the content and duration of courses is variable. In 2013, approximately 120 000 people per term took a course in a folk high school and nearly one million individuals (914 763) took part in the educational activities provided by study associations (*Source: Folkbildningsrådet, 2013*).

Although folk high schools are free to determine their own curricula, certain standard courses exist, including basic skills courses and a course to help improve learning motivation. The learning motivation course is directed at the unemployed who lack a compulsory school or upper secondary school qualification. The aim is to motivate these groups to undertake further studies in formal adult education or a general course in a folk high school leading to upper secondary qualifications⁽¹⁸⁾. The course is delivered on a full-time basis and generally lasts three months. It also includes guidance elements, basic skills and study skills. In 2013, 5 167 people took part in this type of provision (*Source: Folkbildningsrådet, 2013*). Another example is an introductory course aimed at newly arrived

⁽¹⁸⁾ All folk high schools offer a general course at upper secondary level which can qualify participants for entry to higher education. This type of provision is, however, outside the scope of the present country sheets.

immigrants (aged 20-65) with limited education. The aim is to get them into employment or formal education. This full-time course lasts six months and has no fixed curriculum. In 2014, 1 066 people participated (*Source: ibid.*).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of current employment policies (ALMP) as well as various project-based initiatives.

United Kingdom – England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Background information

In the United Kingdom, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 21.6 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary), while only 0.3 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 17.9 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 16.4 % of adults in the United Kingdom (England and Northern Ireland) have low literacy skills and 24.1 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

In 1999, a working group chaired by Sir Claus Moser on behalf of the Government reported on the scale and causes of poor basic skills among adults in England, and made recommendations for tackling the problem. These recommendations led to the 2001 launch of 'Skills for Life', a national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. The strategy introduced a coherent set of standards for literacy and numeracy as well as a new system of qualifications to measure achievement against the standards. The strategy was supported by a programme of research that included surveys of 'Skills for Life' in 2003 and 2011.

In Wales, the 'National Basic Skills Strategy' was published in 2001, based on the same set of standards as 'Skills for Life'. Skills surveys, comparable to those undertaken in England, were undertaken in 2004 and 2010.

In Northern Ireland, the 'Essential Skills for Living Strategy' and action plan was launched in April 2002. The delivery of Essential Skills still continues.

Main types of provision

Single subject qualifications in basic skills are available at Entry Level (subdivided into 3 sub-levels); Level 1 and Level 2 of the nine-level National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which is used across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This enables small steps of progress to be accredited and provides a coherent progression pathway through to higher level qualifications. There are different suites of qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- In England, there are 'Functional Skills' qualifications' in English, mathematics and ICT.
- In Wales, there are 'Essential Skills Wales' qualifications in Communication, Application of Number, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (up to Level 4).
- In Northern Ireland, there are 'Essential Skills' qualifications in Literacy, Numeracy, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

In England, Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) ⁽¹⁹⁾ qualifications and units in English and maths up to Level 2 are also available to help learners progress towards 'destination' qualifications such as functional skills or GCSE.

GCSEs are the main measure of achievement at school at age 16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and are also available to adults. Attainment at grade C or above (Level 3 of the NQF) is important for progression to further study and employment. These are single subject qualifications, with maths and English the most popular subjects for adult candidates (Gill, 2010). The assessment model in England changed in summer 2014 to become linear only (from either modular i.e. unitised or linear). In Wales and Northern Ireland, the option for modular assessment remains.

In England, people aged 19 and above are entitled to full funding for English and maths qualifications up to and including GCSE, i.e. including Functional Skills qualifications. In 2013/14, 567 800 qualifications were awarded to adults (aged 19+) in English and maths at GCSE and lower levels in the NQF including Functional Skills and other qualifications (*Source*: SFA 2014, p. 22). In Wales, Essential Skills Wales provision may also be free to adult learners. In Northern Ireland, Essential Skills provision is free to adult learners.

Programmes for adult learners are delivered by a variety of institutions including private providers. Further education colleges are major providers. Individual qualifications may be delivered as part of a wider programme of training, such as apprenticeships and traineeships (England and Wales) and Training for Success (Northern Ireland). In England in 2013/14, 369 000 funded intermediate level (Level 2) 19+ apprentices participated (*Source*: SFA 2014, p. 26).

Community Learning (adult community learning in Wales) is a term used for a broad range flexible learning opportunities, ranging from personal development through to older people's learning, IT courses, employability skills, family learning and activities to promote civic engagement and community development. Its aims include enabling people of different ages and backgrounds to reconnect with learning and often to progress to formal qualifications. Courses may be offered by local authorities, colleges, and voluntary and community groups and may include activity targeting at deprived areas and disadvantaged groups. The overall cost of delivering community learning is subsidised although not all learning is free.

Other types of programme also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population and there are individual qualifications and units with various purposes situated at Entry Level, Level 1 and 2 of the QCF.

United Kingdom – Scotland

Background information

In the United Kingdom, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 21.6 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 0.3 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 17.9 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average (21.8 %). Scotland did not take part in the PIAAC survey, but

⁽¹⁹⁾ The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) exists alongside the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and is organised around the same system of nine levels.

in 2009, it conducted the Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies (SSAL), which showed that around a quarter of the Scottish population (27 %) may face occasional challenges and restricted opportunities due to their skill levels, but will generally cope with their day-to-day lives. Within this quarter of the population, 3.6 % (one person in 28) face serious challenges (Scottish Government, 2014).

Scotland has developed a policy framework for adult literacy. Its current priorities are stipulated in the 'Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020 Strategic Guidance' (Scottish Government, 2010).

Main types of provision

Adults who wish can take single subject qualifications known as SQA 'Core Skills'. Each Core Skill is available at levels 2 to 6 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The five Core Skills are Communication; Numeracy; Information Technology; Problem-solving and Working with Others. Core Skills aim at contributing to employability, and are a component of Modern Apprenticeships. They are provided mainly by schools and colleges, and are also used to certify community-based adult learning programmes (see below). There is no fixed time frame to achieve Core Skills. The cost of undertaking these qualifications is covered by the learning provider, i.e. a school, a college or a community-based project. Core Skills are generally free for participants. There are no national statistics on adults who have taken core skills, but the Scottish Qualifications Authority have information on those over 16 years of age at the time of certification, who achieved discrete Core Skill Units.

There are also single subject qualifications known as 'National Qualifications'. These are the main qualifications taken at school at age 15-16 but can be taken at any age. The qualifications are provided by Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and delivered by the same providers as Core Skills (i.e. schools, colleges or community-based providers). Funding also follows the same pattern. As above, there are no national statistics on adults who have taken National Qualifications, but the Scottish Qualifications Authority again holds data about those over age 16 that did so.

The above National Qualifications include 'National Literacy Units' that are available on a freestanding basis at Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework levels 3, 4 and 5 (European Qualifications Framework – EQF 1, 2 and 3). These qualifications are relatively new (note: in December 2014, they have only been available for 18 months) and, as they form part of the new National Courses in English at National 3 and National 4, the up-take is mostly by young people in schools. However, they can also be taken by adult learners. National Literacy Units follow the same pattern as Core Skills and National Qualifications with respect to funding and participation data.

Furthermore, there is a system of community-based adult learning, including adult literacies and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Community learning and development (CLD) providers and colleges deliver most adult literacies and ESOL programmes. The duration of courses, which mainly have a non-formal character, is negotiated with the learner through a personal planning process. Participation statistics for programmes are collected locally. There is no national data collection.

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and various project-based initiatives.

Iceland

Background information

In Iceland, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 27.8 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while 15.6 % have a lower level of educational attainment. Iceland has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

There is no policy framework specifically for adult literacy and basic skills. The only law touching directly on adult education is a clause dedicated to this in the secondary school level (Adult Education Act 27/2010). Based on this clause, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills. All of these are partly funded by the adult education fund 'Fræðslusjóður'.

Main types of provision

Adults who need to improve their level of basic skills can follow two programmes with similar aims: 'Back to school' (*Aftur í nám*) and 'Steps towards self-reliance in reading and writing' (*Skref til sjálfshjálpar í lestri og ritun*). Their goal is to increase participants' learning skills and create positive attitudes towards learning (i.e. facilitate a return to learning). Both are aimed at adults with learning disabilities and intended to help them to master reading, writing and studying. They are provided by the 11 Lifelong Learning Centres across the country. They are part-time and modular, and can be recognised as equivalent to up to seven credit units in the upper secondary system. Institutions running these programmes get partial funding from a central fund for adult education. The funding is based on the number of participants. However, participants are required to pay fees. The logic behind this arrangement is to encourage learners' commitment to the course. Fees vary according to programme length: ISK 68 000 (around EUR 450) for the *Aftur í nám* programme and ISK 12 000 for the *Skref til sjálfshjálpar* (around EUR 80). Moreover, all members of trade unions can get subsidies for course fees up to a specific maximum each year or every other year – according to their union – usually in the range of ISK 60 000-100 000 a year (around EUR 390-650). Some people can also get subsidies from their employer, or from the unemployment agency to participate in these programmes. In 2013, the two programmes involved 102 participants (74 and 28 respectively) (*Source: ETSC, 2014*).

There are also two additional programmes: *Grunnmenntaskólinn* and *Nám og þjálfun í almennum bóklefum greinum*. The first programme was developed in 2001 and the second one in 2007. They target adults with limited formal education who are intending to complete upper secondary education. These programmes are the first step towards reaching that goal, and are thought of as a way to get people back into learning. They include elements of Icelandic, English, mathematics, various life skills and personal development, ICT skills, communication and portfolio creation. They are provided by the 11 Lifelong Learning Centres and include around 300 hours of tuition delivered on a part-time basis. They are modular and credit-based. Upon successful completion, participants receive a certificate which can be recognised as equivalent to up to 24 credit units in the upper secondary system. Depending on the institution, the programmes cost between ISK 53 000 (around EUR 350) and 57 000 (around EUR 370). Both programmes are publicly subsidised and the financial arrangements follow the patterns described in the previous section. In 2013, the two programmes involved 308 participants (135 and 173 respectively) (*Source: ETSC, 2014*).

In addition, there is a programme in ICT and communication skills known as 'Stronger Employees' (*Sterkari Starfsmaður: Upplýsingatækni og samskipti*). The programme targets adults in employment who want to upgrade their skills to meet changes in their jobs, particularly in ICT. The programme is delivered by the ten Lifelong Learning Centres. It is provided on a part-time basis and includes around 150 hours of tuition. Upon successful completion, participants receive a certificate which can be recognised as equivalent to up to 12 credit units in the upper secondary system. The programme is publicly subsidised and the fee charged is ISK 29 000 (around EUR 190). Financial arrangements, including possible financial support from trade unions, follow the pattern described in the first paragraph of this section. In 2013, there were 49 graduating participants (*Source*: ETSC, 2014).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP) and various project-based initiatives.

Liechtenstein

Background information

Liechtenstein has not participated in any international surveys on adult competences.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

The number of educational programmes offered in Liechtenstein is very limited, due to the size of the country. As an alternative, Liechtenstein has close cooperation with education authorities, associations and institutions in neighbouring countries. Moreover, there are financial mechanisms that allow learners to get financial support for attending education and training programmes abroad.

Adult education courses (*Erwachsenenbildungskurse*) is a generic term for a broad variety of adult education programmes aimed at professional and personal development as well as basic skills training. Courses are proposed by profit-making as well as non-profit organisations. There is state financial support available depending on the nature of the programme.

Norway

Background information

In Norway, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 17.6 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary) while only 0.2 % have a lower level of educational attainment. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES; 2011), 33.4 % of low-qualified adults (i.e. those with lower secondary education at most) participate in lifelong learning, which is well above the EU average (21.8 %). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) reveals that 12.3 % of adults in Norway have low literacy skills and 14.6 % low numeracy skills, evaluated at level 1 or below of a 5-level scale.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills.

Main types of provision

Adults who wish to improve their basic skills can follow a programme known as 'compulsory education for adults' (*Grunnskoleopplæring for voksne*). This provision falls under the responsibility of municipalities. People who have not completed lower secondary education are legally entitled to this type of provision. 'Compulsory education for adults' is funded from national sources and is free for all participants. In 2012/13, 5 882 participants took part in it (*Source: Vox, 2012/13*).

Since 2006, a programme known as 'Basic Competence in Working Life – BWCL' (*Basiskompetanse i arbeidslivet* – BKA) has been in operation. The programme is aimed at strengthening the basic skills of employees in literacy, numeracy and ICT; it also offers help with oral skills. The target group are employees with a low level of basic skills. However, it is their employer who applies for funding in cooperation with a provider. The courses have to cover the competence-based goals set out in the Framework for Basic Skills developed by the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (Vox) and approved by the Ministry of Education and Research. These competence-based goals are aligned with the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training, developed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. The most common providers of the basic skills courses are public municipal schools (i.e. institutions providing initial education to young people) and private non-profit organisations. The standard courses (which in 2013 were required by 75 % of employers) include 130 lessons. Overall, in 2013, 4 714 employees benefited from the programmes; and in 2014, 577 employers applied for BCWL funding and 497 applications were accepted (*Source: Vox, 2014*).

Furthermore, Norway has a broad sector of liberal adult education. It consists of 20 non-governmental study associations (*studieforbund*) and over 400 member organisations that run courses and study groups for adults. This area is coordinated by the umbrella association – the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL, in Norwegian 'VOFO') – that is an interlocutor for central authorities. The educational activities provided by study associations range from purely leisure activities to vocational courses and courses in general education subjects. The educational programme Basic Competence in Working Life (see above) can also be delivered within the framework of this provision. The system of liberal adult education also contains a network of nearly 80 folk high schools (*folkehøgskoler*), i.e. boarding institutions providing various courses open to people aged 17 and above. Most offer one-year courses (33 weeks) or half-year courses (16.5 weeks). Folk high school programmes do not follow any centrally established curriculum or an examination system and their programmes do not lead to formal qualifications. However, they may provide various credentials for further learning progression, including three points in higher education competitions for those who take a one-year course. In 2013, 493 180 learners participated in the activities of study associations and in 2012/13, 6 737 people participated in the provision of folk high schools (*Source: SSB, 2013*).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. For example, within the framework of active labour market policies (ALMP), people can follow 'employment courses' (*Arbeidsmarkedsopplæring* – AMO), which comprise a whole range of different vocational courses (including basic skills courses). This type of provision is coordinated by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration and its main target is unemployed people. All AMO courses are provided by external institutions and organisations according to the Public Procurement Act. There is no national overview of providers. In April 2014, 4 697 people participated in AMO courses (*Source: NAV, 2014*).

Turkey

Background information

In Turkey, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS; 2013), 68.1 % of adults (aged 25-64) have completed lower secondary education at most (see Glossary), while 56.9 % have a lower level of educational attainment. Turkey participated in the second round of the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC; 2012) but the results are not yet available.

There is no specific policy framework for adult literacy and basic skills. However, there are publicly funded programmes that support adults in acquiring or improving their basic skills. Moreover, the comparative research by Carpentieri et al. (2011) indicates that Turkey has developed strong family literacy provision.

Main types of provision

Since 1998, people with limited prior school experience can follow distance education courses known as 'open lower secondary education' (*Açık Öğretim Ortaokulu*)⁽²⁰⁾. These fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education and follow quite closely the curriculum of primary and lower secondary education. The provision is delivered only via the Internet⁽²¹⁾ and television⁽²²⁾ so educational institutions are not involved. While the overall duration of courses is not pre-determined, each school year consists of three terms and there is a final examination at the end of each term. Learners who follow this publicly subsidised provision are required to pay an annual registration fee of 15 Turkish Liras (around EUR 5). In 2012/13, 367 277 students were registered in this type of provision (*Source*: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı/Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2013).

In addition, there are general courses with social and cultural objectives (*Genel Kurslar*), which may also include literacy provision. They are provided free of charge and are supervised by public education centres and education 'chambers'. The overall governing authority is the Ministry of National Education. The duration is variable, between 16 and 768 hours. The same applies to the curriculum. Certification is carried out via e-YAYGIN system, which is the Ministry of National Education's online portal through which all administrative and statistical transactions related to the courses are conducted. In 2013, 2 805 879 people took part in this type of provision (*Source*: e-YAYGIN, 2014).

Other types of provision also contribute to the development of basic skills in the adult population. These include, in particular, a range of programmes/courses provided within current employment policies (ALMP) and various project-based initiatives. Moreover, there are also publicly subsidised vocational courses (*Mesleki ve Teknik Kurslar*) aiming to provide training for people who cannot attend vocational and technical schools. The curriculum and duration of courses varies. Certification is carried out via e-YAYGIN system (see above). In 2013, 1 918 612 people took part in this type of provision (*Source*: e-YAYGIN, 2014).

⁽²⁰⁾ These courses were previously known as 'open primary education' (*Açık İlköğretim Ortaokulu*). However, from the school year 2012/13, the 8-year 'primary education system' (i.e. single structure education) turned into the 4-year primary, the 4-year lower secondary and the 4-year upper secondary compulsory education. Open education at the basic level now refers to lower secondary education.

⁽²¹⁾ See: <http://www.eba.gov.tr/video/uzem> (Accessed 26 January 2015).

⁽²²⁾ See: <http://hayatboyuogrenmetv.eba.gov.tr/> (Accessed 26 January 2015).

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GLOSSARY

When referring to educational levels, this document refers to the **International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)**. The latter has been developed to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. The coverage of ISCED extends to all organised and sustained learning opportunities for children, youth and adults, including those with special educational needs, irrespective of the institutions or organisations providing them or the form in which they are delivered.

The ISCED 97 classification (UNESCO-UIS, 1996) is the main reference for this document and it distinguishes between seven levels of education

ISCED 0: Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is defined as the initial stage of organised instruction. It is school-based or centre-based and is designed for children aged at least 3 years.

ISCED 1: Primary education

This level begins between 5 and 7 years of age, is compulsory in all countries and generally lasts from 4 to 6 years.

ISCED 2: Lower secondary education

Continues the basic programmes of primary education, although teaching is typically more subject-focused. Usually, the end of this level coincides with the end of compulsory education.

ISCED 3: Upper secondary education

This level generally begins at the end of compulsory education. The entry age is typically 15 or 16 years. Entry requirements usually include the completion of compulsory education but other minimum qualifications are often set. Instruction is often more subject-oriented than at ISCED level 2. The typical duration of ISCED level 3 varies from two to five years.

ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

These programmes straddle the boundary between upper secondary and tertiary education. They serve to broaden the knowledge of ISCED level 3 graduates. Typical examples are programmes designed to prepare pupils for studies at level 5, or programmes designed to prepare pupils for direct access to employment.

ISCED 5: Tertiary education (first stage)

Entry to these programmes normally requires the successful completion of ISCED level 3 or 4. This level includes tertiary programmes with academic orientation (type A) which are largely theoretically based and tertiary programmes with occupation orientation (type B) which are typically shorter than type A programmes and geared for access to employment.

ISCED 6: Tertiary education (second stage)

This level is reserved for tertiary studies that lead to an advanced research qualification (Ph.D. or doctorate).

The ISCED classification refers not only to the education of young people – described in this report as initial education, but also to continuing/adult education and training. When national statistical offices provide information on adult education and training programmes, they are asked to report programmes that are similar in content to the education given at the various ISCED levels. More specifically, programmes for adults usually comply with the following characteristics:

- they involve studies with subject content similar to initial educational programmes,
- or
- the underlying programmes lead to similar potential qualifications as corresponding initial educational programmes.

This specific understanding allows the ISCED classification to be used when describing the adult education programmes within this document.

It must be noted that the ISCED classification was thoroughly revised in 2011. The new classification (ISCED 2011) is currently being phased in. It provides improved definitions and greater scope to monitor global patterns in education. Moreover, ISCED 2011 presents new coding schemes for education programmes and educational attainment (for more details see UNESCO-UIS, 2011).

For further definitions, see the Glossary of European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015.

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