



**DEFINING COMMON ISSUES
ACROSS EUROPE FOR ADULT
EDUCATION**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The National Foundation for Educational Research was appointed by the National Council – ELWa in May 2003 to assist in developing the first phase of this work into defining common issues for adult education across Europe. The following report aims to arrive at a common definition of adult education purely to facilitate this specific piece of work, identify common issues confronting adult education in Europe, and propose an action plan for exploring these issues in Phase II of the project. The member countries of the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities on Lifelong Learning (EARLALL) were used as a basis for this report, although other European countries referred to in the literature are also included.

1.1 Project background

International and European cooperation between local and regional tiers of government is increasing. Associations such as the Local Government International Bureau (LGIB), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) have developed as fora for discussion, exchange of ideas and cooperation in a wide range of policy spheres. These developments have been of particular benefit for regions which face similar social and economic problems.

In recognition of the importance of lifelong learning EARLALL aims to share good practice on different aspects of lifelong learning across Europe. EARLALL was set up in Brussels in 2001 with the support of the European Commission. It comprises a network of founding members, effective members and observers across Europe, and aims to *'...reach a high degree of collaboration among its members in the field of lifelong learning policies and establish a close collaboration with the European Union and other international organisations and public institutions throughout the world'* (EARLALL n.d.).

Wales is represented in this network by the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning for Wales and by the Welsh Assembly Government's Lifelong Learning Division. The National Council – ELWa supports the Assembly's membership through observer status. Wales is the lead region in the network with responsibility for exploring, with other EARLALL members, the theme of adult education and its role in lifelong learning.

The following sections provide a background to adult education providing an understanding of how present policy emphasis has developed.

It should be noted, however, that some difficulties have arisen due to terminology. The terms ‘adult learning’ and ‘adult education’ are referred to regularly, but there appears to be no common application of the two terms. Generally, ‘adult learning’ is an inclusive term that refers to all types of learning activities for adults including formal, non-formal and informal, and ‘adult education’ is used to describe more formal types. For the purpose of this research, both learning and education will be taken to include all learning types.

1.2 Background to adult education

According to Federighi (1999), the first state provisions in Europe for adult education were made in Norway early in the 18th century, but it only truly established itself with growing industrialisation.

Wales was at the forefront of these initiatives through the 18th century religiously-inspired circulating schools of Griffith Jones and then the Sunday School movement which also took root in England. Secular adult education in England and Wales developed from the mechanics institutes established in the early 19th century which later lead to the establishment of technical schools. Mechanics institutes were originally established to provide basic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic, but broadened with the increase in availability of free elementary education (EURYDICE 2001/2002).

In Denmark in the mid-19th century adult learning was introduced on a much larger scale. Based on developments by N.F.S Grundtvig and K. Kold, Folk High schools were set up in local communities based on demand. The service was launched in response to the needs of sections of the population such as small farmers who were becoming increasingly important to the economy. Folk High schools aimed to develop people’s political and social awareness. The Folk High School movement gradually spread through northern Europe and Grundtvig’s founding principles are still alive in many European countries - both Norway and Sweden have Folk High schools, although the organisation and role of the institutions often varies (OECD 2003).

The two World Wars hindered further development of adult education to a certain degree, although the fledgling Soviet Union committed itself to accessible knowledge and universal and free education for all workers.

In post World War I Wales, the WEA was a major provider of adult education classes for its members. The main focus was on liberal subjects and included economics, social studies, history, modern languages, the arts and natural sciences. The organisation had no political or sectarian ties and its purpose was to provide opportunities for individuals to develop as active and informed citizens.

Also in Wales, Coleg Harlech was established during the depression of the 1930s. Its mission was influenced strongly by the Dane Grundtvig and his

ideas of learning as a means of personal fulfilment and a means to promote participation in public life. A great deal of emphasis was placed on self-directed study supported by a considerable emphasis on tutorial work and the use of formal methods of lectures and note-taking were discouraged.

Although the college encouraged learners to progress to other courses, including those offered at HE institutions, its early mission included the aim of providing individuals with new skills and knowledge which would enable them to return to their communities and contribute to the cultural and public life of those areas.

In the 1930's the concept of adult education advanced in both theory and practice and from the 1960's onwards, *'the field of education entered a phase of constant growth'* (Federighi 1999).

1.3 Lifelong learning

Whilst adult education has deep historical roots, the necessity for an individual to continue learning throughout life is a more recent concept. In the early 1970s, the notion of lifelong learning became clearly and universally formalised through OECD and UNESCO papers. This work marked a turning point in policy for adult learning as there was the recognition, for the first time, that periods of learning should take place throughout a person's life, and not be confined to the early years (OECD 2003).

Makela and Hulkko (1999) provide Finland as an example where the principle of 'continuous education' was the basis for the comprehensive development of the Finnish education system in the 1970s: *'Lifelong learning has been a central aim of Finnish education policy as well as a frame of reference for fostering practical solutions'*.

However broad or narrow lifelong learning policies are in reality in different European regions, education policy is a subject of international debate, as well as being an internal matter for different countries (Green 2002). This international debate is partly as a result of the need to respond to global pressures.

To a great extent, lifelong learning has gained prominence in European policy *'...not least through the advocacy of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Commission (EC), to become, by the turn of the century, almost ubiquitous in the developed world.'* (Green 2002). Lifelong learning has also been given a high priority by the European Union (EU).

This was emphasised formally in Article 149 of the Maastricht Treaty which stated *'the EC shall ... encourage cooperation between Member States'* and Article 150 which stated that *'the Community shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member*

States while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training'. However, the turning point for this agenda was the result of Lisbon European Council.

At the Lisbon European Council, March 2000, the important role of education as an integral part of achieving economic and social cohesion, and as an instrument for strengthening the EU's competitive power worldwide was finally recognised. A 10-year mission was adopted by the European Council to become '*...the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*' (EUROPA n.d.). To help realise this goal, the European Council called for concrete objectives to be set to encourage cooperation in addressing issues of common concern in education and training across the EU.

Progress in realising this was made at the Stockholm European Council in March 2001 which agreed three strategic objectives and 13 associated objectives, one of which was to '*facilitate the access to lifelong learning to all Europeans at all ages*'.

The Barcelona European Council in March 2002 endorsed the European Commission's overall strategy to guide member states' lifelong learning policies, which identified a range of priorities for action with the aim that European education and training should become '*a world quality reference by 2010*'.

This resolution established lifelong learning as a guiding principle for the development of education and training policies at the EU level. One of the benchmarks this will be measured against is that, '*by 2010, the EU average level of participation in lifelong learning should be at least 25 per cent of the adult working age population (defined as being the 25-64 age group)*'. This will be measured by an Adult Education Survey designed by the Eurostat taskforce and introduced in 2006.

Field (2002) highlights the considerable public funding the Commission has channelled into vocational training programmes in the member states and its development of policies and programmes for the entire education sector. Two examples given are the comprehensive programmes LEONARDO, which covers transnational projects in vocational education, and SOCRATES with a similar role with respect to education. An important strand of the SOCRATES programme is the **Grundtvig Action** which is designed to enhance adult learning and encourage European co-operation by providing support for transnational co-operation projects, learning partnerships, mobility for the training of educational staff and networks (NIACE 2000).

Currently, the Grundtvig programme provides support for initiatives to do with adult education and lifelong learning. '*It encompasses all levels and sectors of adult learning*' including formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Its operational aims which signal where the European Commission's interests in adult education lie, include:

- ♦ promoting the development of concrete products and valid results which will be of use in several participating countries
- ♦ promoting European cooperation between bodies providing adult education
- ♦ contributing to improving the quality of teacher training relating to persons involved in the teaching of adults
- ♦ furthering the debate on lifelong learning and contributing to the dissemination of good practice.

The clear emphasis on lifelong learning has led to the development of bodies such as EARLALL.

1.4 Adult education as part of lifelong learning

Adult education was accorded a prominent place in lifelong learning strategies across Europe and farther afield by a number of reports published in 1996. The White Paper of the European Commission, *Teaching and Learning: towards the Learning Society* (1996), the *Delors Report* (1996) and the *OECD Report* (1996) all emphasised the importance of adult education in lifelong learning strategies being developed in response to major technological changes in Western society. The reports pointed to the acceleration of scientific and technological innovation, the rapid spread of ICT and the growth of new business cultures and labour force patterns as factors creating a need for adults to improve or update their basic skills and acquire new knowledge even after completion of their initial, compulsory education (Stoney *et al* 1999 p1). McGivney (2003) noted, however, that '*the growing Europe-wide emphasis on lifelong learning was creating a rationale for maintaining and supporting forms of adult learning that were not directly economically or competence-orientated*'. Adult Community Learning (ACL) was viewed as a means of addressing issues such as social inclusion and community regeneration alongside economic objectives. She notes that while traditional venues could be used to deliver ACL it was also delivered in a '*huge variety of outreach locations*' by a wide range of types of providers and involving many different learning activities and pedagogic styles.

Stoney *et al* (1999) maintain that adult education continues to be a central plank of lifelong learning strategies and as a result has become a high priority for EU member states. This view of adult education within the wider spectrum of lifelong learning was supported by an officer from the EAEA interviewed for this project who stated that '*...lifelong learning is the whole of it and adult education is a very big part of lifelong learning.*'

Indeed, across the globe, the OECD (2003) argues that the vision of adult learning as part of lifelong learning has been adopted in a number of countries and has now formed the basis of numerous government initiatives. For some countries lifelong learning in reality only focuses on certain elements of the spectrum, for example adult education, rather than embracing a ‘cradle to grave’ concept. An officer of the German region of Rheinland Pfalz stated, *‘...In Germany adult education is the main mode of lifelong learning. Indeed, lifelong learning has centred almost exclusively on adult education...’*.

1.5 The research project

♦ Aims of the project

The aims of the project were to:

- arrive at a common definition of Adult Education
- identify common issues confronting Adult Education in Europe
- propose an action plan for exploring these issues in phase II of the project.

♦ Objectives of the project

The objectives of the project were to:

- compare the range of definitions, aims and scope of adult education used across Europe in order to provide an understanding of the role it plays in lifelong learning
- propose a common definition of adult education for the purpose of this project,
- work with interested EARLALL members and adult learning associations to gather information on problems regarding adult education which are shared by many European countries and regions and to:
- as above, identify up to four common challenges of adult education faced by Europe
- propose an action plan for Phase II of the project for the further investigation of these issues, and for the identification and sharing of good practice in tackling these problems.

♦ Methodology

The methodology used a combination of research methods and techniques to address the above aims and objectives.

a) Defining Adult Education

A literature search was conducted to identify and analyse definitions of adult education used across Europe. The search sought to obtain relevant published material and data sources in English and other languages which contained information about the scope of adult education and the issues confronting it in Europe. The NFER EURYDICE Unit and the NFER library service provided expert support in this Europe-wide literature search.

Through a process of desk research, the documentation was read and analysed by NFER researchers, using a standardised framework for the analysis. Key issues and conclusions were drawn out in order to obtain:

- a record of the definitions, aims and scope of adult education across Europe
- a comparative analysis of those definitions
- an analysis of the role played by adult education in lifelong learning in different European countries
- a proposed common definition of adult education for the sole purpose of facilitating discussion amongst the European countries for this project.

This information has been supplemented with data collected from telephone interviews.

b) Identification of Common Issues

This aspect of the project was addressed through two methods:

- Documentation review

The literature review also provided a documentary perspective of the most important issues common to adult education across Europe.

- Telephone and face-to-face interviews

The information obtained on common issues through the documentation review provided a basis for a programme of interviews with personnel involved at the macro level in a range of organisations involved in adult education across Europe. Semi-structured interview schedules for the collection of qualitative data were developed and discussed with the National Council – ELWa. It was agreed that all respondents would be asked a total of 19 questions. These instruments enabled an in-depth investigation to be undertaken of a range of key themes as they apply in different European states and regions.

♦ Key themes

The 19 questions were based around the following key themes:

- **the definitions, aims and scope of adult education across Europe**
- **the merits and weaknesses of the different definitions currently in use**
- **the strategic role of adult education in lifelong learning**
- **the balance between national, regional and local responsibilities in the provision of adult education**
- **the structural arrangements in place for the funding and delivery of adult education**
- **current organisational problems facing the provision of adult education**
- **barriers to learners' participation in adult education and means to overcome those barriers.**

The responses to these themes are summarised in Chapter 5.

Face-to-face interviews were also conducted with relevant personnel at the National Assembly for Wales/Welsh Assembly Government in order to obtain the Welsh perspective.

The respondents in Europe were identified in conjunction with the National Council – ELWa and contacted first through e-mail to make arrangements for the telephone interview. Where the initial e-mail failed to elicit a response, a second message was sent. No responses were received from the majority of contacts while other contacts were unavailable for interview because of annual leave or other commitments. The NFER's EURYDICE Unit then provided the research team with telephone numbers for other relevant personnel in several European regions. Regional officers in the following countries were interviewed by telephone in time for their data to be included in the final project report:

- The Italian region of Livorno
- The German region of Rheinland Pfalz
- A national overview from Denmark.

The General Secretary of the EAEA was also interviewed.

c) Action plan for further investigation and development

Based on analysis of the documentation and literature review and the face-to-face and telephone interviews described under a) and b) above, the research team devised an action plan for further investigation and development. This sets out a timetable and recommendations for action to consolidate and take

forward both the research into comparing adult education across Europe, as well as supporting EARLALL to carry out its work effectively.

1.6 The project report

This report presents the findings of the research. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and a background to adult education in Europe. Chapter 2 discusses the objectives of adult education across Europe. Chapter 3 identifies four major trends within adult education across the European states and regions relating to:

- ♦ decentralisation in regulation and organisation
- ♦ a holistic approach
- ♦ increased coherence in organisation and structure
- ♦ widening participation in adult education.

Chapter 4 examines how adult education is defined in different countries and proposes a standard definition. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the key themes outlined in the introduction and begins to tease out common issues that have been identified in the report. The final section is the action plan for further development in Phase II of this research.

The discussion of definitions of adult education occurs in Chapter 4 (instead of following the sequence set out in of the objectives) because it draws on the trends, challenges and issues developing across Europe that make up the main body of the report and enables the reader to gain an awareness of the scope of adult education.

Appendix 2 also provides more detailed information regarding country comparisons.

2. OBJECTIVES OF ADULT EDUCATION

Developments during the second half of the 20th century brought far-reaching social and economic changes to Europe. As one key publication noted: *'Globalisation and its manifestation in cultural, political, economic and environmental fields have been the major force behind this transformation'* (EURYDICE 2002). Many European countries, through their policy documents, stress both economic and non-economic motives for funding and providing adult education. However, in reality it appears that the emphasis is more often placed on an economic agenda.

2.1 Economic objectives

Globalisation has provided the major shaping force behind educational reform because of the education and skill demands which arise from an emerging global market (Green 2002). European countries have recognised that knowledge is their most valuable resource as a response to a changing economic environment and increased international competition (Eurydice 2002). As a result the promotion of lifelong learning strategies, particularly with regards to adult education, is a key feature of this reform.

Available literature has identified two main challenges for adult education in Europe. These are:

- ♦ low unemployment levels
- ♦ a highly skilled work force

Low unemployment levels

The OECD (2003) maintains that economic growth and the creation of jobs is a major objective of all governments, and adult learning programmes help to increase the *'employability pool'*.

An officer of Rheinland Pfalz suggested that the whilst there were no economic targets for adult education in the region, the emphasis on vocational education was perceived as an indicator of how learning was geared towards employment and the economic needs of the country.

A further example of the significance placed on economic factors was also provided by interview data collected from Denmark. In contrast to the government's memorandum statement emphasising both economic and non-economic objectives for adult education, it was suggested that there is a very strong focus on employability and stability.

A highly skilled workforce

It is suggested that the very notion of a 'career' is changing – job tenure has decreased and temporary employment has grown and education has become essential to enable people to adapt to multiple job and career changes. Adult learning enables greater versatility and mobility of workers (OECD 2003).

The acceleration of scientific and technological innovation and the spread of communication and information technology necessitate the constant acquisition of and updating of skills (Stoney *et al* 1999).

Two different strands can be identified in the economic drive behind adult education. These are:

- The need to provide the population with basic literacy and numeracy skills, particularly for marginalised groups. The OECD (2003) suggests that basic skills are a necessary condition to cope with everyday life in general and, more particularly, entering the labour market. The acquisition of basic skills can be an effective method of preventing skill shortages.
- A growing need for the upgrading and updating of skills in a changing global environment (Green 2002). European countries are implementing reforms to their education systems in order to respond to the need to upgrade the skills of the workforce '*...whose knowledge and competencies are often outdated and ill-suited to new challenges*' (Le Magazine 2003).

The economic objectives of adult education are summarised by Clayton (1999) who suggests, '*in an era of large-scale unemployment and rapid technological and social change, lifelong learning is increasingly necessary for individuals wishing to gain, change or progress in employment.*'

Wales provides an example of a country that has prioritised the economic objectives of lifelong learning. In its Corporate Plan, the National Council – ELWa maintains that learning must be responsive to the social and economic needs of Wales, but also states that its first priority is the economy.

2.2 Non-economic objectives

It is worth noting that the objectives for adult education are not wholly economic. Although many governments suggest that the economic and non-economic benefits for learning are inextricably linked, social objectives for adult education are also emphasised in their own right.

The European Commission, in a paper presented to the UNESCO conference (1997) defined the value of general adult education as being, '*an essential factor for achieving personal fulfilment and development, and for attaining optimal levels of social and political participation. It is rightly seen as being a*

major instrument against social exclusion and marginalisation...’ (Stoney *et al* 1999 p1).

The OECD (2003) maintains that adult learning can affect every facet of a person’s life from citizenship and democracy, in the sense of full participation in society, to individual welfare. It is suggested that participating in adult education can facilitate social returns such as improved health and reduced crime levels and personal and cultural development encouraging social integration (OECD 2003). A good practice guide produced the EAEA (2001) argued that lifelong learning is about combating social exclusion through helping all to participate in shaping their own futures, improving quality of life and become active citizens.

The Nordic countries’ focus upon social education provided, for example, through Folk High schools is evidence of the strong emphasis on non-economic objectives for adult education.

Interview data collected from Denmark highlighted the personal benefits adult education provided: *‘Participation is of course empowering in many ways, but it also has the social benefit of simply getting together if you feel isolated and alone.’*

In Spain, the main objective of the ‘popular universities’ has been to promote social interest and personal and cultural development in order to improve the quality of life of individuals (OECD 2003). In the UK the term ACL has been used increasingly since the late 1990s to define learning which is not *‘on the whole formal provision leading to vocational academic or professional qualifications’* (McGivney, 2003). Although the definition of ACL is extremely broad, its more recent features have been identified as being:

- ♦ *the strong emphasis on widening participation and countering social disadvantage*
- ♦ *a new emphasis on collaboration and partnerships in planning and providing local learning opportunities*
- ♦ *a broader provider base*
- ♦ *curricular change. Whereas traditional adult education programmes have focused on personal development and recreational activities as well as skills development, there is now an emphasis on literacy, numeracy and ESOL, family learning, ICT, environmental issues, citizenship and skills for community development and engagement.*

However, it is worth reflecting that, although personal and cultural development have been presented as an objective for adult education in some countries across Europe, this does not appear to be a significant priority which is routinely translated into current policy in all countries.

This may be partly due to the fact that the social benefits of participating in learning are often difficult to judge. An officer from the German region of

Rheinland Pfalz clarified this point by stating '*...there is very little empiric evidence. The soft outcomes with which we are dealing with are very difficult to measure.*'

2.3 Joint objectives

Despite the distinction between the economic and social objectives of adult education, the OECD reports that, overall, many European countries agree on long-run goals which include economic and non-economic objectives.

Adult education has been accepted as an important tool for equity and social cohesion, for personal development and furthering citizenship and democratic values, for economic and social development and for reducing unemployment and skills shortages. In support, a European communication on '*Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*' highlighted a consensus relating to '*four broad and mutually supporting objectives*' of lifelong learning: personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/adaptability (EUROSTAT 2002).

While the inclusion of economic and non-economic objectives in the development of adult education policy is apparent, the emphasis placed on them does vary from country to country. An officer of the EAEA argued that there is great variation in objectives: '*Provision in Norway is very broad, but this is not true for other countries. We are working to develop a common strategy*'.

In Sweden, the general objective for adult education is '*to provide adults with the opportunity...to supplement their education in order to strengthen their position of the individual in both social and working life*' (EURYDICE 2001/2002).

For Portugal, the general objectives for adult education are:

- ♦ to promote the development and upgrading of knowledge and competencies as a replacement or complement to school education
- ♦ to tackle basic and functional illiteracy
- ♦ to encourage the educational and creative occupation of leisure time (EURYDICE 2001/2002).

Denmark highlighted its future priorities as including the following:

With today's challenges, enterprises and individuals to participate actively in an ongoing competence development, provision of adult education, including further education, must continue to be able to meet the expectations and needs of individuals and enterprises, offering lifelong learning opportunities for development and recognition of relevant qualifications and skills for employability and adaptability as

well as opportunities for personal development and fulfilment in active citizenship.

Key Findings

- ♦ Globalisation and economic and technological change mean that the development of a culture of lifelong learning, in which individuals are constantly gaining new skills, is being recognised by governments across Europe as a major priority. This is especially true in relation to the skills that empower people to benefit from the knowledge economy.
- ♦ Approaches to lifelong learning have emphasised the need for individuals to acquire skills in order to obtain and retain employment and thus overcome one of the major obstacles to social inclusion thus combining economic and social goals for adult education and lifelong learning
- ♦ A number of European countries, such as the Nordic countries and Germany, have strongly acknowledged the role of liberal adult education in strengthening social inclusion. This approach recognises the role of adult education in promoting active citizenship and community cohesion at a time when many traditional notions of society are being undermined by a variety of economic, cultural and other factors.
- ♦ Most European countries have their own aims for adult education which include both economic and social objectives. However, there are variations in the importance given to these different aims in individual countries, and the level of funding for vocational as opposed to liberal adult education varies substantially across European states and regions.
- ♦ In reality, it appears that the economic agenda is given a higher priority than the individual and social agendas in many European countries. This could be because of the suggestion that economic returns are easier to measure than social benefits.

3. TRENDS

The following chapter examines current trends within adult education in Europe which highlight common challenges and issues. The common issues relate to:

- ♦ Regulation and organisation – the trend towards decentralisation and how countries are devolving operational control of adult learning to other levels of authority
- ♦ The trend towards a holistic approach – the inclusion of different modes of learning under the umbrella term ‘adult education’ and how countries are developing a broader view in terms of this
- ♦ The trend towards improving coherence – the move towards coherence between policy and providers and how countries are achieving this
- ♦ The trend towards widening participation in adult education – the common approach by governments to increase participation in adult learning and how different countries are attempting to realize this goal.

Although variations exist, a number of common issues can be identified through the four trends, and are discussed in Chapter 5.

The timescale for this research and difficulties in gaining access to relevant staff has meant that it has not been possible to examine lower-level issues and provide concrete examples of common issues. This first phase of the research does, however, provide a strategic overview of the common issues relating to adult education in Europe.

3.1 Regulation and organisation

3.1.1 The trend towards decentralisation

In terms of the regulation and organisation of adult education in Europe, the general trend is towards decentralisation.

Green (2002) argues that although the regulation and governance of adult education is subject to continuous change, there has been a tendency for EU states and the rest of the developed world, to move away from *‘direct central government administrative control over educational processes and towards greater devolution of operational control to other levels of authority’*.

Green (2002) puts forward a number of reasons for the move towards decentralisation. One suggestion is that decision-making by those who are closer to *‘operational realities’* is more effective because it is more able to reflect local needs. It is suggested that the trend towards decentralisation

follows a general tendency to bring political decision-making closer to local circumstances and requirements (OECD 2003). The argument is that decentralisation in adult education gives organisers and providers greater autonomy to co-operate and identify and meet local needs more effectively. It also allows different regions working towards the same objectives to work in partnership. The OECD (2003) suggests that this is particularly noticeable in Spain and Sweden.

A further explanation is that modern education and training systems are so vast and complex that no government can effectively manage it from the centre.

Most EU states have a federal or devolved system of government, such as the *Länder* in Germany, the *autonomías* in Spain, the tri-partite federal division of Belgium into Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels, and the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly in the UK.

3.1.2 Types of decentralisation

It should, however, be noted that despite the trend towards decentralisation in many European countries, *'the form that decentralisation takes...has varied significantly from country to country'* (Green et al 1999).

Green (2002) proposes three main models of decentralisation:

- ♦ to regional or provincial governments
- ♦ to municipal or local level administration
- ♦ to the institutions and other providers.

Decentralisation to regional or provincial governments

A number of countries have devolved control over adult education to regional or provincial governments. Germany has a federal structure where primarily the *Länder* or provinces are responsible for organising, among other types, general continuing education. Relevant legislation and administration of the education system are principally the responsibility of the *Länder* (EURYDICE/CEDEFOP 2000).

In Belgium, the federal state is composed of three language communities, Flemish, French and German and three regions Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. *'Each of the communities and regions has legislative and executive autonomy with respect to its own attributions'* with the communities being responsible for cultural matters, education, personal related matters and language (EURYDICE/CEDEFOP 2000).

The Italian region of Livorno has responsibility for coordinating the provision of and monitoring adult education.

However, the diversity of such decentralisation was highlighted by interview data gathered from the German region of Rheinland Pfalz which has no formal strategy for adult education but, instead, follows EU policies and those of central government. Länder only have responsibility for some aspects of adult education. For example, vocational education is the responsibility of central government. Lifelong learning in Germany is therefore supported by a dual funding stream where central government funds vocational education and the Länder fund other types of adult education.

Decentralisation to municipal or local level administration

Several countries have transferred authority to municipalities or to the local level. Although the central and local authorities, together with the different providers, are responsible for ensuring that educational activities are consistent with the national goals and guidelines defined by the national government, the municipalities are responsible, in many cases, for coordinating the provision of adult education (EURYDICE / CEDEFOP 2000).

In Denmark, for example, a recent change has occurred in the funding mechanisms for adult education. Traditionally, funds had been distributed and shared between all forms of education at a national level. However, in 2001 the responsibility for funding certain types of adult education, such as informal learning, was transferred to the municipalities or local levels. Additionally, action plans for the education of ‘targeted groups’ are included under the duties of each municipality.

Decentralisation to the institutions and other providers

Some countries have reduced the power of the middle public level and delegated administrative and budgetary powers to the institutions themselves, developing a ‘*quasi market*’ in education where more choice of providers is given to the student and institutions compete with each other for business. This has occurred in the Netherlands, and in England and Wales. In the latter two regions Further Education colleges were given autonomy in 1993 to run their own affairs. The governing body is accountable for the management of the college and for the proper use of allocated funds (EURYDICE/CEDEFOP 2000).

Key findings

- ♦ EU governments are increasingly decentralising responsibility for adult education to regional governments. In some countries certain key decisions are taken at local government level. The extent to which this is done varies from country to country.

3.2 A holistic approach

3.2.1 Inclusion of different types of learning

The OECD (2003) states that Europe exhibits a general trend towards a holistic approach to adult learning within a developing lifelong learning perspective. This involves the inclusion of all types of adult learning under the umbrella term ‘adult education’. It also involves an increasing effort to generate coherence across the diversity of programmes and courses for adults, such as community education, or provision open to adults in universities and colleges (Clayton and McGill 1999).

In response to the many different types of learning which can be identified within adult education, the concept of ‘education’ is broadening to incorporate a variety of delivery methods and objectives (OECD 2003).

Three main categorisations of learning are targeted as part of this developing comprehensive strategy and their inclusion is intended to produce a holistic approach to adult education. The types of learning under discussion are:

- ♦ Formal, non-formal and informal
- ♦ Vocational and non-vocational
- ♦ Assessed and non-assessed.

This trend is also closely linked to issues surrounding the definition of adult education and its scope – an issue discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

3.2.2 Formal, non-formal and informal learning

Formal, informal and non-formal types of learning have received attention from a number of European organisations concerned with adult education and lifelong learning. For example, EUROSTAT is currently developing a ‘framework for discussion’ in order to present the full range of information needs on lifelong learning. Within this framework formal, informal and non-formal are taken into account as a means of including all kinds of *‘purposeful activities’* as defined by the European Union (EUROSTAT 2002).

The incorporation of formal, informal and non-formal learning into the concept of adult education is often highlighted by institutional definitions provided by European countries. Denmark, Norway and Portugal specify that adult learning includes all three types of learning (OECD 2003).¹

¹ The definitions adopted by the EU interpret these terms in the following way:

- ♦ Formal learning takes place in an organised, structured setting. It is clearly defined as a learning activity such as that in primary, secondary or higher educational institutions, and by its very nature leads to certification
- ♦ Non-formal learning implies organised activities that are not explicitly identified as learning activities but have a major learning component. For example, it may occur in the workplace and does not lead to certification

Different countries, and regions of those, incorporated a variety of types of learning under their description of the term ‘adult education’. For Tuscany, it was suggested that several approaches are included, from formal to non-formal. In Denmark the interviewee reported that there had been a tendency towards greater recognition of informal and non-formal learning because *‘access to a wide variety of subjects in adult education is an advantage...a lot of people have had very bad experiences with their formal education and felt that they were not good learners. When they had a non-formal experience, even if it was connected with something not at all relevant to employability...a hobby kind of thing or personal fulfilment...and have a positive experience and they did learn something and were not stigmatised, they very often afterwards have got the courage to continue with, for instance, more formal adult education.’*

However, the extent to which various types of learning are included in individual approaches aimed at developing adult education systems differs across European countries. An officer of the German region of Rheinland Pfalz did not feel that informal learning was, at present, considered much of a priority: *‘Informal education is not recognised at present although there are moves towards its recognition...most of the adult education which they (federal states) fund, would be described as formal learning given that it takes the form of a specific course.’*

3.2.3 Vocational and non-vocational

Much debate has arisen about the distinction between vocational and non-vocational learning. On the one hand, it appears that the old distinction between education and training, which saw the former as the gaining of intellectual knowledge and the latter as acquiring job-related skills, is being increasingly discarded in favour of the term ‘learning’. Much learning which may begin as non-vocational may lead to more work-orientated learning (Clayton and McGill 1999). For example, an officer from a German region stated that *‘increasingly there is a tendency to emphasise adult education as a means into more vocational learning.’* This view is echoed elsewhere:

Vocational and adult education and training are regarded in the different European Union Countries as crucial to the maintenance of employment, economic growth and the social integration of disadvantaged groups (Van Wieringen and Attwell 1999).

Many European countries including Denmark, Finland, Norway, Portugal and Spain refer to vocational training and general education in their institutional definitions of adult education (OECD 2003).

♦ Informal learning occurs by chance or during everyday activities or learning through experience. It is not provided through any formal structure.

On the other hand, however, the OECD (2003) argues that most countries still provide greater support for vocational orientated training as opposed to general learning, and that countries differ in their coverage of non-vocational learning. For example, for Switzerland, *'...adult learning covers any learning process that enables adults to develop their skills, increase their knowledge and upgrade their general and vocational qualifications...there is little or no scope for non-vocational learning'* (OECD 2003).

3.2.4 Assessed and non-assessed

Smith and Spurling (1999) suggest that there is substantial evidence of the growing popularity of accredited courses as a means of reinforcing the aims of adult continuing education and lending it greater status.

Governments across Europe have introduced national qualification frameworks or are experimenting with different types of qualification structures that can cater for adult learners as incentives for adults to learn (OECD 2003). This is because assessment and accreditation are said to provide evidence of learner achievements and provide learner progression routes.

Interview data confirmed that efforts were being made towards designing and developing accreditation procedures for adult education. In the Italian region of Livorno, although there was no standard national qualification framework or national tests, attempts had been made to define a *'standard'*. Experiments providing certificates to those who had completed adult education courses were also underway and through a structure of accreditation, attempts had been made to *'establish a system of continuous or permanent learning'*. It was suggested *'...if people finish a course they normally want to carry on with their learning, this is also one of the aims of the adult education system in Livorno'*. In fact, it was suggested that the pressing priority for the region was *'to qualify the system.'*

There were, however, examples of areas that had not developed systems of qualifications or standards. In the German Region of Rheinland Pfalz, some courses, including languages and IT, make use of international standards. For example, the Cambridge standard is referred to for English courses. Additionally, there appeared to be standard scales of assessment, set by the federal government, for vocational education, but no localised alternative for adult education had been developed.

The three main strands of development identified and discussed above are also interlinked. For example, there is a growing emphasis on assessing informal and non-formal learning.

The identification, assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning have been included in a number of national approaches to adult learning. This gives learners credit for learning a range of less formal settings,

boosts learners 'confidence' and contributes to the development of individual career paths (OECD 2003).

Sweden has recently begun developing general systems for the assessment of competencies acquired outside formal learning systems and since 1994, Finland has had a qualification framework built on competence based exams, irrespective of where the knowledge and skills were obtained (OECD 2003). Finland, Denmark and Sweden, although they have chosen different approaches, have taken practical steps through legislation and institutional initiatives towards strengthening the link between formal education and training and learning that takes place outside schools.

The general acceptance of learning outside formal education and training institutions as a basic feature of adult learning is illustrated by countries such as UK, Ireland and the Netherlands.

It must be noted, however, that not all European countries are moving in this direction. German and Austrian approaches to the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning are similar in the sense that they have been reluctant to adopt this trend (Bjórnsdóttir 2000).

Interview data collected from Denmark revealed that the accreditation of informal learning was possible, but the emphasis was on work-based learning.

Bjórnsdóttir (2000) also highlights some problems with the identification, assessment and recognition of, in particular, non-formal learning. One example is the difficulty associated with establishing a system able to integrate non-formal learning into its framework such as developing an acceptable qualification standard.

Modularisation or the division of qualifications into small units is being viewed as positive for adult learning in terms of enabling an individualised pace of learning. This method seeks to ensure that the management of training programmes and individual learning paths is flexible and is being utilised by a number of European countries including Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland (OECD2003).

Although efforts are being made in other countries to develop accreditation and qualification systems, progression is not consistent across Europe. An officer of the EAEA indicated that some countries have developed some national qualification systems for adult education but there appears to be no common approach.

Key findings

- ♦ A common feature in most European states is an emphasis on flexibility and variety in the delivery of adult education in order to meet the needs of different groups. This has led to the development of delivery methods which can be categorised broadly as formal, non-formal and informal learning.
- ♦ The more flexible methods have been used successfully to deliver both vocational adult learning and more liberal forms of adult education.
- ♦ The distinction between vocational and non-vocational learning in Europe is not always simple. While the aims of vocational education are relatively easy to define, the objectives of non-vocational adult education are more complex and include educational, social, and economic aspects.
- ♦ The broad range of systems which have been introduced as a means of assessing and accrediting adult learning provide a variety of progression pathways and reflect the varying degree of state concern for adult education across Europe. There is no consensus on whether all types of adult learning should include learner assessment or not.

3.3 Improving coherence

3.3.1 The trend towards coherence

Waddington (2002) argues that the problems caused by the lack of coherent policy for lifelong learning have been perceived by many countries as barriers to participating in policy at a European level. A recent trend, therefore, associated with the holistic approach taken by many European countries towards adult education, has involved efforts to address this lack of coherence and co-ordination that exists between the different partners and providers (OECD 2003). As an increasing number of learning modes are included under the umbrella term ‘adult education’, it becomes necessary to have greater coherence. This trend appears to have two main components – policy coherence achieved via partnerships between policy makers and organisations, and partnerships between those agencies involved in the actual delivery of adult education.

Governments from many different European countries have emphasised the importance of partnerships, which are perceived as the means through which coherence, coordination and effective provision can be achieved. Partnerships are also seen in many countries as a means for matching both the demand for, and supply of, adult learning provision with the necessary resources (EAEA 2001). A number of European organisations argue for the promotion of educational partnerships, involving governmental bodies and other organisations (EAEA 2001).

3.3.2 Policy coherence via partnerships between policy makers

Adult education in most European countries has a broad range of partners engaged in policy making and implementation. These include ministries, regional governments and local level governments. For example, although France has no centralising or coordinating body, three ministries work together in partnership in the promotion of continuing education and training – the Ministry for National Education, the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity and the Ministry of Agriculture. Adult learning is provided by a variety of local and regional authorities and organisations that often work together (EURYDICE / CEDEFOP 2000). This point was reflected in an OECD report: *‘Both across ministries and between them there is a large number of actors and institutions involved in defining and implementing adult learning policies’* (OECD 2003).

Denmark, as part of its adult education reform, defined three structures – the Adult Education Council, the Council for General Adult Education at Basic Level and the Labour Market Institution for the Financing of Education and Training - that have the specific aim of improving coordination between its different ministries.

The German region of Rheinland Pfalz recommends its form of partnership between the state and provider organisations as an experience that would be valuable for other European countries. An interviewee remarked that: *‘What makes it special is that the government gives basic guidelines and they (provider organisations) have considerable discretion to deliver within those guidelines as they see fit and what methods they use is a matter for them.’*

3.3.3 Partnerships between providers

As a result of the education systems within Europe not being homogeneous (Alheit 2001), the delivery of adult education is carried out by a multiplicity of institutions which may deliver one or more types of learning activities (Fretwell and Colombano 2000). The provision of adult learning requires a complex system of providers consisting of a large number of diverse institutions including public, private and non-governmental organisations (OECD 2003). This diversity is essential in order to meet the varied learning needs of adults in different circumstances (Oliver 1999).

In Germany, the adult education schemes cover a broad spectrum of courses which are supported by a diverse range of institutions including the state and private sector, non-profit making and profit orientated organisations, in-company and public arrangements, social groups and through media technologies such as radio and television. Rheinland Pfalz has a wide range of organisations which provide adult education, demonstrating the diversity of adult education institutions. These include evening schools, churches, trade unions, sports organisations and farmers’ organisations.

In Finland, educational institutions are increasingly involved in adult education, but in the category of general education, learning is provided by

evening schools, music schools, folk high schools and adult education centres (Makela and Hulkko 1999).

Despite the diversity, several common strands can be identified across Europe with regards to the providers of adult education. Folk High schools are widespread in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. They are among the oldest organised aspects of adult education and are run by a mixture of popular movements, non-government organisations and local authorities. Adult education centres are also popular in Finland and Sweden for providing general and interest orientated education. The roles of colleges and universities are important in the UK, Denmark and Sweden because they provide a large proportion of public adult learning programmes. According to the International Adult Literacy Survey (1994 – 1998) employers are the main providers of vocational training in most countries except Denmark and Switzerland (OECD 2003).

As well as cooperation at a policy level, coherence in adult education is also said to be dependent on collaboration between the range of different institutions providing adult learning within European countries, as the following statement indicates: *'The degree of policy coherence depends on a large extent on the degree to which the different institutions that participate in adult learning share their vision and co-ordinate their activities'* (OECD 2003).

An example of this type of partnership is provided by Spain where the Regional Development Councils are in partnership with local employers, such as in the community of La Rioja (OECD 2003).

Unfortunately the literature did not provide particular case-studies involving partnerships between organisations responsible for more general education. However, interview data did indicate that partnerships were being developed. For example, the Italian region of Livorno had undertaken experiments creating *'local communities'*. This involved a *'synergy between local bodies, education bodies and vocational training agencies'* concerned with adult education. Additionally, the networking system developed between public, private and the 'third-sector' had created a body of people qualified to tutor courses, thus ensuring that the provision of adult education could be quickly organised.

A regional officer in Denmark explained that *'...in some cases there is a tendency towards this sort of cooperation, and towards efforts to strengthen that cooperation, but there are also providers that are quite independent.'*

Key findings

- ♦ There is a trend throughout Europe to encourage greater coordination in the planning and delivery of adult learning and develop a more strategic approach which also makes better use of resources.
- ♦ Greater organisational coherence within individual member states is required before a Europe-wide approach could be developed.
- ♦ Most states and regions recognise that diversity is required within the system in order to meet the needs of different groups of learners.
- ♦ There is no common European approach to creating partnerships of providers, and present practice reflects the differing prior experiences, traditions and structures of individual countries.

3.4 Widening participation in adult education

Across Europe there appears to be a trend in policy thinking with regards to adult education. Although a mixed picture, there is a common approach by many governments to widen participation levels in adult education as a means to achieving the economic and social objectives referred to earlier in the report.

3.4.1 Government policy

A survey undertaken by the OECD (2003) observed that all European countries visited had adopted some kind of specific policy measure which targeted adult learning at a national level. The policy direction varied from country to country and ranged from general action plans to increasing learning opportunities for all adults to more specific programmes designed to target particular sub-groups of the population.

Interview data collected from a variety of countries highlighted this diversity. An officer of the EAEA supported the data, claiming that the position of governments across Europe differs:

In the Nordic countries, the UK and Ireland, there is a general understanding that adult education is important for the whole society and government approaches are more developed there than in other countries.

Conversely, interview data collected from Italy indicated that policy relating to adult education was not such a priority. An interviewee reported that: *'In Italy as a whole there is not a good adult education policy. In fact, Italy is the worst country in Europe in relation to adult education'.*

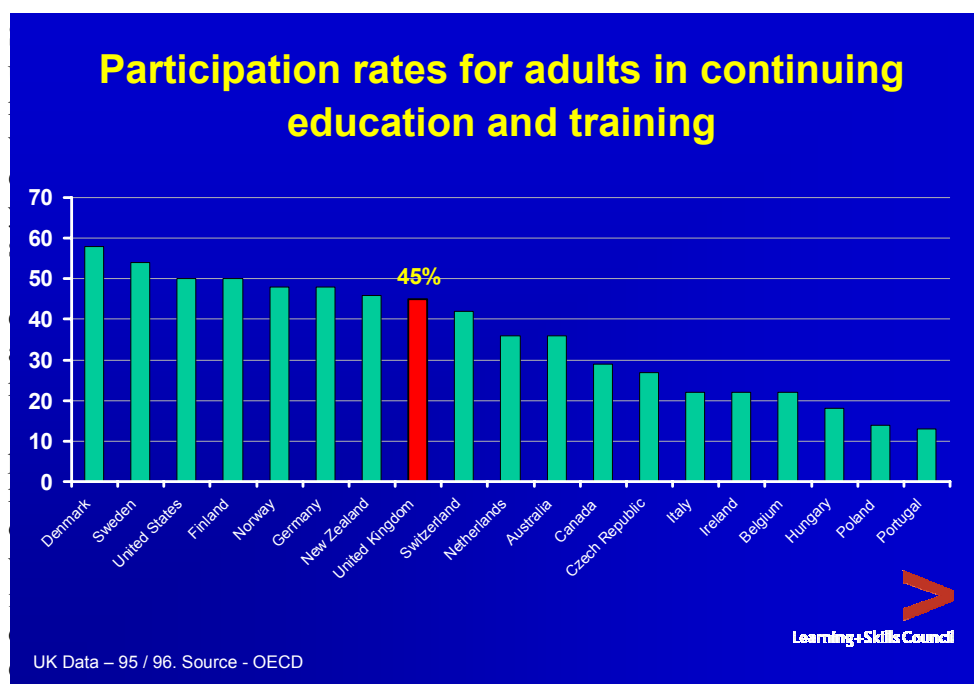
Most European countries have worked towards increasing and diversifying provision at different levels. Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Spain and Portugal have particularly focused on increasing access and improving public provision (OECD 2003).

However, it has been generally recognised that, despite the recent policy emphasis placed on lifelong learning, participation levels in adult education are inadequate, and difficulty of access to such opportunities is considered to be a major obstacle. This is particularly the case for those from marginalised groups and therefore most at risk from social exclusion (Clayton and McGill 1999).

3.4.2 Levels of participation

The OECD (2003) maintains that, although adults participate in learning processes in all European countries, the level of participation varies significantly.

It is suggested that providing a clear picture of participation levels in adult education is difficult because there is no agreed definition of what constitutes learning across European countries and participation can be measured in different ways, for example, by using different reference periods and the inclusion of different types of learning. An example is provided below:



This source indicates that Denmark has the highest level of participation and Portugal has the lowest. The participation rate in the United Kingdom is positioned approximately half way between Denmark and Portugal.

However, it must be noted that participation levels may have altered since the survey and alternative surveys collecting similar data may vary due to different parameters used to measure adult education.

Attempts are being made to improve data collection with regards to adult learning. EUROSTAT has created a task force on measuring lifelong learning with the ultimate goal being the creation of an integrated European statistical information system on education and learning. At the centre of this proposed system is a household-based EU adult education survey currently being developed that aims to collect relevant information from both learners and non-learners.

Additionally, surveys such as the European Union Labour Force Survey (ELFS) (2001), which includes a sample of those who are 16+ and is cited by sources in terms of adult education, and the International Literacy Survey (IALS) conducted between 1994 and 1998 can provide useful data on participation rates in adult learning across Europe (OECD 2003 pp 38 - 39). However, some caution is required in their interpretation because of the time reference, that is, the period of time used by the survey in which learning took place.

Both the IALS and ELFS, although to slightly different degrees, illustrate that the Nordic countries and the UK have high levels of participation, followed by Switzerland. Countries such as Spain and Portugal have much lower participation rates.

Patterns of participation reveal several common features across Europe. There appears to have been a general increase in participation levels from 1995 to 2000, although this is not consistent across all countries (OECD 2003). For example, the ELFS (2001) found that there was a rise of 15 per cent in participation rates in Finland, Denmark, Spain, Switzerland and the UK, but Norway and Sweden have witnessed a decrease in 2001, and in Portugal participation has remained stable.

There are also variations in participation levels for particular sub-groups of the population. For example, younger age cohorts participate in learning to a greater extent than older cohorts. In all countries, and particularly in Portugal and Spain, adults aged 25 to 29 have the highest participation rates. For those aged 30 to 49 these rates decline across all countries and after 50 there is a considerable decrease (OECD 2003). Differences in participation also exist when educational attainment is added to the equation. According to the OECD (2003) *'level of education reached is one of the most relevant variables in relation to adult learning'*. In each European country studied except Portugal, those with the lowest levels of educational attainment also have the lowest participation rates. In all countries but particularly Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the UK, adults with low educational attainments have access to the least learning opportunities as the result of a multitude of barriers.

It can therefore be seen that certain sub-groups of the population participate in adult learning to a greater degree than others and non-participation is often associated with disadvantaged positions in the labour market and social exclusion. However, in relation to ACL, *'participants are characterised by diversity of age from 16 to 100), social and ethnic background, experience and ability'* (McGivney 2003).

Interview data collected reflected these variations in participation of particular sub-groups. In the Italian region of Livorno, women were found to have the highest participation rates. The reason given was that, *'women in Livorno are the highest category of unemployed, which is why they participate most in adult education...women have the greatest need to enter or re-enter the labour market.'*

A similar finding was provided by interview data from Denmark. Women had a very high participation rate in adult education, which was in contrast to middleaged men with limited previous education, who were poorly represented. Conversely, in the German region of Rheinland Pfalz, men participate in adult learning to a greater extent than women. It must be noted, however, that variations could exist between different groups of men such as age cohorts. The interview data did not provide this information.

In all European countries, similar groups have been identified as at risk of social exclusion and these groups. The most common groups include:

- ♦ Older age cohorts
- ♦ Those with low educational attainments
- ♦ The long term unemployed
- ♦ The disabled – including physical, mental and learning disabilities
- ♦ The homeless
- ♦ Ethnic minorities, travellers and refugees
- ♦ Women with children and single parents.

3.4.3 Barriers to participation

Both the literature and the interview data collected suggest that barriers to participating in adult education are extensive and widespread. Although barriers vary according to the economic, political and social structures of a country, they appear to be similar for many countries in Europe. They range from practical barriers such as costs and availability of provision to more complex barriers such as the stigma attached to participating in adult education classes and low self-confidence issues. Therefore, a common issue is how to address these barriers and adopt practice and lessons learned from different regions to meet the needs of others.

The difficulty of access to learning opportunities is a major-reason for non-participation across Europe. Wouters (1992) argues that in Europe as a whole, the market principles of supply and demand tend to exclude many sub-groups of the population including the poor, the disadvantaged and the less well educated.

Lack of regional and national provision - particularly the case for rural areas – is frequently cited as a significant issue for non-participation levels in adult learning. However, different sub-groups of the population often have individual characteristics which also hinder participation (Clayton 1999). As mentioned above, there are particular sections of society that are more at risk of social exclusion. Adult learning can be seen in terms of cause and effect, as those who do not participate in learning are more prone to social exclusion, but those who are socially excluded have greater difficulties in gaining access to provision. Examples of these groups include:

- ♦ Those who have insecure employment status, low pay or low level of skills, often have a lack of opportunity for employer-financed training and are unable to finance their own
- ♦ For those from deprived backgrounds, learning is neither feasible nor a priority
- ♦ Those with prison records find it difficult to access employment and the associated training
- ♦ The homeless can face a number of different barriers including the effects of alcoholism and drug-abuse, low qualification levels and criminal records
- ♦ Ethnic minority status, refugee or asylum seeker status and travelling lifestyles can make it difficult to access learning opportunities. Apart from the more basic problems of language difficulties, many members of these groups suffer from discrimination and prejudice. In addition, for asylum seekers and refugees, there are resettlement issues stemming from the huge differences of language and culture.

Clayton (1999) suggests that psychological barriers to access such as low levels of confidence and self-esteem can also have an important impact on access to learning opportunities, which can stem from previous negative experiences at school. This view is supported by the argument that this group do not participate in adult education because they see institutionally based learning programmes as giving them the same sort of *'rough hand school dealt out'* (Steele 1999). For those at risk of social exclusion, participation is low where institutions do not provide appropriate courses, which take into consideration the practical and support needs of learners (McGivney 1993).

An example of this is provided by Italian experience where certain literacy courses attracted very poor participation because the Ministry of Education set up *'rigid, school-like provision'* leading to *'no visible relationship between the*

literacy provision and social policy favourable to the emancipation of marginalised groups' (Lichtner 1991).

The interview data reflected the wide spectrum of barriers preventing adults from participating in learning. For the Italian region of Livorno, barriers to access in terms of money, distance or transport were not considered problems because the area was so small. Instead the main barrier there was felt to be the lack of marketing: *'The problem is that people aren't aware that these adult education courses exist. Also they don't know that they can learn in a number of places, not just at school.'*

In Denmark, time was considered to be a major difficulty. An interviewee pointed out that: *'In Denmark a lot of women work...so when you have to manage the family and working life, and everything you want, then it's all a matter of time, and that can be a barrier.'* The cost of participation was also felt to be a barrier. A local authority officer stated that: *'Danish statistics show a decrease in participation in the last three years. This is due to the fact that in Adult Education, especially liberal education, the Danish government has demanded higher fees for participation and reduced state funding. State support, or support from the municipalities has decreased. In some subjects, the fees have increased by as much as 50 per cent.'*

Attitudes amongst the public sometimes remain unfavourable towards adult education. An officer in the German region of Rheinland Pfalz suggested that: *'Participation is mainly a cultural problem. A lot of people are not aware of the possibilities and the image of adult education is not very positive in some quarters. They view participants as people who meet for fun and the outcomes are not very well recognised. Learner apathy is also a major problem.'*

3.4.4 Approaches towards widening participation

Although participation levels and the types of participants and non-participants vary across European countries, many appear to be moving towards widening participation through either policy measures or more practical approaches.

National policies

It was suggested by an officer of the EAEA that *'governments are not generally aware of the barriers because, if they were, they would do more.'* However, other sources of information indicate that, in order to increase the representation of certain groups in adult learning programmes, many countries have developed a number of different solutions.

Indeed, the focus of many European countries' policies is on increasing opportunities for up-skilling or re-skilling the adult population. In 1999, Norway implemented a Competence Reform which was a long term initiative to expand learning opportunities for adults. Between 1998 – 2002 Spain developed a National Vocational Training Programme aimed towards flexibility and facilitating access for adults to training in different settings

(OECD 2003). The adoption of different approaches to learning under the remit of adult education has also helped to overcome barriers for some groups who may be reluctant to enter traditional adult education settings. For example, Hillage (2000) argues that informal learning, which takes place outside a formal learning environment, now has a valuable role in encouraging excluded groups to participate in learning (see section 3.2.2).

Key Findings

- ♦ It is sometimes difficult to measure participation in adult learning as comprehensive data is lacking in many regions, particularly for the private employers' sector. Even so, in addition to the identified variations in participation rates, it appears that participation is increasing in some EU states while decreasing in others.
- ♦ Certain learner variables affect participation levels across Europe. Participation is generally highest among young adults and those who have had previous positive engagement with learning. Gender is also a major determinant of participation with more women than men pursuing adult learning in most countries.
- ♦ A similar range of barriers to participation have been identified in most states and regions, including transport issues, rurality, a fear of stigma, cost of participation, lack of information about what provision is available, prior negative experiences of learning, low confidence levels, criminal convictions, homelessness, lack of a fixed lifestyle, ethnicity, and refugee or asylum seeker status.

4. DEFINITIONS OF ADULT EDUCATION

The previous chapter which presented key trends in adult education across Europe attempted to outline the scope of adult education across a number of European countries. This was intended to provide a basis for identifying commonalities that aid the development of a working definition of adult education purely to facilitate discussions in Phase II of this project to share good practice. This chapter examines the ways in which adult education is defined in different European countries.

This chapter draws upon previous discussions relating to the scope of adult education because the inclusion of different learning types is fundamental to developing a definition of adult education.

4.1 Lack of consensus

The OECD (2003) states that there is no consensus across Europe on a single definition of adult education because:

- ♦ It is difficult to define an adult learner and learning as coverage, settings and age of learners vary according to region and type of programme
- ♦ The minimum age for defining the adult learner varies
- ♦ Countries differ in their approach to vocational and non-vocational learning – for example, Switzerland is preparing a law on adult learning that deals with only vocational learning.

This is confirmed by an officer of the EAEA who suggested that: *‘there is a common understanding of adult education, but not a common definition.’*

As a result, it is suggested that the definition of adult education should be addressed on a country-by-country basis depending on local economic, institutional and social conditions (Fretwell and Colombano 2000).

Hillage (2000) argues that there are two main issues in defining adult learning:

- ♦ What constitutes an adult?
- ♦ What counts as learning?

4.2 What constitutes an adult?

Tight (1996) contends that, in its simplest form, adulthood may be defined purely in terms of age.

However, the concept ‘adult student’ differs from country to country (Alheit 2001). For example, in England and Wales, although an adult learner is theoretically anyone, at whatever age, who returns to learning after completing compulsory education, the term is more usually understood as anyone over the age of 19 years (Hillage 2000). In contrast, in Spain and Portugal, if employed, a 16 year old can be defined as an adult learner (OECD 2003).

With regards to higher education (HE), the UK and Ireland have a nationally recognised age for mature students at undergraduate level – 21 years and over and 23 years and over respectively. In Belgium and Spain, it is generally accepted that 25 is the boundary age separating adults from younger students. In Sweden, the term ‘adult student’ is less familiar because many people often choose to participate in HE in their mid twenties. Similarly, in Germany, the length of degree courses means that many undergraduates are older than in other countries.

Owing to the complexity of the term ‘adult’, Burke (1998) argues that it is easier to employ the term ‘post-compulsory education’ to overcome the difficulties which arise from international variations. In addition, Tight (1996) argues that the internationalisation or international acceptance of adult education and development of lifelong learning call for a rejection of a model of education that is confined to childhood, adolescence and early adulthood: *‘...Instead education is portrayed as being available throughout life, as needed and desired by everyone’*. The notion of learning being available throughout life is central to any lifelong learning strategy – an issue previously discussed in Chapter1.

4.3 What counts as learning?

The OECD (2003) maintains that some definitional problems stem from the variety of forms of learning and settings of adult education. Adult learning now encompasses a wide range of different learning and delivery methods, but not all have been given equal precedence by all European countries.

Three distinctions can be made. These are:

- ♦ Clarification of learning as formal, informal or non-formal – as discussed previously
- ♦ Whether it is undertaken for professional or personal purposes, as countries differ in their focus on non-vocational learning, even though it is considered an important aspect of lifelong learning
- ♦ Whether it is on a full-time or part-time basis. Part-time learning is generally more appropriate for people in employment, but does not always signal a return to formal education as full-time learning does.

Although the points above are helpful and contribute to providing a typology of adult learning, they exclude the distinction between different motivations for learning such as learning for its own sake and learning for economic advantage – both of which are important strands in adult education.

The number of different providers that offer various types of adult education is also an issue that needs consideration. Tight (1996) suggests that the concept of lifelong learning extends well beyond providers of formal education to encompass all agencies, groups and individuals providing any kind of learning activity.

4.4 National definitions

European countries have gone some way to widening their definitions of adult education by including various types of learning, but definitions do tend to vary from country to country in terms of content and some countries have much clearer definitions of adult education.

It must be noted that although some variables such as age and mode of learning can be compared, there are difficulties involved in producing a complete comparison table of definitions across Europe due to the variations that exist in individual definitions.

The OECD (2003) provides the following European institutional definitions that were obtained in a thematic review of adult education conducted in eight countries:

Denmark

Adult learning covers vocational training and general education as well as formal, non-formal and informal learning. All adult learning activities are defined in contrast to initial education and training, which is confined to youth. There is no one definition of adult learning, but all facilities providing adult education courses are clearly identified. There is mention of age in two respects:

1. General adult education at lower secondary level and preparatory adult education at an even lower level. Eighteen is the minimum entry age for basic general adult education, corresponding to the age at which schooling in the initial system is no longer open to participants
2. Adult vocational education and training and basic adult vocational education – 25 is established as the minimum entry age to post compulsory vocational education and training. Seventeen and a half years is the minimum age for entering a folk high school.

Finland

Adult learning covers vocational training and general education as well as formal and non-formal learning. The definition of adult learning was contingent in the nature of the host institution and education/training provision rather than on the learner's profile. Nowadays the definition is more based on learner's profile and also takes informal learning into account for those aged 25+.

Norway

Adult learning covers vocational training and general education as well as formal, informal and non-formal. The definition therefore encompasses all the settings whether formal or not, in which learning can occur. Age generally means 19+ since 19 is the age limit for students in secondary education and not enrolled in a higher education facility.

Portugal

Adult learning covers vocational training and general education as well as formal, non-formal and informal learning. However, the ministries of education and labour do not use exactly the same definition although the two jointly set up the National Agency for Adult Education and Training. The Agency's definition initially covered those over 18 but now includes those aged 16 and over in employment.

Spain

Adult learning covers people over 18 who have left initial education and training and those over 16 who are in work. It includes vocational training and general education which are defined in relation to provision and individual situations.

Sweden

Adult learning is defined in relation to education/training provision rather than individuals. An adult learner is therefore someone who participates in some form of education organised and provided in an adult facility e.g. municipal learning centre, folk high school, regardless of age. Self-learners are not included in the definition.

Switzerland

Adult learning covers any learning process that enables adults to develop their skills, increase their knowledge and upgrade their general and vocational qualifications, or switch to a new form of employment better matched to their own needs and those of society. There is little or no scope for non-vocational learning. In Swiss law, learning is virtually synonymous with vocational training. There is no mention of age.

The United Kingdom

An adult learner is a person engaged in education and training outside the formal initial education system. Policy tends to target those aged 19+. The type of learning concerned includes formal education or training leading to a qualification and a range of informal learning opportunities that can be significant sources of skill or knowledge development. This focus is now broadening to encompass informal learning and non-vocational learning.

4.5 A proposed European definition

Any all-encompassing definition applicable to all European countries should therefore be as flexible and broad as possible, while still defining the parameters of the concept in a way meaningful to people in very different settings. The following should be taken into consideration:

- ♦ Specific age requirements limit a definition's usefulness. Instead of an adult being defined by age, any person participating in post-compulsory education could instead be considered an adult learner
- ♦ All types of learning that provide a person with additional knowledge or skills should be included under the umbrella of adult education
- ♦ All those who are involved in offering learning to adults, in whatever form or setting, should be included in definitions of adult education.

The following working definition is therefore proposed for use as a common template across Europe:

- ♦ *Adult learning involves an organised process which enables a person to acquire new skills, competencies or attributes*
- ♦ *it is undertaken by any person who has completed compulsory basic education*
- ♦ *it includes all types of learning, such as learning with and without accreditation in formal, informal and non-formal modes*
- ♦ *it includes a variety of delivery modes, including tutor-directed, class-based and distance learning; it can be undertaken in a wide range of settings, from traditional classrooms and workshops to museums and libraries, churches, public halls, public houses and the home*
- ♦ *it can be delivered by a range of different providers including the public, private and voluntary sectors.*

More detailed definitions of European countries are provided by the EURYDICE European Unit as an annex.

5. SUMMARY

This section summarises, from the interviews and literature search, the key themes referred to in chapter one and the common divergences, trends and common issues that have been identified in the report.

This work will inform phase II of this research and enable the investigation of specific strategies and initiatives as a national and regional level.

♦ Introduction

The task of comparing policies, strategies and initiatives across Europe is complex because of the lack of consistency in the use of the terms ‘adult education’ and ‘adult learning’.

The research undertaken identified more policy-orientated issues rather than concrete issues because of the nature of the literature and time restraints of the research schedule. Further comparative regional research is necessary to draw out these more concrete issues.

♦ The strategic role of adult education in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is now firmly embedded in the European agenda and lifelong learning strategies are a reality in many different European countries.

Adult education has been accorded a prominent place in lifelong learning strategies in response to:

- the recognition that periods of learning should take place throughout a person’s life and not confined to early years
- rapid environmental changes such as the acceleration of scientific and technical information. This had created the need for adults to update basic skills and acquire new knowledge
- objectives.

Most European countries promote both social and economic objectives for adult education. Indeed, the adult education agenda is now often also argued from the premises that economic and social benefits are inextricably linked. However, unlike the rhetoric, in reality there appears to be an increasing emphasis on the economic agenda in some countries, despite the EU’s strong emphasis on lifelong learning for citizenship and social inclusion.

Given such an unclear picture, this issue would benefit from being tested further in phase II of the project. Greater detail is provided in the action plan at the end of the report.

♦ **Trends**

There appear to be four common trends occurring across Europe. Unsurprisingly, however, the trends vary according to the political, social and economic situation of each country. The trends are towards:

♦ ***Regulation and organisation – the trend to decentralisation***

The general trend across Europe is towards decentralisation in terms of the regulation and organisation of adult education. The three main models are:

- regional or provincial government, for example Germany
- municipal or local level administration, for example Denmark
- institutions, for example the Netherlands.

Although not explicitly found in this report, previous work undertaken by the NFER has found that in some adult education systems greater autonomy of policy and provision to reflect the needs of communities has led to a duplication of certain types of courses - an issue which we recommend should be further investigated in phase II of the research.

♦ ***A holistic approach***

Although there are variations, the general trend across Europe is towards a holistic approach in adult education. That is, the inclusion of three main types of learning:

- *Formal, non-formal and informal*

Many countries include formal, non-formal and informal types of learning in their institutional definitions, but the extent to which they are acknowledged differs. For example, the German region of Rheinland Pfalz does not recognise informal learning.

- *Vocational and non vocational*

It appears that, across Europe, the distinction between vocational and non-vocational is being discarded in favour of the term 'learning'. However, many countries still provide greater support for vocational learning, for example Switzerland.

➤ *Assessed and non-assessed*

There is evidence of the growing popularity of accredited courses across Europe. Governments are introducing national qualification frameworks or are experimenting with different types of qualification structures.

Variations do however exist and there is evidence of regional disparities. For example, the German region of Rheinland Pfalz uses international standards because they have not developed their own.

There is a growing emphasis on assessing non-formal and informal learning for many European countries, although there are exceptions such as Germany and Austria.

The progress made in developing accreditation and qualification systems is not consistent across Europe. This issue should be further investigated in phase II of the research.

♦ *Improving coherence*

The lack of coherent policy and the sheer number of providers often causes difficulties with the organisation and implementation of adult education systems. As a response, there is a trend across Europe towards improving coherence. Many European governments are approaching this through partnerships between policy makers and providers.

As a result of the broad range of partners engaged in policy making and implementation, partnerships are increasingly being used in the structural arrangements for the delivery of adult education. The two main types of partnerships are:

- Partnerships between policy makers, for example, France has three ministries which are partners in the promotion of continuing education and training
- Partnerships between providers, for example, the development of 'Local Communities' in the Italian region of Livorno – a partnership between education bodies and vocational training agencies.

Actual case-studies of such partnerships have been difficult to obtain and it would be valuable to gather this information in the next phase of this work.

♦ *Widening participation*

It is widely acknowledged that participation levels across Europe are inadequate.

Participation levels vary between countries and across countries. For example, different sub-groups such as gender and age cohorts have different participation levels.

Gaining a clear picture of participation levels is difficult because across Europe there are disparities regarding how adult education is defined. Surveys exist that can provide a general picture of adult education, but may provide differing results due to different countries using different parameters to measure adult education.

Despite the difficulties involved in all European countries, similar groups of people have been identified as being at risk of social exclusion. These are:

- Older age cohorts
- Those with low educational attainments
- The long-term unemployed
- The disabled – including physical, mental and learning disabilities
- The homeless
- Ethnic minorities, travellers and refugees
- Women with children and single parents.

Barriers to participating in adult education appear to be extensive and widespread.

Although individual barriers do vary according to the political, economic and social situations of each country, similar categories of barriers exist across Europe. These range from practical barriers such as cost and provision to psychological barriers including the stigma attached to adult education and low levels of confidence.

The actual levels and profile of participation are a very mixed picture, however, there is a trend across Europe to tackle this issue by developing strategies to widen participation in adult learning. Many European governments have taken policy measures which target participation at national, regional and local levels and appear to be working towards widening participation in adult education through:

- National and local policy measures such as the Competence reform in Norway which is a long term initiative to expand learning opportunities for adults, as well as, more targeted programmes. An example is provided by a project in South Wales that provides learning for single parents in their children's schools.
- Practical approaches including improving the locations of adult education provision, improving the use of technologies for distance learning, better marketing tools and more flexible timetables.

♦ **The definitions, aims and scope of adult education across Europe**

There appears to be no consensus across Europe on a single definition of adult education. This is because parameters relating to what constitutes an adult and what counts as learning differ from country to country. The inconsistency in defining adult education is an underpinning problem for comparability projects.

♦ **The merits and weaknesses of the different definitions currently in use**

It is difficult to evaluate any definition of adult education because each is designed in response to the needs of individual countries.

However, definitions can be evaluated on a more general basis. Often types of learning are excluded. For example, Switzerland has little scope for non-vocational learning, whereas countries such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden tend to be more inclusive and make reference to a range of learning types such as vocational, non-vocational, formal, informal and non-formal.

It is proposed that, in order to identify the parameters of adult education in a way that is still meaningful to countries with different settings, a common template to aid the development of definitions should be developed.

For further detail refer to Appendix 2.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview information

The following were interviewed as part of this research:

Marienne Horsdal, Assistant Professor, Institute of Educational Research and Development, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark.

Maria Giovanna Lotti, Officer, Region of Livorno, Italy.

Elinor Haase, General Secretary, EAEA, Belgium.

Jesco Weickert, Ministry for Science, Continuing Education, Research and Culture, Federal State of Rheinland Pfalz, Germany.

The questions which were asked to each interviewee were:

♦ Definition, organization and funding

Is there a national/regional policy or strategy on Adult Education / lifelong learning?

How is the scope of Adult Education (AE) defined in your country/region?

Prompts: what is officially included/excluded?

What are the (official) aims of AE?

Prompts: economic, social?

Is AE seen as part of lifelong learning? If so, in what way?

Does your country/region differentiate between formal and informal AE? If so, what is understood by informal learning? How important is it?

How is AE organised, delivered, and funded at local, regional and national level?

Prompts: venues, minimum class size, funded by course/number of learners/number of hours, public sector, private sector, voluntary sector?

Who funds the AE courses?

Are national statistics collected and published for the numbers of learners involved in AE?

♦ Recruitment of learners

How are learners recruited for AE?

Prompts: fees/charges, initial assessment or screening

Which socio-economic groups participate in AE? Is there a breakdown by social class/sex/ethnic group, etc.?

What recruitment strategies are there for the hard-to-reach groups? How successful are they?

♦ **Delivery and accreditation**

What national qualifications or standards are there for AE learners?

What kind of organized progression is there from course to course?

Prompts: links with school qualifications, previous accredited learning, access to university

What are the most popular courses / subjects?

♦ **Assessment and evaluation**

Are there standard scales of attainment or kinds of assessment for adult learners?

Prompts: *national tests*

What gains for adult learners have been identified? Is there statistical data?

Prompts: *a qualification, meeting national skills needs, greater social inclusion, personal gains in confidence*

How are the organisation, development and funding of Adult Education monitored and evaluated? Who does this?

Prompts: *national inspection system, self-evaluation*

♦ **Barriers**

What are the main barriers a) to participation in Adult Education b) to progression in Adult Education?

Prompts: *cost, transport, and distance, lack of learner confidence, apathy, shortage of provision*

What stops them progressing after they have entered AE?

♦ **Nationally specific issues**

What are the current priorities for AE? Are there any special initiatives?

Are there any lessons or experiences from your country, which you think would be valuable to other countries' development of AE?

Could you please send us any national statistics or policy documents you have regarding Adult Education?

APPENDIX 2

COUNTRY COMPARISONS

The following section provides in-depth information for a number of European countries.

Adult education country descriptions

This document contains country tables which provide, where information was available, definitions, aims and objectives, scope and provision, finance information, further information and, current issues in adult education in the other member states of the European Union. In the majority of countries no official definitions of adult education were found in the sources consulted. In these cases, where available and where appropriate, an official definition of lifelong learning has been included.

General sources

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Available online from the OECD Adult Learning homepage :

<http://www.oecd.org/els/education/adultlearning>

Country background reports produced as part of the OECD study are also available online:

http://www.oecd.org/document/30/0,2340,en_2649_34511_2084190_1_1_1_1_00.html

Austria

Definition	No official definition of adult education has been found in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	The key goals of adult education and further vocational training are as follows: ♦ to enable learners to upgrade their qualifications, enhance their proficiency and competencies, and to further develop their individual talents along with their social skills. This may in turn promote their employability, as well as their capacity and readiness to develop their own interests. ♦ to promote open and flexible learning methods which incorporate ICT (the Austrian Education Ministry's current IT strategy also embraces many adult education measures), or self - or distance learning methods, individual access for as many people as possible, tutoring and guidance systems, the development of modular and regional provision and the corresponding teaching tools, and the establishment of skills centres.
Scope and provision	Adult education provision in Austria is very diverse, both in terms of content and the institutions which provide it. It comprises general as well as technical and vocational education. Many courses are available to upgrade and enhance the skills of people who have already completed vocational education, especially in technology and engineering. A considerable number of initiatives focus on language learning. Such courses and programmes are offered by the formal education system as well as social institutions, churches, scientific and cultural associations, and professional private providers, which decide freely as to their organisation, programmes and aims. They may receive financial support from public bodies provided they meet certain requirements. It also includes opportunities to acquire upper secondary and tertiary qualifications at a later stage in life through second-chance education (<i>Zweiter Bildungsweg</i>). Public and private schools/colleges for people in employment offer courses which are parallel to standard upper secondary courses and lead to the <i>Reifeprüfung</i> certificate allowing those who pass to embark on post-secondary/tertiary-level studies. In the technical and vocational education sector, the <i>Reife- und Diplomprüfung</i> provides general higher education entrance qualifications, as well as professional qualifications.

	Key organisations in the provision of adult education include: The Conference on Adult Education in Austria (represents the largest and most important adult education institutions. Includes the Vocational Training Institute, which coordinates all vocational teaching and training measures provided by employee organisations.) The Institute of Economic Promotion (represents economic promotion institutes, which offer training programmes focusing on trades, crafts, industry, trade and commerce and leisure activities.) The Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres (<i>Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen</i>). <i>Volkshochschulen</i> offer general education and vocational training courses, language courses and preparatory curricula for second-chance education.
Key issues	The Austrian Education Ministry's IT initiative <i>eFit Austria</i> makes specific reference to adult education and lifelong learning in section 4: eTraining. Further information is available in German from the following URL: http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/start.asp?OID=1602&isllink=1&bereich=3&gwort= (Examples of projects, description of plans to develop new educational infrastructures, for example to target those from disadvantaged backgrounds.)
Finance information	The <i>Bundesgesetz über die Förderung der Erwachsenenbildung und des Volksbüchereiwesens</i> (Act on the Promotion of Adult Education and Public Libraries) governs all granting of public funds. Under this Act, adult education is funded in two ways: ♦ Direct grants to adult education associations and establishments which must be non-profit corporate bodies, registered and domiciled in Austria, and consistently and systematically involved in educational work; and ♦ Maintenance and operation of government institutions of adult education by the federal government, which act as service centres for the associations and institutions of adult education and public libraries. Such promotion centres for adult education have been installed by the federal government in all of Austria's provinces with the

	exception of Vorarlberg and Vienna. Vienna and Vorarlberg have set up their own adult education departments. Funding from the federal budget is distributed to the adult education organizations (the main receivers of this type of funding) as either annual subsidies (basic sponsorship) or as funds for special projects (project sponsorship). Support also comes from the: ♦ Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour ♦ Federal Ministry of Social Security and Generations ♦ Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Environment and Water Management ♦ Decision-making bodies, financing of vocational schools for working adults ♦ The federal government bears operating and staffing costs of public-sector institutions. In the case of private institutions (operated by different interest groups), the public-sector institutions may act as co-sponsors.
Further information	http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at - Education Ministry's website on adult education. http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/start.asp?OID=4950&isllink=1&ber_eich=2&gwort - General information on the Austrian education system in English on the Ministry website – includes links to information summarising arrangements for adult education.

Belgium

French-speaking Community

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	The main aims for lifelong learning and continuing education are as follows: ♦ To strengthen basic learning and improve the transition between education and working life; ♦ To improve the overall consistency of the education system; ♦ To ensure that systems of education and initial or continuing training match demand/the labour market; and to encourage adult education and training through the provision of linked work and education or training; and ♦ To diversify the provision of education and training. The federal state is responsible for measures to improve workforce quality. These include, in particular, the <i>congé-éducation payé</i>, a system of paid educational leave. It is aimed at social improvement for workers employed on a full-time basis in the private sector, and involves the right to time off work with retention of normal earnings. The vocational courses that workers follow must be linked to their job or occupational prospects. An evaluation of this scheme has been discussed and measures to promote the use of <i>congé-éducation payé</i>, particularly among workers aged over 45 are in preparation. Within the new legislature established after the June 1999 elections, a governmental declaration was adopted. The various Community reform measures proposed in it include the following: <i>“...the government will see to it that all provision in continuing education is enhanced so as to respond as effectively as possible to economic, social, cultural and civic demands”².</i>
Scope and provision	The Council of the French Community is responsible for the general policy on adult continuing education. In accordance with the 1976 decree, it provides grants for continuing

² Unofficial translation from the French, by the Eurydice European Unit (EEU).

	education organisations and subsidies for permanent positions. Distance learning and education for social advancement are also financed and organised by the French Community. Adult education is organised through a number of initiatives, schemes and measures. In recent years, faced with a difficult economic situation and high unemployment, particularly for under-qualified people, educational administrators, in partnership with others players in the vocational training field, have developed various initiatives designed to foster education, training and vocational integration of those with low-skills. Organisations/Types of Provision The main adult education organisations and types of provision are as follows: Continuing Education Organisations: The 1976 decree provided conditions for recognising and awarding subsidies to organisations providing continuing education for adults and for organisations furthering the socio-cultural advancement of workers. Continuing education activities are divided into general, regional and local organisations. There is a dual objective: to assure pluralism and to extend the field of those benefiting to include disadvantaged groups. Education for Social Advancement: Originally conceived as a means to personal advancement for people already working, this provision is now a category of continuing education and training that forms an integral part of the movement towards lifelong learning and is the main adult vocational-training stream in the French Community. As well as providing for those who wish to supplement their basic education and training, it is also intended for people who wish to retrain or acquire further expertise in any particular field in order to meet the requirements of business, administration or teaching, or, more generally, their personal socio-economic or cultural environment. Education for social advancement is organised at secondary and tertiary education levels. It is currently a continuing education 'track' and part of the continuing education movement. Distance Learning: Adapted to the level of each student, distance education is mainly geared to the needs of adults who wish to further their education or training or who wish to retrain or prepare for state examinations in order to obtain a secondary education qualification. 'Open Universities': The so called 'open' faculty provision has given rise to several experiments launched by universities
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	or organisations for lifelong education working with them. In all cases, the aim has been to offer adults involved in professional occupations university education of a kind not provided in full-time courses. Literacy Courses: Literacy courses are provided to improve basic essential skills in reading, writing and arithmetic to enable learners to undertake vocational training leading to a qualification, or basic education and training. Courses are designed for persons who do not have a Primary Education Certificate (CEB) or any other equivalent diploma and are organised by local organisations. Artistic Socio-cultural Advancement Education: The purpose of part-time artistic education is twofold, offering students a secondary-level preliminary introduction to enable them to begin artistic tertiary education and also providing the opportunity to acquire artistic training for all who are so inclined. The FOREM and Bruxelles-Formation: FOREM, the community and regional training and employment office, was created by decree in 1988. FOREM provides vocational training for adults in the job market (those employed and job-seekers) appropriate to all sectors of industry and services at all skills levels. The training courses are designed to improve vocational qualifications and consist of apprenticeships, retraining or further development covering a wide range of occupations. Bruxelles-Formation organises skills training in six fields including technical and industrial occupations, IT and management proficiency courses, and self-directed and distance training. The target groups are workers and enterprises as well as job seekers. Other Vocational Training Provision: Includes provision for specific groups of workers, for example agricultural workers, civil servants etc. The IFPME (the French-speaking Institute for the Continuing Education for Independent Professions and Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)) coordinates and administers various training options targeted at young people and adults who wish to improve their knowledge of a craft, business or service occupation that they wish to practise on a self-employed basis or as skilled workers in SMEs.
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Finance information	The federal State finances adult education measures which are intended to improve workforce quality, in particular, this relates to the <i>congé-éducation payé</i> (a system of paid educational leave). Although these are funded at federal level, their organization/management is carried out by the regions and communities. Employers are expected to grant <i>congé-éducation payé</i> and pay the participants their normal salary, with a part of the wages and social contributions being reimbursed by the Ministry of Employment and Labour. The level of reimbursement is capped and some employers will supplement it. Employers contribute 0.04 per cent of the total payroll to fund this type of provision. The Council of the French Community is responsible for the general policy on adult continuing education. In accordance with the guidelines of the April 1976 decree, it provides grants for continuing education organisations and subsidies for permanent positions. Distance learning and education for social advancement are financed and organised by the French Community. Continuing education for independent professions and SMEs is financed by grants from various public funds.
Further information	See: EURYDICE Eurybase Chapter 7.

German-speaking Community

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	The aim of continuing education and training is to develop vocational, social and socio-cultural integration and, in particular, the following: ♦ The development or acquisition of basic knowledge, ranging from acquisition of language to courses in computer science (compensating for gaps in education and training); ♦ The preparation of students for second chance education examinations; ♦ The acquisition of knowledge and skills which – possibly because of the optional and selective nature of the education system – have been somewhat overlooked; ♦ The updating of knowledge and acquisition of further qualifications with a view to full personal development, or to take advantage of greater equality of opportunity on the job market; ♦ Diversifying the provision of education and training and adapting it to demand; ♦ Cooperation with the FOREM (employment office) concerning measures for the unemployed.
Scope and provision	A number of different institutions provide continuing training and retraining. Organisations involved in non-formal education for adults include: FOREM: FOREM, the Training and Employment Office of the region and Community, seeks to improve and extend the qualifications of job-seekers and those in employment by offering opportunities for vocational training and retraining. FOREM is responsible for the professional integration of the unemployed and for their vocational training and retraining. In addition to its own centres, FOREM organises training centres in cooperation with businesses to offer regular retraining for a company's personnel. FOREM is supported by a sub-regional committee for job creation and training which coordinates employment policy, makes recommendations and undertakes evaluations. The Institute of Training and Retraining of the 'Mittelstand': The training provided by <i>Mittelstand</i> aims at

	the acquisition of general and professional knowledge and of the skills required to carry out an independent trade. The target of the training is to prepare the participants for technical, commercial, financial and administrative management of a trade or small company. Some training results in the award of a certificate which allows access to a profession. Schulische Weiterbildung (Social Advancement Education): In addition to many private institutions for adult education, <i>Schulische Weiterbildung</i> represents a major part of adult education provision. Institutes for <i>Schulische Weiterbildung</i> offer a diversified and wide-spread programme including, for example, housekeeping, languages and computer-aided-design. The aims of <i>Schulische Weiterbildung</i> include improving professional, social, cultural and educational integration and meeting the needs and requirements of employment and administration, of the education sector, of the socio-economic and cultural world. Other Vocational Training Provision: This includes provision for specific groups of workers, for example personnel involved in the agricultural sector.
Finance information	The <i>Rat der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft</i> is responsible for adult education. It directly finances some of the costs of some adult education establishments, including the Training and Employment Office (FOREM), training in SMEs, and continuing training in schools. Participants contribute a participation fee for each continuing training course they take – with the exception of unemployed persons registered at the Labour Exchange. Training and continuing training of the <i>Mittelstand</i> (body responsible for craftsmanship, professions in commercial and services sector as well as for small and medium-sized enterprises) is financed by public funds out of different public budgets. The <i>Bildungsurlaub</i>, equivalent to the <i>congé-éducation payé</i> in the French-speaking community, is financed in the same way (see above).
Further information	See: EURYDICE Eurybase Chapter 7.2

Flemish-speaking Community

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted, however in July 2000, the Flemish Government approved an Action Plan <i>‘Lifelong Learning on the Right Track’</i> which sets out a general concept of lifelong learning: <i>‘The Flemish Government wants to contribute to the achievement of the reflexive participation of citizens in an active and democratic welfare state, within the framework of the knowledge society, by means of a considered and well thought out policy with regard to lifelong learning.</i> <i>This stems from the conviction that by ‘lifelong learning’, one stimulates the personal development of people (the development of literacy, numeracy and basic skills, the intrinsic motivation to enjoy learning, etc), increases the social cohesion of society, promotes the active participation of the citizen in the democratic order and contributes to strong and more qualitative economic growth and growing participation in the job market.’</i> Flemish Government (7 July 2000): Action Plan: Lifelong Learning on the Right Track. p.1-2.
Aims and objectives	In July 1999, the Flemish Government adopted lifelong learning, which concentrates on education and training for adults, as a central theme of the official Governmental Agreement: <i>‘The right to continuous training or lifelong learning is the only appropriate strategy to allow both active and inactive workers to develop in society. Not only training and additional schooling feature in concrete fulfilment but the social and employment conditions within which the citizen is given possibilities for continuous learning are also addressed. In order to realise this aim, the Flemish Government will develop an integrated policy in collaboration with the social partners. In addition, real and structured collaboration must be developed between the Flemish Institute for Independent Entrepreneurship (VIZO – Vlaams Instituut voor Zelfstandig Ondernemen), the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB – Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding) and Education for Social Advancement (OSP – Onderwijs</i>

	<i>voor Sociale Promotie</i>)’ Flemish Government (July 1999): Governmental Agreement, chapter I, B: Lifelong Learning.
Scope and provision	Organisations/Types of Provision <i>Onderwijs voor Sociale Promotie (OSP) (Social Advancement Education)</i> As at most of the other education levels, <i>Onderwijs voor Sociale Promotie</i> (Social Advancement Education) (OSP) is organised by all the <i>onderwijsnetten</i> (educational networks): Communities, Provinces, and Municipalities, free denominational and non-denominational <i>inrichtende machten</i> (organising bodies). Following the Decree of 2 March 1999, the institutions for Social Advancement Education have been renamed <i>centra voor volwassenenonderwijs</i> (Adult Education Centres) (CVO). The Decree stipulates that Social Advancement Education should provide the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for social integration, participation in further education, exercising a profession, or mastering a language and enable the student to obtain a recognised certificate. <i>Basiseducatie (Adult basic education)</i> Adult basic education is part of the formal adult education system. It fulfils two roles. Firstly, education and training programmes are designed to suit the specific learning needs of students and meet specific objectives: to teach and improve basic competencies, which are vital to be able to function in personal, social and professional situations. Secondly, adult basic education acts as a stepping stone towards other training or educational initiatives. At present, Flanders boasts 29 adult basic education centres, which are officially recognised and funded. The centres are set up as privately run organisations. In addition to the adult basic education centres, the Flemish Government also founded the Flemish Agency for Support and Development of Adult Basic Education (VOCB) in 1990. The VOCB is responsible for providing guidance and support to the adult basic education centres and to provide additional training for educational staff at those centres. The VOCB stimulates and supports innovation in the sector by means of development projects and acts as a point of contact for international contacts. The Adult Basic Education Act (Flemish decree) was approved and became effective in 1990. Adult basic education provides education for low skilled adults and adults who are behind in their education. The objective of the educational

	programme is to teach and to improve basic competencies, which are vital to be able to function and to play an active part in society. <i>BEGELEID INDIVIDUEEL STUDEREN (GUIDED INDIVIDUAL STUDYING)</i> The Flemish Education Department organises its own distance learning provision known as <i>Begeleid Individueel Studeren</i> (BIS, or supervised distance learning). Following the Decree of 2 March 1999, <i>Begeleid Individueel Studeren</i> (BIS) (Guided Individual Studying) has been partly integrated into part-time adult education. The special aim of BIS is to provide course participants with the opportunity to obtain knowledge and skills required to prepare them for the examinations of full-time secondary education and examinations for the civil service. At higher education level, there is a cooperation project with the <i>Open Universiteit Heerlen</i> (Heerlen Open University) in the Netherlands. Flemish students may attend at this university via <i>Afstandsonderwijs</i> (distance education) and are supported by the guidance services of the Flemish universities.
Current issues	Initiatives At present each branch of education is subject to specific legislation but a more integrated framework has been under consideration for some years. The original goal was to establish one comprehensive structure integrating full-time and part-time education for both pupils and adults, this was partially achieved with the decree which came into force on 1 September 1999. The decree established adult education as far as possible along correspondingly similar lines to full-time secondary education, with maximum coordination regarding fields of study, courses and modules and broad similarity between course patterns and attainment levels. The aim is to allow easy movement from secondary education to part-time adult education, and devise formal recognition arrangements for certificates, diplomas and other written evidence of study achievement. From the 2000-01 school year, it has been possible to obtain part-time adult education diplomas equivalent to those awarded in full-time secondary education. Data concerning the background and career of students enrolled in formal adult education will be gathered in a structured way by the Education Department. It is intended to introduce initiatives to boost enrolment in adult education, with the use of promotional campaigns to highlight the usefulness of training and education for individual citizens, as well as organisations and society in general.

	Since 2000, 13 Edufora (sub-regional consultative bodies for organisations in the field of adult education that work with public funds) have been in operation. Their tasks are threefold: ♦ making a transparent and easy-reference survey, including a web-based guide, of opportunities for education and training; ♦ identifying educational needs; ♦ development of an educational programme.
Finance information	In general, the Community Minister of Education is responsible for nearly all adult education courses in the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium. The only exceptions to this are: ♦ The Flemish Minister of Finances and Budget, Innovation, Media and Town and Country Planning is responsible for the <i>Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding</i> (Flemish Employment Agency) (VDAB) ♦ The Flemish Minister of Economy, Town and Country Planning, and Media is responsible for the <i>Vlaams Instituut voor Zelfstandig Ondernemen</i> (Flemish Institute for Entrepreneurship) (VIZO); and ♦ The Flemish Minister of Environment and Agriculture is responsible for the agriculture training courses.
Further information	Flemish Government (7 July 2000): Action Plan: Lifelong Learning on the Right Track Flemish Government (July 1999): Governmental Agreement: Lifelong Learning Decree of 2 March 1999, <i>Begeleid Individueel Studeren</i> (BIS) (Guided Individual Studying) Flemish Agency for the Support and Development of Adult Basic Education (VOCB): see http://www.vocb.be/vocb_eng.html

Denmark

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	The main principles of the adult education system are: ♦ Good and relevant opportunities for continuing and advanced training for all; ♦ The recognition of adult education programmes; ♦ Good possibilities for building bridges between education programmes and levels. In May 2000, the Danish Parliament (the <i>Folketing</i>) adopted a number of acts which will tie continuing training and further education programmes together into a single coherent and transparent adult education system. The acts came into force in January 2001. The main objectives of the reforms are: ♦ To provide relevant adult education and continuing training offers to all adults at all levels, from the low-skilled to university graduates. The offers of education/training are to constitute a system of competences which will give all adults formal recognition of the knowledge and qualifications they acquire, whether this takes place on the job or by participation in formal education/training programmes. ♦ Improving opportunities for those with the lowest levels of education ♦ Courses for adults in general subjects, such as reading, spelling, mathematics and continuing vocational training play an important role in the efforts to enhance education/training opportunities for the low-skilled groups. The same applies to the new possibilities for having work experience and participation in continuing training credited as part of an education programme which will give the participants formally recognised vocational competences. ♦ Better utilisation of resources ♦ In 1998, the Danish State spent 12.7 billion DKK on continuing and advanced training. The adult education reform will make it possible to use the considerable resources provided for adult education in a more cost effective way.

	The reform package comprises a new system of adult education and continuing training, a new form of educational support for adults, as well as new grant allocation schemes for institutions offering adult education and continuing training.
Scope and provision	In the Danish context, lifelong learning: ♦ is first and foremost connected with adult education, on-the-job training and with the training system; ♦ adopts a broad perspective that includes objectives connected with economic policy and that of the job market, educational objectives that are democratic and favour participation, and objectives connected with individual development and quality of life; ♦ covers both formal and practical skills; ♦ requires a more conscious effort on the part of both employers and institutions, when it is a question of applying it in the place of work. In the new adult education and continuing training system, courses are structured in such a way that they can be compared to levels in the ordinary system. At the same time, new concepts and courses have been created. The credit award system has been extended and the occupational experience of the adult learners is taken into account. It is a characteristic feature of education programmes within the adult education system that work and life experience of adults plays an important role in connection with the organisation of the education programmes as well as their content, profile and duration. The new adult education system can be broadly split into two levels: ♦ Basic Adult Education: education courses providing instruction in the same skills as in normal initial education and training programmes for young people; ♦ Advanced levels which are comparable to those of mainstream education, but different from them in organisation and content (short, medium-term and long higher education programmes).

	An important element of adult education reform is to strengthen basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics. About one million adult Danes in the labour market have reading skills at a level which is considered insufficient compared with the literacy skills required in a knowledge-based society (results of a study published by the OECD in the spring of 2000). The reform of adult education therefore includes an additional education level, i.e. preparatory adult education. Adult vocational training programmes (AMU programmes) play a key role in the general policy of lifelong learning and contribute to creating a flexible labour market by giving individuals opportunities to acquire the skills and competences required by the labour market. Among other things, the legislation concerning AMU programmes ensures: ♦ Good financial framework and conditions ♦ Nationally recognised competences ♦ A flexible structure ♦ Developing competences to higher levels ♦ Continuous development of new training programmes ♦ Adult educational techniques which cater for learning practical skills ♦ A close interplay with the enterprises ♦ Quality assurance at all levels of the AMU system. Within the AMU system, a National Training Council and training committees have been set up, and at local level boards and local training committees are operating at the schools and centres. The social partners play a key role in all of these boards and committees, contributing to organising, developing, setting priorities and quality assurance of the training programmes. This ensures that training and education meets the qualification needs of the labour market, enterprises, and the individual.
Current issues	See above for current reforms.

Finance information	Funding methods vary according to the different types of adult education: Basic Adult Education: The Ministry of Education is responsible for this type of educational provision, but it is the counties³ who: ♦ manage the establishment and closure of adult education centres; ♦ approve the courses offered; ♦ set the budget framework; ♦ supervise the teaching; and ♦ have the overall responsibility for the information for statistical data about such centres. Each adult education centre has a centre council consisting of members representing the county council, the municipal councils of the area covered by the centre, the trade union movement in the area covered by the centre, employers of the area, course participants, teachers in general adult education and in courses for the higher preparatory examination. The centre council decides on the budget of the centre within a fixed financial framework on the basis of the educational need, informs on the educational offer of the centre, submits on the principal's recommendation the centre's opinion on the appointment and dismissal of teachers and other staff etc. LABOUR MARKET TRAINING The management of labour market training is based upon a close co-operation between the Ministry of Labour and the social partners. It is financed by the labour market tax imposed on all those, who are active in the labour market - employers as well as employees. OPEN EDUCATION For each paying participant, the educational institution receives a fixed state grant. The grant is awarded for partial compensation of expenditure relating to teaching and, for vocational colleges of capital expenditures. All other expenditure is covered through tuition fees. Tuition fees, which are fixed by the educational institution, are estimated to make up 25-30 per cent on average of the institution's expenditure in relation to the course.
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³ Denmark is divided into 14 counties which undertake tasks spanning larger areas and applying in particular to roads and hospitals

	FURTHER EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR ADULTS The overall responsibility for this type of adult education lies with the Ministry of Education. Provisions pertaining to basic education courses for adults are laid down upon advice from the Council for Vocational Education, the Council for Adult Vocational Training, the Council for Social and Health Education and the Council for Agricultural Education. NB. Public finance for adult education is focused on those with a low level of educational attainment. Those with higher education qualifications are more likely to have to finance their studies themselves and must study in their own time.
Further information	Ministry of Education, Denmark (2002). <i>Better Education Action Plan</i> [online] http://pub.uvm.dk/2002/better1/hel.pdf (3 June 2003). Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, Denmark (2000). <i>Adult Education and Continuing Training in Denmark</i> [online] http://us.uvm.dk/videre/voksenuddannelse_dk/engelskpjece.htm?menuid=350535 (3 June 2003). Ministry of Education, Denmark (2002). <i>Focus on the Teacher of Adults</i>. [online] http://pub.uvm.dk/2002/fokus/11.htm (3 June 2003).

Finland

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	The main goal of adult education is to improve the basic educational level of older adults, which is currently lower than that of young adults. It is also important for lifelong learning that education should improve continuous learning skills to boost employability. Specialised and personalised adult education services aim to give those with a poor basic education a chance to improve their skills and knowledge. Increased opportunities for mature students to graduate from universities or polytechnics are also planned.
Scope and provision	Formerly, adult education was primarily general or interest-oriented education, the education of the unemployed being an exception. General adult education expanded to a large extent up until the 1970's. Since then, the focus in the development of adult education has shifted towards vocational adult education and training, although general adult education also plays an important role in terms of citizens' working life skills and use of spare time. Therefore, Finnish adult education and training can now be seen to be divided into two main areas: ♦ General adult education and ♦ Vocational adult education and training. General adult education: ♦ Upper secondary adult education – Upper secondary schools for adults are aimed at adults who wish to complete their upper secondary education, which was interrupted at an earlier stage in life. They follow the national core curriculum and have the option of completing the basic or general syllabus, or parts of these. Some institutions may specialise in particular subject areas or in the teaching of particular groups of students. ♦ Liberal adult education – This includes general, social and leisure-oriented studies, which do not generally lead to academic or vocational qualifications. Such courses are available at a wide variety of institutions, including adult education centres, folk high schools, study centres, summer universities and physical

	education centres. Vocational adult education and training Vocational adult education and training can be divided into upper secondary and additional vocational education and training, which may be either certificate-oriented or non-formal. Upper secondary vocational education and training is certificate-oriented, whereas additional vocational training may be either. The qualifications in vocational adult education and training are mainly taken in the form of competence-based qualifications. Adult students may demonstrate their vocational skills in competence tests regardless of how and where they have acquired the skills. Upper secondary vocational education and training provides preparation for upper secondary vocational qualifications, whereas additional vocational training leads to further and specialist vocational qualifications. Polytechnic adult education Adults also have the opportunity to study for the same polytechnic degrees as young people. The time spent to complete a degree is usually slightly shorter, since adult students' previous studies and work experience may be taken into account.
Key issues	Current measures intend to raise the number of adults with upper secondary education. A Government working group has been set up to implement a programme between 2003-07 targeted at 30 to 54-year-olds. It aims to raise attainment levels amongst the entire adult population, improve the study skills of those who have not participated in education and training for a long time and guarantee opportunities to acquire further education.
Finance information	The Ministry of Education grants permission to establish educational institutions and decides whether these will be granted financial support by the State on the basis of educational needs. In 2002, about 90 per cent of the 269 adult education centres in Finland received support from public funds. State subsidies are granted to help with both establishment and operating costs. The state subsidy for operating costs is granted on the basis of calculated unit prices, which are confirmed annually. Other sources of financing for the institutions include contributions from the students' municipalities of residence and the maintaining bodies of the institutions, as well as student payments and course fees. Some adult education institutions finance their activities by

	selling educational services to both the public and the private sector. State funding for the operating costs of non-formal adult education is granted according to specific funding criteria for each type of institution. The local authorities have no statutory obligation to participate in covering these costs. It is also possible for the institutions providing adult education to receive discretionary state subsidy for investments depending on the decision of the Ministry of Education and within the limits of the state budget. Adult education in polytechnics observes the same principles as other polytechnic education. In their negotiations on performance agreements, the Ministry of Education and the polytechnics agree on the average annual number of students for adult education in degree-oriented education and specialisation studies. In addition, the Ministry of Education has allocated funding to the development of the provision of open polytechnic courses.
Further information	http://www.oecd.org/document/30/0,2340,en_2649_34511_2_084190_1_1_1_1,00.html (Thematic review on adult learning – OECD Background Report) Also, see Chapter 7 of Eurybase

France

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	Adult education in France should be based on and have a sound relationship with initial and more formal continuing training. That is to say it should provide a gateway to a general and/or technological grounding and knowledge, take account of and build on what has been achieved in prior learning and include the validation of acquired skills. In addition, lifelong education and training should go hand in hand with regular opportunities for making fresh choices and skills appraisal. The core mission of the <i>Association nationale pour la formation des adultes (AFPA)</i> (National Association for the Education of Adults) is to enable people of working age to gain vocational qualifications and to build upon these qualifications throughout their working life, with the aim of providing them with the skills and knowledge required by the labour market so that they can readily find employment.
Scope and provision	Adult education in France encompasses both further training provided to workers under a clearly defined legal framework and all other forms of study open to adults. Its priorities mainly include: ♦ general training for work or training for personal development; ♦ personal and vocational evaluations (for defining an individual-specific training course); ♦ anti-illiteracy campaign; ♦ youth and unemployed training-for-work schemes; ♦ special training schemes for the integration of immigrants and/or non-French speakers; ♦ European languages training courses; ♦ refresher courses (basic skills, key qualifications, etc.); ♦ local community development schemes. There is a wide range of adult education providers in France, these include: ♦ The <i>Groupements d'établissements pour la</i>

	formation continue (GRETAs) (Grouping of establishments for continuing education – see below for further information) offer a variety of certificates, ranging from the <i>certificat d'aptitude professionnelle</i> (CAP) (vocational aptitude certificate awarded after two years upper secondary vocational education in a branch of industry, craft or service sector) to the <i>brevet de technicien supérieur</i> (BTS) (advanced technical certificate available to pupils who successfully complete a three-year course in the general and technological <i>lycée</i> by students who do not obtain either the general <i>Baccalauréat</i> or the technological <i>Baccalauréat</i>). ♦ University training centres offer adult learners the chance to study for the full range of university diplomas. ♦ The Centre national d'enseignement à distance (CNED) (provides an extensive range of training, mainly in the following areas: financial and accounting management, business management, international trade, administrative organisation and techniques, computer technology, tourism, catering, public health, languages, and the arts. CNED also offers courses preparing for the BTS, diplomas in many subjects, the university diploma for general studies, the arts, languages, musicology, fine arts, and diplomas awarded by the National Institute of Languages and Oriental Cultures (INALCO). It also provides specific preparation courses for the competitive exams for recruiting all categories of teachers, and civil servants. ♦ Forty or more engineering schools are also authorized to award diplomas through continuing education.
Finance information	The financing of continuing education in France is by private companies, the State, the local authorities and individuals. The law of July 1971 made it compulsory for companies with more than 10 employees to devote an annual fixed percentage of total salary costs to vocational training. This percentage started at 0.8 per cent in 1971 and has risen to 3.25 per cent in 1996. The largest public provider of funds is the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, since it finances educational action

	for people seeking employment. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the organisation of most forms of continuing education but only provides a small part of its funding. Local authority funds for professional training are mainly for training contracts concluded with the regional councils.
Further information	<i>Groupements d'établissements pour la formation continue (GRETAs)</i> are groupings of public education establishments which pool resources to provide adult education opportunities. Further information is available (in French) online: http://www.education.gouv.fr/fp/greta.htm <i>Association nationale pour la formation des adultes (AFPA - National Association for Adult Vocational Training)</i>, which falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity is a certificate awarding public agency for vocational training. Further information (some in English) is available online: http://www.afpa.fr/ For details of legislation, see EURYBASE Chapter 7 Adult Education

Germany

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	State regulations regarding continuing education are aimed at establishing general conditions for the optimum development of the contribution of continuing education to lifelong learning, which is a central element of current education policy. In January 2001, the Government launched an action programme <i>Lebensbegleitendes Lernen für Alle (Lifelong Learning for All)</i> which combines all current and future federal government measures concerned with research, development and experimentation to encourage lifelong learning, especially in continuing education and training. The guiding principles of the action plan are as follows: ♦ strengthening the responsibility and self-motivation of learners; ♦ elimination of inequality of opportunity; ♦ cooperation between training providers and users; ♦ strengthening the association between all areas of training. The plan highlights a number of different priority areas; those relating specifically to continuing education include: ♦ the ‘Quality of Continuing Education and Training Campaign’ and ♦ encouragement for innovative projects in general continuing education and training.
Scope and provision	Since the 1970’s, adult education has been seen within the wider context of <i>continuing education</i>. This refers in particular to an extension of, or return to, learning activity after completion of schooling, as well as an initial period of vocational training and – normally – after beginning some form of professional activity. It includes, in particular, the acquisition of qualifications awarded by establishments for general education offering evening classes (‘parallel provision’), as well as additional qualifications, but also courses and various personalised activities covering a wide range of subjects, such as political and cultural topics. A central principle

	of continuing education courses is that attendance should be voluntary. The continuing education schemes on offer cover a broad spectrum of courses in continuing general, political and cultural education and continuing vocational training, which are supported by a diverse range of institutions - state and private-sector, non-profit-making and profit-orientated, in-company and public - and of institutions attached to the Protestant and Catholic Churches, the trade unions and other social groups. Radio and television also fulfill responsibilities in the field of continuing education. The activities of the state in the field of continuing education are restricted to laying down principles and to issuing regulations relating to organisation and financing. The responsibilities of the <i>Länder</i> (the 16 individual federal states) include powers to regulate and promote many of the different forms of adult education. Different forms of adult education: ♦ Second-chance education (<i>Zweiter Bildungsweg</i>) offers adults the opportunity to acquire school-leaving qualifications later in life at evening classes or in <i>Kollegs</i>. Evening classes are available in three different types of institution that each prepare students for a different kind of qualification. <i>Abendhauptschulen</i> prepare adults in a one-year course (two semesters) for the acquisition of the <i>Hauptschulabschluss</i>. <i>Abendrealschulen</i> take adults through to the <i>Mittlerer Schulabschluss</i> in evening classes (four semesters). <i>Abendgymnasien</i> allow suitably capable adults to obtain a higher education entrance qualification (<i>Hochschulreife</i>) usually in a three-year period. Applicants must provide evidence of a vocational qualification or evidence that they have been in steady employment for at least three years. They must also be at least 19 years old and usually have to complete a half-year preliminary course before entry to the main course. <i>Kollegs</i> are full-time schools where adults can obtain the <i>Hochschulreife</i>. The admission conditions are the same as for <i>Abendgymnasien</i>. Those attending such schools are not allowed to combine their study with work.
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	♦ Courses at Institutions of Continuing Vocational Training (<i>Fachschulen</i>) aim to offer skilled workers with job experience opportunities to take on responsibilities in middle management. The courses last between one and three years. ♦ Distance learning courses offer adults in employment the opportunity to take up continuing education on a flexible basis while remaining in employment. In recent years, developments in information and communication technologies have led to a growth in the provision of distance learning courses which are supported online. ♦ Courses provided by <i>Volkshochschulen</i> (local adult education centres) cover a broad range of subjects in the field of general continuing education. They are designed to meet differing social requirements and individual needs. ♦ <i>Bildungsurlaub</i> (Paid educational leave) allows employees in twelve of the sixteen <i>Länder</i> to attend continuing education courses for several working days per year (usually five) with no loss in earnings. ♦ Courses provided by higher education institutions offer people the opportunity to specialise, to extend existing knowledge or to obtain an additional vocational qualification. The entry requirement is usually that students have a degree, although sometimes continuing education courses are open to applicants who have achieved the necessary skills through a period of employment or another means. Courses last from a few weeks or months to several semesters; increasingly modular courses are offered. Students who successfully complete the courses are awarded certificates or occasionally degrees. Through continuing academic education, higher education institutions also contribute to regional development in cooperation with partners from industry.
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Finance information	The public sector, industry, social groups, continuing education institutions and public broadcasting corporations, as well as the general public, bear responsibility for continuing education. This joint responsibility is reflected by the funding principle, which obliges all the parties concerned to contribute towards the cost of continuing education in relation to their share and according to their means. Public-sector funding (local authorities, <i>Länder</i>, the Federal Government, the European Union) includes the following areas: ♦ institutional sponsorship of recognised continuing education institutions by the <i>Länder</i> on the basis of continuing education legislation, ♦ institutional sponsorship of local adult education centres (<i>Volkshochschulen</i>) and sponsorship of activities of continuing cultural education by the local authorities, ♦ grants for adults seeking to obtain school-leaving qualifications under the Federal Training Assistance Act (<i>Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz</i>) and career advancement training under the Career Advancement Training Promotion Act (<i>Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz</i>), ♦ continuing education for employees of the Federal Government, <i>Länder</i> and local authorities. Industry provides a considerable proportion of funding for schemes through which people can obtain and improve vocational skills and qualifications. Companies spend substantial funds on continuing education for their staff. Further training schemes designed to meet the needs of the labour market, which are targeted especially at the unemployed and those facing the threat of unemployment, are funded under the Social Security Code III (<i>Sozialgesetzbuch III</i>) from the unemployment insurance fund. The Federation and the <i>Länder</i> fund the promotion of further vocational training as laid down in the Career
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	Advancement Training Promotion Act <i>(Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz).</i>
	Those attending continuing education courses also make a contribution towards their cost. This contribution can be subsidised by tax relief and by assistance for low income groups and for special courses. For example, between 30 and 50 per cent of the cost of <i>Volkshochschulen</i> courses (especially general continuing education) are covered by course fees. In particular, those on career development courses within continuing vocational training bear a large proportion of continuing education costs themselves. Social groups (churches, trade unions, and so on) also bear a proportion of the cost of running their continuing education institutions. They guarantee the widest possible access to continuing education by setting their fees at an appropriate level. Continuing academic education at higher education institutions is funded by the fees of course members. Public broadcasting companies finance their contribution towards continuing education, which is one of their statutory obligations, through license fee revenue.

Further information	<i>Lebensbegleitendes Lernen für Alle</i> (Lifelong Learning for All Action Plan in German): http://www.bmbf.de/presse01/Pmprog.pdf The German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) is an institute of the Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz academic community (WGL), carrying out federally and state-supported research. It acts as a link between academic and practical work in adult education, provides the basis for practical research and develops innovative approaches. The main areas of the institute's work are the provision of services, research support, networks and international activities. Further information is available from its website (available in German and English): http://www.die-bonn.de/portrait/die-in-english.htm
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Greece

Definition	All organised methods and activities for formal and non-formal education of adults, both in and outside the official education system, whether education is provided by public, private or social bodies.
Aims and objectives	The overall aim of adult education in Greece is to prevent and combat social exclusion. The General Secretariat of Adult Education (GGLE) plans, coordinates and supports actions with three main objectives: ♦ To combat illiteracy and supplement basic education ♦ To provide preparatory and non-formal vocational education, mainly to the unemployed; and ♦ To provide social and cultural enrichment.
Scope and provision	In 2002, GGLE programmes covered the following areas: ♦ Communication – language and arithmetic literacy, culture and social literacy, and strategies of learning ♦ Information and communication technology ♦ Business – organisation – the management of social activity, multiple skills in the work place ♦ Greek for immigrants ♦ Family planning ♦ Support programmes for special groups ♦ Volunteer programmes ♦ Programmes for senior citizens. The curriculum and the number of teaching hours in formal adult education (evening schools) follow approximately the regulations that apply to regular day schools, the only difference being that in evening upper secondary schools the course of studies lasts four years, while in counterpart day schools it lasts three years. For non-formal adult education, there are no specific curricula, as the curriculum is worked out according to the educational objectives for the particular target group. Some examples for specific groups include: ♦ The education of adult gypsies includes: literacy,

	vocational training, health education, parental counselling. ♦ Education for repatriates includes: modern Greek language, history, literature, geography, labour legislation, information about the operation of the Hellenic public services, etc. ♦ Programmes of second chance schools are based on innovative approaches to content and methodology. There is no formal assessment system for those attending non-formal adult education classes, as these programmes do not lead to recognised certificates. Participants may, however, receive a certificate of attendance.
Key issues	Following the European Commission Memorandum on lifelong learning, adult education in Greece has also focused on the development of non-formal social capital and knowledge obtained in various social groups not officially recognised as learning opportunities e.g. trade unions, cultural associations etc.
Finance information	The General Secretariat for Adult Education (GGLE) , accountable to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, plans, organises and funds adult education. Where appropriate, it cooperates with other state agencies, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED), the Ministry of Justice, etc.
Further information	General secretariat for Adult Education (GGLE) http://www.gsae.edu.gr/English/default_eng.htm

Ireland

Definition	The 2000 White Paper on Adult Education '<i>Learning for Life</i>' defined adult education as: <i>'Systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training'. As such it includes aspects of further and third-level education, continuing education and training, community education, and other systematic deliberate learning by adults, both formal and informal.</i>
Aims and objectives	The White Paper aims to provide a template for the development of the Adult Education Sector as part of an overall Government commitment to establishing a comprehensive system of lifelong learning for all. The White Paper advocates a national programme of Adult Education within an overall framework of lifelong learning on the basis of its contribution to six priority areas: ♦ Consciousness raising; ♦ Citizenship; ♦ Cohesion; ♦ Competitiveness; ♦ Cultural development; ♦ Community building. The key principles as set out in the policy papers can be summarised as follows: ♦ Access – programmes to be provided at a variety of levels and locations to meet the diverse needs of target groups; ♦ Recognition – a comprehensive national framework of certification to be established so that achievement will be recognised by participants, potential employers and providers of further education and training; ♦ Quality, Relevance and Partnership – national standard of achievement to be set, with the close involvement of industry, social partners, education and training interests; ♦ Learner Orientation – there is a widespread acceptance that the learner is at the centre of

	the education and training process; ♦ Lifelong Learning – a framework in which all education and training is set; ♦ Equality – training and educational institutions will ensure that participation of both women and men is promoted and facilitated. This will be extended to further develop monitoring systems and gender proofing procedures. Flexible delivery systems, bridging programmes, guidance and advisory services, childcare support and staff development methods will be used to promote such participation.
Scope and provision	Adult Education is the last area of mass education which remains to be developed in Ireland. It is recognised in the White Paper that significantly increased investment will be required if adult learning opportunities are to reach a stage of parity with those in other countries. The key priorities identified in the White Paper are: ♦ To allocate priority resources to address adult literacy needs; ♦ To systematically increase opportunities for adult learners within the system, prioritising the needs of those with less than upper secondary education; ♦ To develop supporting services such as adult guidance and counselling and childcare; ♦ To enhance the responsiveness and flexibility of education and training provision to meet the needs of young people and adults alike, optimising participation of and benefit to, those at risk; ♦ To promote and develop a co-ordinated integrated role for adult education and training as a vital component within an overarching framework for lifelong learning. The programme of change and development will be implemented on a phased basis.
Current issues	Financial Support is given for the following adult learning activities: ♦ Adult education in third-level institutions

	♦ Adult education facilitated by the Department of Education and Science ♦ Adult education provided under the auspices of other Government Departments e.g. Department of Enterprise and Employment, Department of Social and Family Affairs, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform etc. ♦ Expenditure in Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and post-primary schools covered by receipts for course fees ♦ Pay and other costs of Adult Education Organisers ♦ Administrative costs in the Department of Education and Science ♦ Cost of second-chance places on the self-financing type of courses ♦ Cost of some activities done on a co-operative basis. The role of the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science (DES) is to promote, co-ordinate, fund and monitor the development of education programmes for young people and adults who have either left school early or who need further vocational training to enhance their employment prospects.
Finance information	
Further information	The key principles which underlie adult education and training in Ireland are set out in the policy papers: White Paper ‘Charting our Education Future’ (1995) White Paper on Human Resource Development (1997) Green paper on Adult Education ‘Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning’ (1998) DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (2000). White Paper on Adult Education ‘<i>Learning for Life</i>’. Dublin: The Stationery Office. [online] http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/fe_adulted_wp.pdf (3 June 2003).

Italy

Definition	In February 2001, the Italian Ministry of Education issued directive no. 22 which defined the following types of adult education: ♦ literacy adult education courses (primary education); ♦ lower secondary adult education courses; ♦ adult education courses in upper secondary schools; ♦ courses of functional literacy; ♦ integrated paths (education and training); ♦ pilot projects to integrate training systems.
Aims and objectives	Formerly, the primary aim of adult education was to combat complete illiteracy. Although the problem of complete illiteracy has now decreased, raising levels of literacy remains a significant part of adult education. A key element of Italian adult education is the new integrated system, which was established to achieve the following aims: ♦ review and broaden the education and training offered to young people and adults of all ages, whether employed or unemployed; ♦ encourage access to all forms of adult education and initial vocational training, as well as to non-formal provision in the fields of culture, health education, social services, training in civic responsibilities and physical education for adults. The integrated adult education system is aimed at establishing a range of measures for study and planning and to support the demand for education and training. These initiatives call for a combined effort by the competent systems and agencies acting within the sector to achieve the above-mentioned aims.

Scope and provision	<i>Corsi di alfabetizzazione</i> (literacy courses) are available which lead to the elementary school leaving certificate. In addition, <i>corsi per lavoratori</i> (courses for workers) offer adults the opportunity to obtain the lower secondary school leaving certificate, which is a necessary qualification for employment in public services. Originally, these courses were attended by workers whose contracts allowed for 150 hours of paid attendance. Over recent years, the courses have been more commonly attended by adults looking for their first job or returning to the labour market, as well as by foreigners from countries outside the EU with little knowledge of Italian. Those in employment or who are temporarily unemployed can attend evening classes in upper secondary schools. Originally, the provision was limited to technical schools as this was the type of education most in demand; later, the offer was extended to other types of school. At the end of these courses, which can, if necessary, be completed in six years rather than the five prescribed for school-age pupils, students take the upper secondary school leaving examinations; the diploma they receive has the same validity as that given to students who complete the normal courses and can grant admission to courses of higher education. Accreditation As a result of the integrated adult education system, which is planned and administered at regional and local level, participants can receive credits for a broad range of open and flexible courses, which are modular in nature. Regardless of the sector that provides them (association, school etc.), each module may be recognised by schools or vocational training institutions as a training credit which can lead to further studies in the school or vocational system. Recognition may be granted to skills acquired outside specialised agencies in education and vocational training and, in particular, agencies offering forms of provision included in plans drawn up at regional and local level.
Finance information	The location of the <i>Centri territoriali</i>, (centres for the co-ordination of the offer of education and training for adult education at district level) is the responsibility of the Regions, in agreement with local authorities and the director of the <i>Ufficio Scolastico Regionale</i>. They are financed by the State and local authorities.

Luxembourg

Definition	In the strictest sense, adult education in Luxembourg only refers to the provisions of the act of 19 July 1991 which established the adult education service. However, this narrow definition ignores measures of continuous vocational training implemented for employees and/or unemployed people by companies, professional chambers and ministries.
Aims and objectives	Strengthening the provision of learning opportunities for adults and encouraging them to take up such opportunities are two of the main aims of adult education and lifelong learning in Luxembourg. Others include: ♦ helping those in possession of a vocational qualification to upgrade or extend it with a view to adjusting to technological progress and the needs of the economy; ♦ offering those in employment, the self-employed and the unemployed the chance to study for the diplomas and certificates covered by the law on technical secondary education and to obtain a vocational qualification under an accelerated training scheme; and ♦ building on the practical training provided by firms and on proposals from the relevant professional associations.
Scope and provision	The remit of the adult training service includes: ♦ co-ordinating adult training provision at evening classes offered by schools within the secondary education and technical secondary education systems, the higher institute of technology, the centre for higher education and the language centre; ♦ organising adult education evening classes leading to the qualifications available through full-time training; ♦ providing basic education for adult residents in Luxembourg on demand; ♦ organising general-interest courses in the general and adult education sectors, either directly or through the agency of municipal authorities or non-profit-making associations (subject to certain criteria);

	♦ developing general interest and State-approved courses for adults. The Luxembourg language centre provides language training, it aims to enable people from all walks of life to achieve the level of comprehension and expression they need to secure integration into the social, economic and cultural life of the community. There are also specific courses for both initial and continuing vocational education.
Finance information	Adult education (in the strict sense of the term), the Luxembourg language centre and continuing vocational training initiatives implemented under the Act of 4 September 1990 are the responsibility of the ministry of national education, vocational training and sports, which also provides financial support. Continuing training provided by businesses and/or professional associations and sectoral training institutes are a matter for the businesses and/or professional associations themselves and are financed by the firms and in some cases the individuals concerned. Professional associations are part-financed through government subsidies.
Further information	For details of legislation, see EURYBASE Chapter 7 Adult Education Service de la Formation des adultes (S.F.A.) Adult Education Service Institut national pour le Développement de la Formation professionnelle continue (INFPC) National institute for the development of continuing vocational training)

Netherlands

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted, however the Netherlands has adopted the definition for lifelong learning provided by the European Commission in its document <i>Setting targets for lifelong learning in Europe</i>: ‘<i>Lifelong learning encompasses all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence.</i>’
Aims and objectives	Adult education (<i>educatie</i>) is geared to furthering the personal development of adults and their participation in society by developing their knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes in a way that fits in with their needs, potential and experience and the needs of society. The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) (<i>Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs</i>) was introduced in January 1996; it brought greater unity to the system of adult and secondary vocational education. Of the existing types of adult and vocational education available at that time, (part-time non-formal education for young people, adult basic education, adult general secondary education, apprenticeships and senior secondary vocational education) some disappeared altogether while others have continued in a new form or under a new name. One of the aims of the Act is to bring education more into line with the world of work. The national vocational education bodies are responsible for developing a clear qualification structure setting out the knowledge and skills required by employers. The purpose of adult education (<i>educatie</i>) is to provide a solid foundation for vocational and secondary education courses and enable adults to participate in society (self-reliance), unlike vocational education (<i>beroepsonderwijs</i>), which trains students for a particular occupation. Adult education can serve various purposes, including preparation for vocational training, assimilation and social integration of migrants and the personal and social development of people who are at risk of becoming marginalised. As well as a socio-economic function (matching supply to demand, greater employability), the Adult and Vocational Education Act therefore also has a socio-cultural function (integration of disadvantaged groups, greater participation). One of the Act's aims is to ensure that every person is able to obtain a minimum basic qualification.

	Government policy on the adult and vocational education sector was outlined in the Agenda for Adult and Vocational Education (1999). This was followed in 2000 by a policy document setting out the specific elements of policy: improving quality, access and regional cooperation. Two other important topics dealt with in the document were increased autonomy and deregulation. In December 1998, the government and the social partners reached agreement on a ten-point ‘employability’ agenda for 1999 and 2000, as part of a national effort to encourage lifelong learning. This agenda includes the following elements: ♦ the introduction of core skills into the aims of the qualifications structure; ♦ the growth of combined learning and work provision; ♦ the implementation of a system of assessment and accreditation for previous learning; ♦ the introduction of an ‘investors in people’ label for firms; ♦ providing ‘employability’ advisers in small and medium-sized firms; ♦ the use of sectorial training and development funds to improve inter-sectorial mobility among the workforce; ♦ the prevention of school dropout; ♦ encouraging training for unemployed people with few qualifications; ♦ the development of an employability observatory; ♦ improving the employability of the unemployed and of workers without an initial qualification (apprenticeship level). These elements have been or are being implemented. The ‘employability’ agenda as such was wound up on 31 December 2000.
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Scope and provision	Educational institutions are free, under the terms of the Adult and Vocational Education Act, to devise learning pathways tailored to the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. The student comes first. Institutions must therefore offer courses that are geared to the needs of young people who have no job experience, employed people and those seeking work. Adult and vocational education courses must be better attuned to each other. Various options will be available, both full time and part time, to suit students' personal circumstances and preferences. The WEB Implementation Decree regulates the funding of vocational education and the national vocational education bodies, and central government grants to adult education institutions. The Manpower Services Act provides a statutory framework for training measures for the unemployed. In 1997 a new qualification structure for adult education (KSE) was introduced with four types of courses and six levels of qualification, ranging from basic skills to secondary education. Courses in Dutch as a second language offer five levels only. The four types of course are: ♦ adult general secondary education (VAVO), leading to a senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) certificate (levels 4, 5 and 6); ♦ courses providing a broad basic education; ♦ courses in Dutch as a second language; ♦ courses aimed at fostering self-reliance. In January 1998, the then government launched a national action programme for lifelong learning known as <i>Nationaal Actieprogramma: een leven lang leren</i> ('Lifelong learning: the Dutch Initiative'). As the period in office of that government came to an end a short while later, decisions relating to implementation of the programme and the financing of its budget were left to the succeeding government. The Government declaration of August 1999 devoted special attention to lifelong learning. It proposed: ♦ tax benefits for the training of workers; ♦ the introduction of linked work and training courses in higher education;
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	♦ the setting up of regional learning centres; ♦ easier transition between courses; and ♦ the establishment of innovative technological centres to improve cooperation between education and firms. Furthermore, additional budgetary resources were made available to prevent school dropout, improve the quality of teaching and the number of teachers, strengthen training infrastructures and the relation between education and firms.
Current issues	The policy on lifelong learning is being pursued in the light of the agreements reached at the Lisbon European summit in March 2000. The Netherlands subscribes to the agreed goals. On a practical level, this involves a general improvement in the educational level of the Dutch workforce. Avenues other than the conventional path of initial vocational education by which this group may acquire an intermediate or higher level of training will have to be explored. In the first instance, these will involve setting vocational education (whether at lower, intermediate or higher levels) on a sound footing as a whole. Important concerns in this respect are improving the internal throughput of vocational education (to secure a high percentage of graduates) and the total elimination of blockages in initial vocational education (between lower, intermediate and higher levels). Here, consideration of new target groups for education and training (such as workers, job-seekers, the elderly), along with the development of new educational concepts, are expected to make an important contribution (interaction with conventional vocational education and points of transfer with the school infrastructure). Experimenting with individual learning accounts The individual learning account is a mechanism to help workers and job-seekers plan and organise their own learning and invest in it to boost their career prospects and improve the development of their skills. It offers them the chance to enhance their own employability and mobility on the labour market. Individual learning accounts are based on individual responsibility and capacity to take decisions, increased involvement in learning and shared expenses. They are in effect savings accounts in the name of a job applicant or worker who may use them to fund courses or training. Money may be paid into them by the worker, the employer or other interested parties. Eight such projects have started

	since February 2001, and their main aims are as follows: ♦ the development of arrangements for using individual learning accounts ♦ the training of workers. The experiment was due to be evaluated in mid-2002, and the findings used as a basis for full-scale implementation. The Netherlands are taking part in the European Learning Account Project (ELAP), together with Spain (in the Basque region), Sweden and England. For more information see ELAP website at: http://www.e-lap.org/index.php?main=home
Finance information	The funding of adult and vocational education is regulated in the Adult and Vocational Education Act. Vocational education courses are funded directly by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. From 2000, this funding is based partly on the number of students per course/learning pathway and partly on the number of certificates awarded per institution. National vocational education bodies are funded by the Minister on the basis of the number of qualifications devised, the number of training companies recognised as such and the number of practical training places filled. The central government budget for adult education is allocated to the municipalities on the basis of the number of inhabitants over the age of 18, the number of ethnic minorities and the number of adults with an educational disadvantage. The municipal authorities then buy in adult education courses by concluding contracts with the regional training centres. The municipalities receive a separate budget for integration courses for ethnic minorities. In addition, students pay course fees to the institutions. Students on vocational training courses (BOL) pay fees to the Minister and are eligible for student finance. Institutions may also receive income from contract activities for companies and private individuals.
Further information	<i>Nationaal Actieprogramma: een leven lang leren</i> Lifelong learning: the Dutch Initiative (1998) Adult and Vocational Education Act Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (1996)..

Norway

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	Educational opportunities for adults and the principle that learning is a lifelong task are the two basic tenets of Norwegian adult education policy. More specific aims include: ♦ to reduce the educational gap between generations and groups of the population in order to qualify people for a labour market in a time of change, and ♦ to improve the quality of life of individuals. In 1998, the Government presented a White Paper on continuing education and adult education, known as the Competence Reform. The basis for the reform is the need for competence in the workplace, in society and by the individual. The reform is aimed at embracing all adults, regardless of labour market attachment, and it has a broad and long-term perspective. It is being implemented with active participation from employers, employees and the Government.
Scope and provision	Originally, adult education was run solely by humanitarian, political and other non-governmental organisations and helped to raise literacy levels in the population. In the 1960's, schools began to take on responsibility for certain aspects of adult education and since then, the public sector has played an important role in running adult education courses. There are seven main types of adult education, based partly on the type of education offered and partly on the organisation involved: ♦ Study associations offer courses to support the individual adult's personal development and to increase equality of opportunity. They are responsible for the content of the courses; most of the courses are not bound by national curricula or examination systems. In principle, everyone can take part, and the participants have the opportunity to influence the content and methods used in the courses. These courses cover areas like languages, computing, cultural activities, arts and crafts. Some associations

	offer courses qualifying for lower and upper secondary education and higher education. The respective national guidelines and laws regulate these courses. Most courses are organised and taught by a teacher, but some courses are based on equal involvement by the participants. ♦ Folk High Schools, which are mainly private boarding schools, aim to develop different aspects of life skills. They offer courses in arts, crafts, music and several other areas. The lower age-limit for admittance to folk high schools is 17 years. ♦ Distance Education aims to meet the needs of various groups for open and flexible learning. Most distance education courses are courses leading to work-related qualifications. ♦ Courses in Norwegian as a second language are offered to all inhabitants whose second language is Norwegian. They aim to promote social integration and prepare participants for further education or employment. ♦ Labour market courses are aimed at preparing unemployed people for work and motivating them for participation in further education. To enrol, participants must be at least 19 years old. The courses quite often cover the subjects and levels offered by upper secondary schools. ♦ Primary and lower secondary level adult education are organised by the local authorities. Courses are offered by local primary and lower secondary schools and municipal adult education centres or are available via distance learning. ♦ Upper secondary level adult education is provided by upper secondary schools, county-based adult education centres and the State Adult Education Centre. It is conducted according to the general regulations covering upper secondary education and the individual subject syllabuses. Adults wishing to follow vocational courses have additional requirements regarding age (they must be over 21) and qualifications. Distance study methods are frequently used.
Finance information	Adult education is implemented in co-operation with public authorities and adult education associations such as

	Folkeuniversitetet and the Workers' Educational Association. The State subsidises adult education in accordance with the provisions of the Adult Education Act. The municipalities are responsible for adult education at primary and lower secondary level, and the counties (larger regional authorities) at upper secondary level. The adult education associations and distance education institutions also provide courses at these levels, as well as courses in higher education and courses not offered by the public institutions. The authorities' responsibility for the provision of financial resources depends on the level and type of education provided. The costs of primary and secondary education for adults are met by municipal or county education authorities, with participants paying for textbooks and any fees for examinations. The educational authorities also cover the cost of adult immigrant education. The other adult education programmes (as listed above) are financed by earmarked grants or subsidised by the Government. Grants are given to county authorities, municipalities, organisations and institutions, companies and national associations of companies in accordance with the requirements of the Adult Education Act. Study associations may also receive contributions from public funds according to rules set out in the same Act, but most of their financing comes from fees paid by the participants. Contributions from public funds are given on the basis of implemented hours of adult education activity, and according to special applications for pedagogical development work etc.
Further information	http://www.oecd.org/document/30/0,2340,en_2649_34511_2084190_1_1_1_1,00.html (Thematic review on adult learning – Background Report). http://odin.dep.no/ufd/engelsk/education/adult/014081-990082/index-dok000-b-n-a.html (Information regarding adult education on the Norwegian Education Ministry's site in English). http://odin.dep.no/ufd/engelsk/education/competence-reform/index-b-n-a.html (For further information on the Competence Reform.)

Portugal

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	It is intended that in Portugal adult education should contribute to: ♦ Enhancing the qualifications and skills of the population; ♦ Promoting social integration and the exercise of citizenship; and ♦ Boosting employability. It should also boost the transition towards a knowledge-based economy and information society.
Scope and provision	Adult education covers vocational training, general education, in addition to formal, non-formal and information learning. It covers the following areas: ♦ <i>Ensino recorrente</i> (Recurring studies) offer a second chance to those who dropped out of the regular system of education. It allows for the acquisition of a degree, a diploma or certificate, which are equivalent to those granted by the regular system. <i>Ensino recorrente</i> has two levels, basic education (with three cycles) and secondary education. The first cycle of basic education is focused on literacy, with the second and third sections the continuation of study and the development of professional skills. Secondary provision aims at providing a professional qualification or access to higher education. ♦ <i>Educação extra-escolar</i> (out of school education) is a series of systematic cultural and educational activities, which are organised outside the school system and carried out through multiple public or private initiatives. <i>Educação extra-escolar</i> is viewed as part of the lifelong learning process and aims to provide global and continuous learning activities. Its duration, goals and methods are flexible. Courses may include literacy training, upgrading courses, social-educational courses and social-vocational courses. ♦ <i>Aprendizagem</i> (Apprenticeship) constitutes a system of rotating initial professional training

	aimed at youths over the age limit for compulsory education and, preferably, under the age of 25. It leads to professional qualifications and also permits educational progress and certification. It covers three main training areas, which are social and cultural training, scientific and technological training and practical training. ♦ <i>Cursos de educação e formação profissional inicial</i> (courses of initial professional training) were created in 1988 through a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity. These courses aim at providing young people not covered by compulsory schooling, as well as employed or unemployed adults, with qualified professional training and the diploma of the 3rd cycle of basic education.
Finance information	Adult education activities are for the most part developed within the scope of the Ministry of Education and financed by the national budget. Those adult education activities which are carried out within the scope of the <i>Programa de Desenvolvimento Educativo para Portugal</i> (PRODEP – Educational Development Programme for Portugal), are partly financed by EC funds through the European Social Fund. <i>Aprendizagem</i> (apprenticeships) are created following the joint authorisation of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Labour and Solidarity to proposals submitted by entities wishing to promote these courses. <i>Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional</i> (the Employment and Vocational Training Institute), finances all expenses related to <i>aprendizagem</i> assumed by the Ministry for Labour and Solidarity. It is also responsible for providing technical and financial support to the training/employment programme the aim of which is to promote the professional integration of young people looking for their first job. ANEFA, the National Adult Education and Training Agency which was recently created by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity, receives global funding from the state budget, through contributions by the Ministries of Education and Labour and Solidarity, and also external funding, namely by the European Union. Both ANEFA and all other public or private organisation

	promoting adult education and training courses may apply for financing through the Operational Program for Employment, Training and Social Development (POEFDS).
Further information	Betting on education for all – strategic document for the development of adult education and training, Alberto de Melo et al, Ministry of Education, Lisbon: April 1998. See chapter 7 of EURYBASE for details of legislation <i>Agência Nacional de Educação e Formação de Adultos (ANEFA)</i> (National Agency for Adult Education and Training): http://www.anefa.pt/ (in Portuguese)

Spain

Definition	No official definition of adult education was available in the sources consulted.
Aims and objectives	In Spain, adult education is inspired by the principle of lifelong education, and seeks to facilitate the admission of adults into the various forms of education offered by the system. The main aims and objectives for adult education are: ♦ the acquisition and updating of basic education and training, ♦ the improvement of professional qualifications or completion of the groundwork necessary to carry out other forms of professional activity, and ♦ development of the abilities needed to take part in the life of society, as well as in economic, political and cultural activity. It is also worth noting that all of the Autonomous Communities in Spain have initiated programmes aimed at enhancing lifelong learning through the development of basic skills and the use of information and communication technology.
Scope and provision	The choice of education and training programmes for adults is very broad, and is spread across all levels of the school system. Adult learning opportunities are available in both more formal traditional (face to face settings) and by distance learning. Traditional, face to face, courses may include: ♦ Courses to provide adults with the essential knowledge, ability, skills and techniques for their professional, social and personal advancement; ♦ Courses leading to the award of the school certificate, which allows access to the second stage of compulsory secondary education; ♦ Vocational courses leading to qualifications which provide access to employment; ♦ Literacy in the Spanish language or Spanish courses for immigrants; and

	♦ Non-formal education, such as cultural enhancement, personal development, professional technician and labour market insertion. Distance learning courses are available in the following areas: ♦ Education leading to the award of existing basic education certificates ♦ Specific distance learning vocational training ♦ Distance secondary education ♦ Preparation classes for university admissions. Some Autonomous Communities, such as Galicia, Andalusia, Valencia and the Canary Islands have likewise regulated the existence of a semi-attendance mode. The semi-attendance mode is aimed at those individuals who for diverse reasons have difficulties continuously attending an establishment. They receive learning support through different media and periodic attendance to activities intended for tutorials, counselling and practice.
Finance information	The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport responsible for establishing the general arrangement of Adult Education, the minimum requisites for the centres and the general planning of this type of educational provision. However, the Autonomous Communities, as for all provision, are responsible for the direct management of adult education. This means that they hold the administrative tenure over the establishments in their territory; may establish and authorise centres; manage staff; develop the educational programming; and manage distance education. The specific nature of adult education is such that Town Councils have become greatly involved in the organisation of this type of educational provision and have taken responsibility for some public centres of adult education, organising their activities and granting financial aid to private entities.
Further information	1999 Organic Act on the General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE) section III is the main law concerning adult education in Spain, see chapter 7 of EURYBASE for further information.

Sweden

Definition	No official definition of adult education is available
Aims and objectives	In the Bill Adult Learning and the Future Development of Adult Education (2000), the Government recommended that Parliament adopted the following goals for adult learning: <i>‘All adults must be given the opportunity to broaden and deepen their knowledge and skills in order to promote personal development, democracy, equality of opportunity, economic growth and employment, and an equitable distribution of wealth.’</i> In Sweden lifelong learning covers both the formal educational system, from pedagogical measures in the early years of the pre-school up to studies at university level, and popular adult education for both young people and adults. The term also covers opportunities for learning at work, the creation of learning organizations and new tasks to be carried out and at the same time develop individuals who make up the work team. The basis for this attitude to lifelong learning must be built during the child’s early years at pre-school level and later permeate the formal education system, as well as attitudes to competence development in working life and opportunities for participating in study circles during leisure time. The individual’s needs at a given time are the key issue for lifelong learning. Learning should not only be lifelong but also “life-wide”. Learning is not limited to formal schooling or other structured courses, but is also realised during spare time in informal settings. How the goals outline above are to be achieved is set out in detail in a strategy for structuring adult learning in a society characterised by lifelong learning. The strategy contains the following points: ♦ Teaching and working methods are to be developed corresponding to the individual’s constantly changing and increasing need to learn in a knowledge-based society. ♦ The individual’s learning and knowledge acquisition are to be assisted through counselling and guidance based on recognition of actual, previously acquired knowledge and skills.

	♦ Appropriate learning environments, teaching, counselling, and distance education are to be available on a scale corresponding as far as possible to the varying learning needs and requirements of all adults. ♦ Financial support is to be offered to adults in order to stimulate their participation in education and skills development. ♦ Society, employers and the individual have a shared responsibility for ensuring that the need of different people and groups for both general education and specialist training are met. ♦ All formal and informal learning which receives state funding shall be permeated by a democratic perspective and respect for the equal worth of everyone. ♦ Fundamental agreement across political boundaries and cooperation between authorities, social partners and non-governmental organisations should be aimed at in order to facilitate the individual's learning and skills development.
Scope and provision	Sweden has an extensive adult education system with long-standing traditions. Its origins are based in national popular movements. It includes many forms of adult education, with a large variety of organisers. The state adult education system includes adult secondary education (<i>komvux</i>), adult education for pupils with learning disabilities (<i>särvux</i>) and Swedish tuition for adult immigrants (<i>sfi</i>). Other forms of adult education exist which complement the state adult education system, e.g. Advanced Vocational Education and National Schools for Adults (<i>SSV</i>). The Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning develops new methods for distance education, and also provides distance education courses for adults, primarily at upper secondary level. The liberal adult education sector, as well as some supplementary schools (<i>kompletterande utbildningar</i>), also provide adult education. ♦ Adult Secondary Education (<i>Komvux</i>) includes basic and upper secondary adult education. Basic adult secondary education corresponds to nine-year compulsory education and is intended to provide a basis for

	participation in the life of the community, working life and further study. Each municipality is responsible for organising basic adult secondary education as and when required. Upper secondary adult education is equivalent to upper secondary education for young persons, although not identical. ♦ The Adult Education Initiative (<i>Kunskapslyftet</i>). All Swedish municipalities participated in this five-year project which started in 1997. The Initiative primarily targeted unemployed adults who wholly or partially lacked three-year upper secondary school qualifications and offered them compulsory and upper secondary school studies. The primary aim was to give those adults who have the greatest educational need the opportunity to expand their basic knowledge. ♦ Swedish tuition for adult immigrants. Immigrants over the age of 16 are entitled to Swedish tuition for adult immigrants (<i>sfi</i>). The municipalities are responsible for the <i>sfi</i> programme and also decide how the courses should be organised. <i>Sfi</i> should provide knowledge of Swedish language and society. ♦ Advanced vocational education (AVE), which is not at university level, is an educational form for post-secondary education based on close collaboration between the labour market and various educational providers (upper secondary schools, municipal adult education, institutes of higher education and training companies). In addition, some of the courses in folk high schools and some of the education programmes within the supplementary schools are, in terms of content, comparable to post secondary vocational training. ♦ The state finances and is responsible for the Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning (CFL). CFL promotes the utilisation of distance learning methods in adult education and liberal adult education, and complements the municipalities' own provision of adult education, primarily at upper secondary level, by offering equivalent courses by means of distance education. ♦ Liberal adult education is run independently of the state. It is organised by adult education
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	associations (<i>studieförbund</i>) and folk high schools (<i>folkhögskolor</i>). Liberal education fulfils an important function in society not least to safeguard and develop democracy and active citizenship. Both the adult education associations and folk high schools have a strong base in trade union organisations, religious communities, political parties and some other popular movements. Major parts of the study activities of these organisations are carried out in co-operation with adult education associations and folk high schools. ♦ Supplementary education is a form of education in its own right which can provide further training in a certain occupation or training for a new occupation. Most of the programmes take six months to a year to complete and focus on subjects such as economics, computing or tourism. ♦ In addition, there are labour market training courses organised primarily for the unemployed in need of retraining, further training and education. In the first instance the Labour Market Board is responsible for labour market training. The Labour Market Board is an agency accountable to the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications. Since 1975 all employees have been entitled by law to unpaid leave of absence for studying, providing they had the same employer the last six months or for a total of 12 months during the two previous years. The employee is also entitled to attend studies arranged by the trade unions irrespective of employment status. Each person has the right to choose the orientation of his or her studies. Neither the employer nor the trade union can give priority to persons opting for study programmes which they consider important from the viewpoint of the company or union. Nor are there any restrictions on the duration of studies. Self-tuition, however, is not covered by law. The employer may postpone giving leave of absence for six months.
Current issues	The Adult Learning Initiative was a five year programme for adult education established in July 1997. The Initiative formed part of the Government's strategy to halve unemployment by the year 2000. The aim of the state and municipalities was to achieve, in a short period of time, an overall boost in national knowledge thereby providing

	those with lower levels of education the opportunity to get a job and continue their learning. At the same time, the Adult Education Initiative would contribute over a five year period to the reform of adult education. The main perspectives of the Initiative included renewal of education and labour market policy, more equitable distribution and increased growth. Beginning in 2003 a new system of adult study support, the Adult Education Recruitment Grants, was introduced to replace the special education allowance (abolished in 2002). The support targets people over the age of 25 who have relatively little previous education, who are either unemployed, or are at risk of becoming unemployed, or who have disabilities. The estimated cost is SEK 2 billion per year, which equals approximately 30 000 full-time study places.
Finance information	State and municipal adult education in Sweden is free of charge. The municipalities finance and are responsible for implementing municipal adult education, post-secondary education, education for adults with learning disabilities and Swedish tuition for adult immigrants. The state also finances and is responsible for the Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning (CFL). Liberal adult education is largely financed by means of support from the state, county councils and municipalities. It is open to everyone and is free of charge. The National Council of Adult Education is responsible for the distribution of state funding to folk high schools and adult educational associations. When the Adult Education Initiative ended, municipalities were offered a new state grant to expand adult education provision. As of 2006, this grant will be included in the regular state grant awarded to municipalities and liberal adult education providers (see also current issues).
Key documents	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (2001). <i>Adult Learning and the Future Development of Adult Education. Summary of Government Bill 2000/01:72</i> Fact Sheet U01.004. Stockholm: Ministry of Education and Science. [online] http://utbildning.regeringen.se/publikationerinfo/pdf/faktabl/2001/u01_004.pdf (3 June 2003). MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (1999).

	<i>The Adult Learning Initiative</i>. Fact Sheet U99.001. Stockholm: Ministry of Education and Science. [online] http://utbildning.regeringen.se/publikationerinfo/pdf/faktabl/1999/u99_001eng.pdf (3 June 2003). SKOLVERKET, NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION (2000). <i>Lifelong Learning and Lifewide Learning</i>. Stockholm: Skolverket. [online] http://www.skolverket.se/pdf/00-538.pdf (3 June 2003). NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADULT EDUCATION (2003). <i>Facts on Liberal Adult Education in Sweden</i>. Stockholm: Swedish National Council of Adult Education. [online] http://www.folkbildning.se/download/271/x/FBR_fickfakta2003_engelsk.pdf (3 June 2003)
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