Equipping adults for the 21st Century – Joining Forces for Action on Skills and Competences

Joint conference
to implement the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning and follow-up on CONFINTEA VI

Vilnius (Lithuania), 9 – 10 December 2013

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THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

Quality in adult learning
Financing adult learning

STUDIES

Quality in the adult learning sector
Financing the adult learning sector
STUDY ON QUALITY IN ADULT LEARNING - Main findings

All countries have quality assurance systems in place for **formal** adult learning.

Three **groups of countries** are identified according to quality assurance systems in place for non-formal adult learning.
## Main findings

### QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS FOR NON FORMAL ADULT LEARNING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country Code</th>
<th>System Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT, BE, CH, DK, EE, FI, HU, IE, LU, LV, NO, SE</td>
<td>ELABORATE QUALITY SYSTEMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE, EL, ES, CZ, IS, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, UK</td>
<td>FRAGMENTED QUALITY SYSTEMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG, CY, FR, HR, IT, LT, RO, SK, TK</td>
<td>NO OR LIMITED QUALITY SYSTEMS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Countries in the first group with comprehensive quality systems for adult learning (formal and non-formal) perform better:

- Higher participation in lifelong learning
- Higher educational achievement
High **diversity** of responsible bodies and monitoring systems, but **similarity** in quality criteria and descriptors.

Need for **comparable data** on adult learning provision

Plea for an **integrated approach to quality in lifelong learning** - building upon EQAVET can provide the basis for action in the short/medium term
HOW CAN THIS STUDY HELP?

Most countries are currently developing or revising their legislative framework for adult learning.

The rich and detailed analysis of experiences in all countries can provide a useful reference for national reforms.
TWG ON QUALITY REPORT

Three main policy messages
Suggestions for action
Draft operational instruments
3 KEY MESSAGES:

• Quality in adult learning – quality of the outcomes achieved by adult learners – can only be pursued through an approach that crosses all education and training sectors;

• Systematic evaluation of quality tools and systems developed at national and regional level is needed to support further development;

• The best way forward is to organise action into three strands, taking advantage of existing resources.
3 STRANDS OF ACTION

- **Improving (national) systems and tools**, based on evaluation and exchange of good practices;

- **Developing and extending EQAVET** – also based on its evaluation – to better promote quality in adult learning (which includes continuing VET);

- **The long term objective should be developing principles, standards and guidelines valid across all sectors of education and training.**
OPERATIONAL INSTRUMENTS:

- A draft framework for the accreditation of adult learning providers;
- A checklist and a profiling grid to promote staff quality;
- Indicators to monitor quality in adult learning.
FOLLOW UP

• The TWG and the study have provided
  - an important information base
  - valuable suggestions for policy action,
    upon which we are building.

• Consultation follow-up for cross-sectoral principles and guidelines for quality assurance and conditions to safeguard specificities proper to sub-systems proposed in both the first report on EQAVET and the second report on quality assurance in higher education.
FOLLOW UP CONT.

• The first report on EQAVET envisages the development of descriptors, indicators and guidelines to better address the quality of non-formal learning, continuing VET and work-based learning.

• The coordination among sectoral developments in quality assurance is part of the wider effort to streamline all instruments and initiatives related to transparency, recognition, quality pursuing a European area of skills and qualifications.
STUDY ON FINANCING ADULT LEARNING
Challenges:

- Research on funding in VET and Adult Learning is limited by complex situations and varying definitions regarding data sources and estimations on funding volumes in countries.

- Getting evidence on the wider benefits of investments in Adult Learning, such as health and social inclusions, and translate these benefits into economic terms, is still challenging;

  - This suggests to consider the findings in this study as (first) indications about correlations, rather than causalities.
(Some) KEY FINDINGS:

• Strong correlations have been identified between adult learning and innovation performance indicators / economic growth;

• Countries with higher growth rates show higher adult learning participation rates;

• In all countries where participation rates increase, mean hours decrease

• Countries with higher participation rates spend more than countries with lower participation rates.
(Some more) KEY FINDINGS:

- Substantial public and private monetary rates of return exist for second chance education as well as for higher education later in life;

- Participation of older learners is higher when funding is open to all age groups and the share of older workers is higher.

- In higher education, the share of non-traditional students is low in countries where funding is restricted to initial higher education.
REPORT FOCUSED ON 5 KEY TOPICS:

• Why investing in adult learning is necessary?

• How can investment in adult learning be made smarter?

• Who should pay for what in adult learning?

• How should funding be prioritised?

• Which funding instruments should be used for specific investments?
SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIONS:

- Providing an **appropriate policy environment, legal framework and incentives** to encourage and enable employers, individuals and civil society organisations;

- Reviewing the **investment required to achieve the ET 2020**;

- Adapting **funding policies to ensure appropriate levels of support for priority groups** (addressing gender gaps, supporting the low skilled and the re-engagement of non-learners);
SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIONS:

- Investing in the adult learning staff and infrastructure to make greater use of ICT;
- Make best use of initial education and VET infrastructure for AL
- Establishing guidelines for the roles of key stakeholders to support efficient investment in adult learning.