Developing the adult learning sector

Quality in the Adult Learning Sector (Lot 1)

Final report (Open Call for tender EAC/26/2011)

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Foreword

Panteia is pleased to present the final report of the study on quality in adult learning, assigned by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture (Open Call for tender EAC/26/2011).

This study has been carried out by Panteia in partnership with Dieter Dohmen, Kim Faurschou, Barry Hake, Helen Keogh, Christian Kloyber, Balazs Nemeth, and George Zarifis. Overall, the research team's opinion is that this study has triggered an intensive and stimulating professional debate, and we are confident that the results of the study could play an important role in structuring future debates and in the development of policies for improving the quality of adult learning. This study would not have been possible without the cooperation of numerous stakeholders in the field of adult learning. Therefore, the research team would like to thank all the respondents around Europe for their willingness to cooperate in this study.

This report has the following structure. First, in chapter 1 and 2, the background and demarcation of the study is discussed. Subsequently, chapter 3 provides an overview of quality systems in the different countries. Then, chapter 4 addresses concrete examples of processes and mechanisms for quality assurance systems, accompanied by an analysis of the bodies responsible for supervising, managing, implementing and supporting these processes. Chapter 5 will go in depth into quality criteria and indicators deployed in quality assurance. Based on the previous chapters, chapter 6 presents issues and challenges that are specific to adult learning in relation to quality assurance, and links these to a range of good practices as identified during the study, including accreditation systems, seals, quality labels and prizes and examines the pros and cons of extending such measures more widely across Europe. Hereafter, chapter 7 describes the main difference and common characteristics of quality assurance systems in non-formal adult learning compared to VET and HE. Based on chapters 3-7, a set of conclusions and recommendations is provided in chapter 8.

This report include four annexes, consisting of a long list of 43 cases, overview tables of quality policies in different European countries, further details of the methodology, and a list of sources. A separate volume to this report includes detailed descriptions of 15 case studies and country factsheets as drawn up in the context of this study.

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Contents

Abbreviations

Country codes

AT	Austria	IE	Ireland
BE	Belgium	IS	Iceland
BG	Bulgaria	IT	Italy
CH	Switzerland	LT	Lithuania
CY	Cyprus	LU	Luxembourg
CZ	Czech Republic	LV	Latvia
DE	Germany	MT	Malta
DK	Denmark	NL	Netherlands
EE	Estonia	NO	Norway
EL	Greece	PL	Poland
ES	Spain	PT	Portugal
EU	European Union	RO	Romania
FI	Finland	SE	Sweden
FR	France	SI	Slovenia
FYROM	Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia	SK	Slovakia
HR (Croatia)	Croatia	TK	Turkey
HU	Hungary	UK	United Kingdom

Abbreviations

ACE	Adult and continuing educational centres in Denmark
ACL	Adult and community learning
AdA	Ausbildung der Ausbildner/innen
AES	Adult Education Survey
AFNOR	Association française de normalisation
AIF	Associazione Italiana Formatori
AL	Adult learning
AMU	labour market training in Denmark
APL	Accreditation of prior learning
BRUK	Bedömning, Reflektion, Utveckling, Kvalitet (Assessment, Reflection, Development, Quality) (Sweden)
CAS	Common Awards System
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CET	Continuing Education and Training
CIF	new Common Inspection Framework
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPD	Continuing professional development
CQAF	Common Quality Assurance Framework
CQAF	Common Quality Assurance Framework
CTP	Permanent Territorial Centers

CVET	Continuous VET
DES	Directorate for Educational Services in Malta
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (UK)
DLLL	Directorate for Lifelong Learning in Malta
DQSE	Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education in Malta
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ECVET	European Credit for VET
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
ENQA	the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EOPP	National Organisation for the Accreditation of Qualifications in Greece
ELGPN	European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network
EQAVET/EQARF	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines in Higher Education
ESIB	European Students' Union
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ET2020	Education and training 2020
EUA	Association of European institutions of higher education
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
FEC	Further education college
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HQAAA	Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency
HR	Human Resource
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUQB	Irish Universities Quality Board
IVET	Initial VET
LLC	Lifelong Learning Centre
LLL	Lifelong learning
LLP	lifelong learning programme
LO	Learning Outcomes
LQW	Lernerorientierte Qualitätstestierung in der Weiterbildung
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports CZ
MNE	Ministry of National Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs in Greece
MQC	Malta Qualifications Council
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
MS	Member State
NCHE	National Commission for Higher Education in Malta
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRTO	Platform of Accredited Private Educational Institutions in the Netherlands
NVAL	Non vocational adult learning

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
OQEA	Offering Quality Education to Adults
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PR	Personal Relations
QA	Quality Assurance
QALLL	Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning
QEF	Quality Effectiveness Framework
QMS	Quality Management System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAR	Self-assessment report
SERV	Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen
SVEB	Swiss Federation for Adult Learning
UPTER	Università Popolare della Terza Età di Roma
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VEU	Continuing adult education in Denmark
VTS	Vocational Training Structures
WBA	Weiterbildungsakademie; the Academy of Continuing Education

Executive summary

A) Brief overview of the study

The results of this study should support the European Commission by **contributing to a knowledge base**, which will inform a number of future activities to be undertaken in the framework of European Cooperation on Adult Learning Policy. According to the terms of reference, the specific objective of this study is to "map and to analyse the scope, content and implementation of quality approaches, standards and other relevant recent developments such as the development and implementation of accreditation systems and institutions, in the adult learning sector".

The study should mainly focus on **mapping interesting practices throughout Europe** and secondly on providing ingredients for the development of a **framework for quality assurance in adult learning**, in which quality assurance systems in other education sectors need to be taken into account. Recommendations on how to proceed in developing the framework (in terms of time lines, consultations, additional studies etc.) should be provided within the study.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned research objectives, the following **research methods** were implemented: 1) Conducting desk research on EU documents, EU projects, and academic literature addressing quality approaches in adult learning. 2) Drawing up 32 country fact sheets based on desk research and interviews on the national level. 3) Conducting 15 case studies on interesting quality systems and approaches. 4) Organising a testing seminar with external stakeholders for discussing and validating the outcomes of the study. 5) Organising meetings with the Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning to discuss the progress of the study and receive feedback on the research.

This Executive summary subsequently presents: B) Key findings of the study; C) Conclusions; D) Specific recommendations for European countries improving their quality systems; and E) Recommendations on the development of a European level quality framework.

B) Key findings of the study

The study resulted in the following key findings:

1 In reviewing the **quality assurance systems in place**, this study identified three groups of countries:

- (1) countries that have elaborated quality systems in place on macro level for adult learning, formal as well non-formal learning often determined in a specific strand (such as AT, BE, CH, DK, EE, FI, HU, IE, LU, LV, NO, SE). Most of these countries are also the better performing countries in terms of participation in adult learning and have higher educational attainment levels (with the exception of BE, HU, and IE).
- (2) countries that have fragmented quality systems on macro level for non-formal adult learning, while having quality systems in place for formal adult learning (such as DE, EL, ES, CZ, IS, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, UK);
- (3) countries with no or limited quality systems in place on macro level for non-formal learning, while having quality systems in place for formal adult learning

(such as BG, CY, FR, HR, IT, LT, RO, SK, TK). Overall these countries are general lacking quality systems for the non-formal part of adult learning and, at the same time, show a relatively low performance on the ET2020 benchmarks.

2   **Overarching quality systems intersecting different sub-sectors are rarely seen.** Some concrete examples are the Ö-Cert (Austria) and EduQua (Switzerland) labels that can be used in all sub-domains of adult learning. In Greece a strategic framework was developed for quality in the whole lifelong learning sector but has not yet been implemented.

3   Type and intensity of quality systems in place **differ between formal and non-formal adult learning**. With regard to system level quality assurance, the differences between higher education (HE), vocational education and training (VET) and non-vocational adult learning are less related to the fact that the provision is intended for adults, but more to the fact that the HE and VET provide state-regulated qualifications, falling under the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF). This often demands that all awards included in the NQF are quality assured, and a key objective of these frameworks is to promote and maintain standards. The non-formal sectors are less regulated through the government and more often grass-root, bottom-up approaches are applied to work on quality assurance (such as codes of conducts and development of sectoral quality labels).

4   Given the fact that the formal sectors are more regulated than the non-formal sector, also **monitoring of the sector differs**. The formal sectors are generally more uniform in their objectives, type of organisation, target groups, and societal results, where the HE sector is even more uniformly organised than the VET sector. The content of the quality assurance systems in place, especially those in relation to organisational requirements, however, do not differ in a great extent between the HE, VET and non-formal adult learning sector. Generally no specific reference is made to specific characters of adult learning within the quality systems in place for formal HE and VET.

5   In most countries there is a consensus that **quality assurance systems should be developed** for the adult learning sector, and especially the non-formal sector. Most countries are currently developing or revising their legislative framework for adult learning, putting more focus on quality assurance mechanisms. In the last few years, most countries produced white papers, communications, policy proposals and lifelong learning strategies in which they emphasise the importance of quality assurance. Nevertheless, the main challenge is to implement these strategies. Experience shows that it takes a long time to build consensus on the idea and content of quality systems.

6   Quality assurance systems have **multiple objectives**. The quality assurance systems studied are developed for different purposes. The objectives the quality assurance systems mostly focus on are setting minimum requirements, transparency, and accountability.

7   Quality assurance systems in non-formal adult learning include a **sequence of procedural steps** for providers being quality assured. The quality assurance systems studied, generally follow the same procedural steps including: application by the provider, including endorsement of adult learning principles; assessment by the responsible body, validation by the responsible body, and finally monitoring, follow-up activities

both by the provider and the responsible body. Most quality assurance systems include self-evaluation procedures at provider level. The emphasis is on the application by the provider.

8   There is a **diversity of responsible bodies**. Most responsible bodies are public bodies (either involved solely in quality assurance or with additional responsibilities). For some sectoral initiatives, the responsible bodies are private organisations, also involved in other activities.

9   The quality assurance systems studied have **common descriptors**. Four broad categories of quality descriptors can be identified: organisational issues; quality of the didactics and the learning process; quality of staff; and quality of measuring results. Only two of the quality assurance systems studied, do not include all four categories.

10 System, or sector level **monitoring systems** including an adult learning-tailored set of indicators are scarce (acknowledging the specific goals of adult learning, the wide diversity of providers, learning environments, and socio economic actors involved, but also endorsing some basic principles on adult learning as identified in the literature, such as that adult learning should be tailor made, learner centred, and attuned to specific learning needs of the adult learner, and should be offered in a flexible manner).

11 This study identified **challenges for improving the quality in adult learning.** The main challenges concern the lack of overarching quality assurance systems in the adult learning sector, and especially for the non-formal part of adult learning. These challenges were subsequently linked to relevant examples of practices over Europe that could be seen as solutions or at least models of inspirations for policy makers.

12 **Success factors of quality assurance systems' implementation can be identified**. Success factors are factors that were identified as being a condition under which a well functioning quality assurance system was/is implemented. The following generic factors of success of quality assurance systems' implementation are identified: 1) The focus of the quality assurance system is on the learner/consumer; 2) The quality assurance system is transparent for all stakeholders; 3) The quality assurance system is organisationally strongly backed (the responsible authorising body possesses authority in the sector); 4) the quality assurance system has commitment of management and the employees within the provider; 5) The quality assurance system should be affordable in relation to the volume of adult learning provision and the context it takes place; 6) The quality assurance system should be relevant for the given context (no one-size fits all) or sufficiently broad to embed different form of adult learning provision; 7) The development/ acceptance of quality assurance systems takes a certain period of time.

13 The **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET** (**EQAVET)** and **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)** quality reference frameworks are applicable to the situation of the adult learning sector, acknowledging that the adult learning sector is less uniform in terms of objectives, organisation, target groups, and societal results (especially for the non-formal part of adult learning). Most cases studied are based on the same philosophy (quality cycle) and similar descriptors are in place.

C) Conclusions

Based on the key findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1 In most countries, **quality assurance systems, especially for the non-formal adult learning sector can be improved**. On the other hand, the study identified a high number of interesting practices which can serve as inspiration for improving and setting of quality assurance systems.

2 There is a strong **need for more (comparable) information on adult learning provision**, especially for the non-formal part of adult learning. It is important to provide relevant statistics in order to prove the results of adult learning in social and economic terms based on cost -benefit models.

3 The results of the study provide arguments for **the development of a reference framework for quality in adult learning at the European level** to serve as reference that Member States could use to develop standards for the whole sector. This reference framework could be used by national, regional, sectoral and institutional organisations in developing quality policies. It is important to differentiate in the framework between the different adult learning domains (e.g. higher education, vocational education, second chance and liberal education) and types of provision (formal and non-formal).

4 Furthermore, there is a plea for an **integrated approach for quality in lifelong learning.** There are some strong arguments to link up with the quality framework already developed for the VET sector (EQAVET), and make this adult learning proof instead of developing a separate framework. The following arguments can be summed up: Firstly, this study provides strong evidence that EQAVET (such as the quality model, building blocks and indicative descriptors set) is applicable to adult learning provision. EQAVET needs slight modification to adopt it to the adult learning sector. Secondly, having different quality frameworks in place could lead to confusion amongst stakeholders ("again another framework"), especially in case a provider provides services in the vocational as well as the non vocational domain at the same time. Finally, aligning with EQAVET leads to economies of scale making use of the existing platforms of national reference points, EQAVET network, the products and tools that has been developed, and the experience of the European Commission guiding this process. This will finally lead to a future quality assurance framework for lifelong learning, being an inspirational model for all actors involved in lifelong learning, including adult learning.

5 Due to the similarities we propose therefore to **take the quality model of EQAVET as reference point for adult learning** and add adult learning specific characteristics to it. Broadening the scope of EQAVET to adult learning could at the same time be a first step finally leading to a **future quality assurance framework for lifelong learning**, being an inspirational model for all educational sectors (also including HE and general education).

D) Specific recommendations for European countries improving their quality systems

Based on the key findings and conclusions, the following recommendations can be mentioned that will help to improve the quality in adult learning in the countries. These recommendations are related to the system challenges which are identified:

1 For countries facing a lack of an overarching framework for adult learning, it is recommended **to develop an overarching system which sets minimum requirements for providers to get validated** (applies mostly to NL, BG, CZ, CY, HR, PL, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), LU, MT, TK). As inspiration, the following systems can be further examined: meta-frameworks such as Ö-Cert (AT) or overarching frameworks such as EduQua (CH) and the FETAC framework (IE).

2 For countries facing a lack of a system / framework / regulation for assuring quality in the non-formal part of adult learning, there are **three potential responses**, dependent on what countries feel best suitable for them (applies mostly to DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, IS, BG, CZ, CY, BE (Walloon), FR, IT, MT):

- Develop a quality assurance system for non-formal adult learning, with setting minimum quality requirements. Inspirational models for this concern firstly, systems organised by public bodies, such as EduQua (CH) Greta-plus (FR); Quality label (LU); and secondly, they concern systems organised by private bodies, such as the Hamburg model (DE); the quality seal for folk universities (NL) and the code of conduct for Dutch private providers (NL).
- Stimulating quality developments without setting minimum quality requirements. As inspiration one could have a look at existing quality prizes in Germany, Sweden and Finland.
- Providing additional support structures. The Quality guidelines/manual developed in Sweden (BRUK); the staff development programmes developed in Norway and Malta; the Slovenian initiative 'Offering Quality Education to Adults' and the Czech 'Concept' project, could serve as inspiration.

3 For countries facing a lack of attention for adult learning specific elements in quality systems / regulation for formal education, it is recommended **to increase attention to adult learning elements in formal education** (applies mostly to NL, BG, CZ, CY, HR, HU, PL, RO, LU). This includes changing policy and legal frameworks related to the educational sectors in question and engaging the stakeholders to change the regulations as they are, in order to increase the attention to adult learning specific elements in the quality assurance systems. Inspiring examples in this respect related to VET can be found in UK (Wales), namely the ESTYN inspectorate, in Ireland, the FETAC framework; and in France, the Greta-plus quality label. Related to general education, the system which is particularly interesting to look at is the quality assurance structures in basic skills in Malta.

4 For countries facing a lack of (specific) legal requirements for adult learning staff or lacking initial training and continuing professional development, it is recommended **to set staff requirements at national level and develop opportunities for initial and further training of teachers in adult learning** (applies to most countries). Actions in this field should take into account the recommendations related to the study on key competences of adult learning professionals. Inspiring examples of frameworks where

explicit attention is given to requirements set for adult learning staff can be found in Malta, namely in the quality assurance structures in basic skills.

5   For countries facing a lack of system / regulation for assuring quality of APL provision and guidance, there are two potential responses, dependent on what countries would like to focus on (in relation to APL, this applies mostly to DK, EE, UK, ES, BG, CY, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, LU, MT, TK; in relation to guidance, this applies mostly to EE, UK, ES, DE, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, MT). Firstly, **set minimum quality requirements for APL providers**. Inspiring examples can be found in the Netherlands, Quality Code APL; and Portugal, quality charter New Opportunity Centres; secondly, **set minimum quality requirements for guidance providers**. An inspiring example can be found in Denmark: quality in guidance.

6   For countries facing a lack of monitoring data in the AL sector (provision of AL and effects), it is recommended **to establish sector-level indicators for monitoring the sector** (applies mostly to DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, IS, BG, CY, DE, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, EL, IE, MT, PT, TK). These indicators should be tailored to the specific objectives of the adult learning system in the country. Although not yet implemented, the Greek "Quality - Always - Everywhere framework" provides an inspiring example to develop indicator sets to monitor the sector.

E) Recommendations on the development of a European level quality framework

Based on the key findings and the conclusions, the following recommendations are provided related to the development of a European level quality framework:

1   This study recommends **broadening the EQAVET framework to the field of adult learning**. This framework could improve the availability of comparable information on adult learning in particular, as countries are asked to take the framework as reference for setting up/ further develop their quality systems.

2   It is recommended that new framework **is flexible and respect principles of adult learning.** A cross-national quality framework should be flexible, open and transparent to all stakeholders in the adult learning sector; it should comprise both a technical and political approach while developing it; and it should take into account the particularities of the adult learning sector (serving different goals, provided by a wide diversity of providers, taking place in different learning environments, and the involvement of wide variety of social and economic actors); and endorse the basic principles related to quality adult learning (that adult learning provision should be tailor-made, learner-centred and attuned to the specific learning needs of the adult learner, and should be offered in a flexible manner in terms of duration, time, and place). Most importantly, however, for working towards a European level framework, it is essential that it is developed on the basis of, or in accordance with national quality frameworks for adult learning and existing practices in place. Finally, the development of a European level framework should respect the principle of subsidiarity.

3   With regard the adjustment of the EQAVET recommendation, it is recommended that the **list of indicators is extended with more adult learning relevant indicators**, i.e.: the Adult education survey, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

(PIAAC), and the Eurostat social inclusion statistics (Living conditions and social protection). In addition, newly compiled indicators could be used at country level such as developed in the Greek π3 framework. Furthermore, with regard system level indicative descriptors, the more procedural system level indicative descriptors can be applied in adult learning as well. Finally, the quality assurance systems studied to a large extent fit the indicative descriptors at providers level; however, there could be more focus on the learning environment of adults, including the quality of didactics and the infrastructure (according to the principles mentioned here before).

4　It is recommended that the implementation strategy takes into account the following steps:

- **Step 1)** In order to expand the scope of the EQAVET recommendation of 2009, a **legal document should preferably be drawn up** as a basis for renewing this recommendation (this would create the foundation to jointly work on renewing the recommendation). This legal document should not immediately propose what the renewed framework will look like, but will set the agenda and a time-plan for arriving at a renewed framework to be accepted by the European Council and the European Parliament.
- **Step 2)** When a legal basis is created, all relevant stakeholders can start working on **shaping the quality framework** on the basis of EQAVET. However, this has to be coordinated by the European Commission. Furthermore, at EU level, but more importantly, at national level, consultations should start to get stakeholders involved in the process of renewing the EQAVET framework.
- **Step 3)** The consultation provides insights with regards to what is socially and politically feasible at country level to include in a quality framework for lifelong learning. This should however, be technically backed up with **pilot studies, cross-country comparisons, sectoral studies** on whether the framework leads to results.
- **Step 4)** In addition, there should also be a **balance between the national and European developments**: there should be a constructive interchange of experiences between the national and the European levels.
- **Step 5)** The legal document on which the whole process should include an **agenda and a time plan for the process**. The final product should also have a clear profile. It should be clear for all stakeholders: What is the aim of the framework? Why is it needed? How should it be used? To whom does it apply? Who is responsible?

5　Concerning the **time plan to unroll the strategy** to develop and implement a renewed EQAVET framework, broadened to lifelong learning, it is expected that when there is a legal document to work on the revision (step 1), implementing the subsequent steps (2-5), will take approximately 2 years. For the further development and implementation at provider level, given experiences with other frameworks, another 5-7 years might be required.

6　The broadening of the EQAVET framework also calls for the need to **change the name** of the framework. This name should be better adapted to the new users and audience, without losing the brand that has been carefully developed over the last years.

1 Policy background: the need for quality adult learning provision

> This chapter sets the scene for the report by describing the need for **improving adult learning systems** in Section 1.1. Section 1.2 describes **EU policies addressing quality in adult learning**, while Section 1.3 further explores **quality initiatives that have been taken place on European level in other educational sectors**. Subsequently, Section 1.4 discusses the **main arguments for investing** in quality of learning. Finally, section 1.5 describes the **aims and goals of the study**.

1.1 The need for improving adult learning systems: the challenges Europe faces

Before addressing the topic of quality in adult learning, this section first shortly address the importance of investing in adult learning systems, in order to contextualise the debate on quality in adult learning. Research confirms the importance of investing in adult learning[1]. Public and private benefits include greater employability, increased productivity and better-quality employment, reduced expenditure in areas such as unemployment benefits, welfare payments and early-retirement pensions, but also increased social returns in terms of improved civic participation, better health, lower incidence of criminality, and greater individual well-being and fulfilment. Research on older adults indicates that those who engage in learning are healthier, with a consequent reduction in health-care costs.[2]

As a result, adult learning could play an important role in addressing some important challenges Europe faces, including[3]:

- Rapidly accelerating skills redundancy, while more jobs are in need of high skills;
- The high number of low-skilled workers in Europe[4];
- The high level of early school leaving, while a high number of adults have reading and writing problems, underlining the need for second chance opportunities;
- Growing challenges of an ageing population and migration;
- High incidence of poverty and social exclusion;

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[1] OECD (2005), Promoting Adult Learning.

[2] See for instance: Alisa Cunningham (no date), The Broader Societal Benefits of Higher Education: http://jcu.edu/academic/planassess/planning/files/Planning%20articles/Broader%20Social%20Benefits.pdf, Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, A Vital Investment From Evidence to Action A Background Paper Prepared for the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Committee of Officials (Seniors), September 2006.

[3] See for instance, Speech of Alan Smith at the Grundtvig Dissemination Conference, Brussels, 26 January 2010: http://ec.europa.eu/education/grundtvig/doc/conf10/smith.pdf.

[4] Commission document (2011) Commission staff working paper: Action Plan on Adult Learning: Achievements and results 2008-2010 SEC(2011) 271 final. Currently, in Europe there are 76 million adults (25-64 year olds) who are low-skilled. Given the current turbulent times after the financial crisis, these low-skilled are more affected than high-skilled and unemployment levels amongst the low-skilled workers has risen significantly in the last years towards more than 16 per cent in 2010: comment: should be more now, please check.

- Widely varying participation rates in lifelong learning across the EU and target groups;
- The need for active engagement of citizens with Europe.

The presented list of challenges shows clearly that action is needed now to tackle the challenges of the future. It is necessary for all – low-skilled, high-skilled, employed and unemployed, young and old – to keep competences up to date, through investing in training and learning across the entire life-span.[1] According to the European Commission, people should have the possibilities and abilities for further education and training, to re-qualify themselves for new jobs[2], learn to deal with new, green and sustainable technologies[3], get acquainted with societal values and increase their general quality of life. Hence, following this line of reasoning, there is a need to built educational systems and structures which are compatible with the idea of learning throughout life.[4]

Although the important role of adult learning for making the knowledge-based economy and society a reality is increasingly recognised, implementation of successful policies lags behind. Most education and training systems are still largely focused on the education and training of young people and limited progress has been made in changing systems to reflect the need for lifelong learning throughout the life course and in particular in adult learning.[5] This entails creating learning environments better suited for adults to learn, courses that are tailor-made and take into account the prior experiences of adults and their specific characteristics. Hence, it involves establishing quality adult learning systems.

One of the main challenges is to increase and widen the participation of adults in lifelong learning. A recent study of the European Commission indicates that countries can deploy a wide range of mobilisation strategies to raise levels of participation (e.g., providing guidance and counselling, flexible learning trajectories, quality management, outreach strategies, accreditation of prior learning, and financial instruments)[6]. Quality of adult learning provision, the topic under investigation in this report, is clearly mentioned as one of the mobilisation strategies to increase and widen participation in adult

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[1] See: Commission of the European Communities (2007), Action Plan on Adult Learning, COM(2007) 558 final: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/adult/com558_en.pdf
[2] See the European Commission New Skills for New Jobs initiative: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=568
[3] Employment Committee (2010), Towards a greener labour market – The employment dimension of tackling environmental challenges Final report endorsed by EMCO on 10 November 2010; http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=370&langId=en&featuresId=130&furtherFeatures=yes; Cedefop (2010), skills for green jobs: European synthesis report: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3057_en.pdf.
[4] European Commission (2000), A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, Brussels, 30.10.2000, SEC(2000) 1832, Field, John, (2006), Lifelong learning and the new educational order.
[5] Field, John, (2006), Lifelong learning and the new educational order.
[6] Broek, S.D., Buiskool, B.J. (2012), Mapping and comparing mobilisation strategies throughout Europe: Towards making lifelong learning a reality, in: JACE 2012, Volume 18, Number 1.

learning, but also to tackle the above-mentioned problems such as reducing drop-out rates and providing relevant and effective learning[1].

1.2   European policies addressing quality of adult learning

The Europe 2020 strategy (EU2020), and more specifically the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), addresses objectives for further developing adult learning systems across Europe[2]. The EU2020 strategy emphasised **smart growth** - developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation – together with **sustainable and inclusive growth** - as one of its three mutually reinforcing priorities that will help the EU to come out stronger from the crisis[3]. The place education and training is given clearly demonstrates that this policy area is considered highly important in the EU, continuing the direction taken in the Lisbon Strategy. ET2020 sets four strategic objectives for education and training policies: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; and enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training[4]. These strategic objectives are translated into five benchmarks of which two are of particular relevance for the field of adult learning, namely the 15 per cent benchmark of adults participating in lifelong learning and the 40 per cent share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary level educational attainment[5]. Quality adult learning provision could help reaching these targets.

At European level, the emphasis on improving the quality of adult learning pre-dates the strategic agendas EU2020 and ET2020. From 2000 onwards, a number of adult learning specific EU-policy documents have been drafted starting with the Memorandum on lifelong learning from 2000[6], the Action Plan on Adult Learning from 2007[7], the 2008 Council conclusions[8], and finally, the renewed European agenda for Adult Learning published in December 2011[9]. All these documents addressed the importance of the quality of the learning experience and outcome, by improving quality of provision, by investing in staff and learning methodologies in formal as well as non- formal learning environments, but

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[1] The state of play of financing adult learning is assessed in another study of the Commission. Open Call for tender EAC/26/2011. DEVELOPING THE ADULT LEARNING SECTOR. Lot 2: Financing the Adult Learning Sector

[2] The Council of the European Union (2009), Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), Official Journal C 119 , 28/05/2009 P. 0002 – 0010: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:01:EN:HTML
[3] EU2020: http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm
[4] ET2020: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1120_en.htm
[5] A third benchmark, reducing early school leaving is indirectly relevant, since adult learning provision could play a role addressing this target group to gain a qualification after interruption of their school career.
[6] European Commission (2000), A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, Brussels, 30.10.2000, SEC(2000) 1832
[7] European Commission (2007), Communication: Action Plan on Adult learning, It is always a good time to learn, Brussels, 27.9.2007 COM(2007) 558 final.
[8] OJ C140/10, Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning (2008/C 140/09).
[9] OJ C 372/01, Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning 20 December 2012

also in guidance and counselling. Quality assurance mechanisms play an important role in realising these goals.

The most recent document, the **Renewed Agenda for Adult Learning 2012-2014,** sets out priorities for action in the period 2012 – 2014, including actions with regard to improving the quality and efficiency of education and training. The title of priority area 2 puts together 'quality' and 'efficiency' ("Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training"). Member States should:

- develop quality assurance systems for providers;
- improve the quality of staff;
- look into the issue of viable and transparent financing of learning;
- develop systems so that learning provision better reflects labour market needs and, finally,
- intensify cooperation amongst different stakeholders.

This policy attention at EU level to quality issues in adult learning should not be seen in isolation and need to be assessed in a broader framework of European initiatives in other educational sectors, subject of the following section.

1.3   Developments of quality initiatives in other educational fields

Since adult learning crosses sectoral boundaries, it is therefore important to take into account of quality initiatives taking place in other sectors, since these are affecting adult learning provision in some particular cases[1].

At European level major steps have been taken in recent years to establish quality standards and guidelines in other sectors, such as within higher education and vocational education and training. In addition, developments have been initiated in relation to quality in school education. Those initiatives are briefly described below[2]:

- The **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET)** was approved by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009[3]. EQAVET provides a Europe-wide system to help Member States and stakeholders to document, develop, monitor, evaluate, and improve the effectiveness of their vocational education and training (VET) provision and quality management practices.[4] The EQAVET framework

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[1] See Field, J. (2006) Lifelong learning and the new educational order, Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books. Research voor Beleid (2011), Impact of ongoing reforms in education and training on the Adult Learning sector (2nd phase) , Zoetermeer: Research voor Beleid; Dellen, T. van, Kamp, M. van der (2008) 'Work domains and competences of the European adult and continuing educator', S. Lattke & E. Nuissl (eds), Qualifying Adult Learning Professionals in Europe, Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann Verlag.

[2] A more elaborated description of these initiatives is provided in Chapter 7.

[3] OJ C 155/1 8.7.2009, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Text with EEA relevance) (2009/C 155/01).

[4] The EQAVET/EQARF builds on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit for VET (ECVET) system and previous European quality assurance systems (such as the Common Quality Assurance Framework – CQAF).

consists of a quality circle consisting of four parts: (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) evaluation and (4) review. Furthermore, it contains ten guidelines for working on quality, such as rules concerning who offers VET provision; roles and responsibilities for different parts of the VET system; information and data required for monitoring; the role of a communication strategy; piloting initiatives and value success; using feedback to improve VET; providing clarity on funding; ensuring quality assurance covers all aspects of VET provision; and, finally, rules ensuring that VET is founded on a strong involvement of external and internal partners and relevant stakeholders.

■ In its **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area**[1], the ENQA, in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB[2] and endorsed by the ministers of education of the Bologna declaration[3], makes a distinction between (1) internal quality assurance within HEIs, (2) the external quality assurance of higher education and (3) the quality assurance of external quality assurance agencies.

■ In 2000, indicators for measuring quality **of school education** were developed[4]. The indicators can be used to identify issues which should be examined in greater detail, and they give Member States the opportunity to learn from one another by comparing the results achieved. Indicators on attainment include issues such as progress in mathematic skills, reading competences, ICT. Indicators on success and transition include, school drop-out rates, completion of upper secondary education. Indicators on monitoring of education include evaluation and steering of school education. Finally, indicators on resources and structures include indicators such as participation in pre-primary education.

In comparing quality assurance in VET, HE and school education, it can be noticed that because of the fact that they only serve as orientation/reference, all three initiatives include a large amount of freedom in determining how quality is measured. For example, it is recommended that existing initiatives should not be replaced, but that the guidelines for both VET and HE should improve existing practices.[5]

In addition to the quality frameworks as developed for HE and VET, an even more important development in recent years is the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and subsequent National Qualifications Frameworks in the

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[1] ENQA (2009), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Helsinki: ENQA.
[2] ENQA: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education; EUA: Association of European institutions of higher education; EURASHE: European Association of Institutions in Higher Education; and ESIB: European Students' Union.
[3] See European Ministers of Education meeting in Bergen in May 2005.
[4] European Commission (2000), European Report of May 2000 on the Quality of School Education: Sixteen Quality Indicators. Report based on the work of the Working Committee on Quality Indicators.
[5] Since the development of the indicators to monitor school quality in 2000, not much has happened, hence, we refer only to the recent developments related to VET and HE.

Member States[1]. Qualifications can be regarded as 'currency' in which people, institutions, employers should have trust. Given this conception of qualification, the institutions offering qualifications, diplomas, or certificates (either through initial education or validation of non-formal and informal learning) should be trustworthy and hence have mechanisms in place for quality assurance. This is true for all institutions where learning takes place, whether provision is provided for young people or adults.

At last, special reference should be made to European initiatives in the **field guidance and counselling** as this field is closely related to adult learning, and more specifically to the priorities identified in the Council resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. This resolution included four priority areas, of which one was devoted to establishing quality assurance mechanism[2]. The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) has worked on this topic since then[3].

1.4 The quest to improve the quality of education and training

Improving the quality of education and training is a common objective of governments, providers, and practitioners in many countries. Literature provides a number of reasons for assuring and improving quality of education and training[4]:

- Quality provision creates **trust in the educational system**, and more specifically trust in qualifications, diplomas, and certificates provided by learning institutes. This also counts for non formal and informal learning, stimulated by the increasing role of accreditation of prior learning in Member State policies.

- The **consumer perspective and learner satisfaction** becomes an increasingly important factor in the field of education and training, since learners are highly conscious about their rights and getting value for money and are demanding a learning experience of sufficient quality.[5]

- Quality provision is often taken up in educational acts as a **legal right for citizens** and should therefore be stimulated as such.

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[1] European Parliament and the European Council (2008), OJ C111/1 6.5.2008, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (Text with EEA relevance) (2008/C 111/01))

[2] Council of the European Union (2008). Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 4-7. Available from Internet: http://eurlex. europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:319:0004:0007:EN:PDF [cited 15.12.2010].

[3] https://ktl.jyu.fi/ktl/elgpn

[4] Commonwealth of learning (2007), Quality Assurance in higher education, an introduction. Vancouver. Canada

[5] Further developed in: Marijk C. Van Der Wende & Don F. Westerheijden (2010), International Aspects of Quality Assurance with a Special Focus on European Higher Education. In: Quality in Higher Education. Research voor Beleid and PLATO (2005), Developing local learning centres and learning partnerships as part of Member States' targets for reaching the Lisbon goals in the field of education and training: A study of the current situation, Leiden.

- The pursuit of **accountability for funding parties**. Every institute is accountable to its stakeholders in terms of funds (public or private) used on it.

- Quality of the provision is increasingly seen as **marketing tool for learning providers** to show their credibility, prestige and status, and visibility of the provider to attract learners.

- **Quest for excellence**, while contributing to the development of learners, economy and society at large, learning providers should also demonstrate the drive to develop themselves continually, just like staff working for learning organisation.

- Research evidence shows that those schools that are well managed, or, in other words, have strong leadership, show **better results in comparative studies** than those who do not. In particular, it is concluded that the role of teachers is the deciding factor for ensuring quality learning and that setting requirement / standards has impact[1].

Reading policy documents, as produced by EU institutions and literature, there is a general consensus that investing in quality education is paying off. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence underlying this argument needs further exploration, especially in the context of adult learning, just as the cost and benefit of quality assurance systems[2].

1.5 Aims and objectives of the study

Given this background and the work done at European level, the results of the study should support the European Commission by contributing to a knowledge base, which will inform a number of future activities to be undertaken in the framework of European Cooperation on Adult Learning Policy[3].

The specific objective of this study is to:

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[1] Further developed in: OECD (2008). Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) TALIS, and OECD (2012), Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators. Schuller, Tom, David Watson (2009), Learning through Life, Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning, Summary. the Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning identified four sub-fields of quality in adult learning, namely, validation of learning; accreditation and evaluation of provision; professional development of teachers and trainers; and innovative pedagogy. NRDC (2010), Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector

[2] To date there are relatively few studies addressing the costs and benefits of quality assurance measures, especially not in the field of adult learning. It has been argued that testing the effects of quality assurance instruments, is empirically difficult. One of the main problems, it has been said, is finding good proxies for quality, in order to examine the effects on service quality. There is a vast economic literature on the need for regulating a sector and setting standards, such as accreditation, licensing (and the role of qualifications), conduct regulation, rules on ownership and form of business, and recommended or fixed prices. See: Svorny, S. (2000), 'Licensing, Market Entry Regulation', in Bouckaert, B. and G. De Geest (eds), *Encyclopedia of Law and Economics, Volume III: The Regulation of Contracts*, Cheltenham, UK and Northamption, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, pp. 296-328. Bruno S. Frey (2006). Evaluitis - Eine Neue Krankheit CREMA; Behavioural Science; Economics. June 2006

[3] Terms of Reference: Open Call for tender EAC/26/2011. DEVELOPING THE ADULT LEARNING SECTOR. Lot 1: Quality in the Adult Learning Sector

"Map and to analyse the scope, content and implementation of quality approaches, standards and other relevant recent developments such as the development and implementation of accreditation systems and institutions, in the adult learning sector".

According to the Terms of Reference, the study should finally lead towards a:

1. Set of conclusions and recommendations based on the methodological best practice identified;

2. Proposal for a quality reference framework for formal and non-formal adult learning.

The study should mainly focus on mapping interesting practices throughout Europe and, secondly, should also reflect on quality assurance systems implemented in other education sectors (ESG and EQAVET/EQARF). This study provides **'ingredients'** for the development of a framework for Quality in Adult Learning. Recommendations on how to proceed in developing the framework (in terms of time lines, consultations, additional studies etc.) should be provided within the study.

2 The study: research topics, concepts, and methodology used

This chapter discusses the **research topics** in Section 2.1. Subsequently, Section 2.2 discusses some **concepts** underlying this study such as **definitions** of adult learning, understanding of the concept of quality, what makes adult learning distinctive, quality instruments in place, and conditions for developing and assuring quality adult learning. These concepts will feed a **further demarcation** of the study and geographical coverage in Section 2.3. In Section 2.4 the **methodology** is presented, while Section 2.5 provides further details on the **structure** of the report.

2.1 Research topics

The following table provides an overview of the envisaged results of the study as stated in the terms of reference[1].

Table 1: Research topics

a) Mapping and analysis of recent developments in European countries with regard to quality approaches in the field of Adult Learning
■ A mapping of national / regional policies, frameworks / legislation, etc. with regard to quality approaches, standards and other relevant developments in the field of Adult Learning;   ■ An examination of the issues and challenges which are specific to the adult learning sector in relation to assuring quality of its providers and provision;   ■ An analysis of differences and common characteristics in the non-vocational adult learning sector compared with the development of quality assurance systems in VET and Higher Education;   ■ An analysis of the processes and mechanisms for quality assurance, accompanied by an analysis of the bodies responsible for supervising, managing, implementing and supporting these processes and mechanisms at national / regional level (including systems and bodies responsible for the accreditation of providers) in order to support quality measures at provider level;   ■ A mapping and documentation of what constitutes quality criteria / indicators, quality management approaches and effective techniques for monitoring / evaluation of quality in relation to adult learning. The analysis should be not only descriptive but also identify the specific characteristics, strengths, weaknesses and results;   ■ A detailed description, drawn from a range of countries, of at least 15 instances of good practices and approaches, some at national / regional level (legislation,

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[1] Terms of Reference: Open Call for tender EAC/26/2011. Developing the adult learning sector. Lot 1: Quality in the Adult Learning Sector

awards etc.) and others at provider level, based on a set of quality criteria including aspects such as content, price and feed-back from adult learners. These descriptions can take the form of case studies, but also describe generally applied teaching and learning methods;

- A description and analysis of successful seals of excellence, quality labels, prizes and awards at national and regional level;

An examination of the pros and cons of extending such quality assurance mechanisms more widely across the adult learning sector in Europe.

b) Conclusions and recommendations on quality assurance in the field of adult learning

- A set of conclusions and recommendations based on the methodological best practice identified in the analyses under point (a) above;
- A detailed draft for a quality reference framework for formal and non-formal adult learning, including:
  - guiding principles, descriptors and indicators;
  - commonalities and differences between quality assurance methods suitable for adult learning and those relating to other education sectors (schools, higher education, VET);
  - an indication of how the quality assurance model proposed for adult learning could find its place within an overarching framework for quality assurance in education and training systems as a whole; making particular reference to EQAVET framework developed for vocational education and training;
  - a strategy for involvement and consultation of the main stakeholders involved (Member States, providers, social partners, users, relevant NGOs and experts, etc.).

2.2   Introducing some key concepts guiding this study

Before going into the research topics in the following chapters, it is important to introduce some key concepts that formed the point of departure for the drafting of this report. This includes; a definition of adult learning; inventory of concepts associated to quality; a section on key characteristics of adult learning; definition of quality instruments; the conditions for developing quality system in adult learning.

2.2.1   Definitions of adult learning

Before discussing quality systems, one should know to what sector these systems apply. Therefore a clear definition of adult learning is needed. First of all, **definitions of adult learning** vary. A commonly used definition in European documents is that adult learning includes all forms of learning undertaken by adults after having left initial education and

training, however far this process may have gone (e.g. including tertiary education)[1]. The study on European Terminology in Adult Learning emphasised that this also includes university-level or higher education undertaken after a break (other than for deferred entry) since leaving initial education and training.[2] This definition is still very broad and further demarcation is needed, given the variety of practices that fall under this definition, meeting an ever larger variety of the learning needs of different groups in society, provided in a wide range of institutions with different goals[3]. Not only the goals of the educational programme differ, but also the forms of learning show diversity in the sector, ranging from formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning[4]. More important than providing a fixed and strict definition of adult learning, is knowing in what kind of different domains adult learning takes place. In order to further demarcate the adult learning sector, several attempts have been made to cluster the adult learning sector in different domains[5]. One of the latest attempts includes a categorisation entailing four broad categories, clustered around the aim and target groups of adult learning.

- Adult learning as **provider of basic skills** for obtaining necessary skills and competences to participate in society (social inclusion);

- Adult learning as a driver for obtaining the necessary **skills and competences for employability**;

- Adult learning as a condition for **innovation and competitiveness in a knowledge economy**, for developing competences serving a high level value in the value chain;

- Adult learning for the learning society for obtaining skills and competences in **areas of personal interest,** but also for citizenship and civil society.

Each category can be described in terms of its main objectives, structures, target groups, stakeholders, finance-structures, governance, policies and arguments in its favour, including quality assurance systems in place[6]. This study takes the definition of the European Commission, as described above, as starting point, to be maximum inclusive identifying interesting practices across the whole spectrum of adult learning. However, it focuses on the formal and non formal part of adult learning in the different sub domains of adult learning as sketched above.

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[1] European Commission (2006), Communication from the Commission on adult learning: it is never too late to learn, COM (2006).
[2] NRDC (2010), Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector.
[3] Buiskool, Bert-Jan, Jaap van Lakerveld, Frowine de Oudendammer, Erik Kats. Hemmo Smit, Simon Broek (2008), Adult Learning Professions in Europe (Research voor Beleid/PLATO).
[4] Cedefop (2008),Terminology of European education and training policy.
[5] Vanwing, T. (2006): Niet formeel, wel professioneel. Brussel. Dellen, Van & Van Der Kamp (2008) Work domains and competences of the European adult and continuing educator, in: S. Lattke & E. Nuissl (Ed) Qualifying Adult Learning Professionals in Europe (Bielefeld, W Bertelsmann).
[6] Broek, S.D., Buiskool, B.J. (2012), Mapping and comparing mobilisation strategies throughout Europe: Towards making lifelong learning a reality, in: JACE 2012, Volume 18, Number 1.

2.2.2   Understanding the concept quality

Literature indentifies two approaches to quality thinking[1].

■ The **economic approach** that is largely concerned with efficiency and effectiveness, and the achievement of learning outcomes at reasonable costs. The economist view of education uses quantitative outputs as the measure of quality, for example enrolment ratios and retention ratios, rates of return on investment in education in terms of earnings and cognitive achievement as measured in national or international tests, like PIAAC and PISA[2].

■ The **humanist/progressive approach** that is characterised by a broader concern for the development of the learner, human development and/or social change. This approach tends to place more emphasis on the learning process. Hence, characteristics such as learner-centred pedagogies, democratic schools and inclusion are included in notions of quality education.

Both perspectives are taking into account in this study, since these are strongly interlinked, answering not only the question of whether education and training works, identifying and estimating effects, but also looking at the black box of the learning process[3]. In addition to these two approaches literature (such as Confintea IV[4]) makes recurring reference to various components of educational quality that form a useful analytical framework for this study. These components are:

> ■ **Equity** - equitable access to and participation in education and training
>
> ■ **Relevance** - provision must represent an effective route to and support, persistence in adult learning to the achievement of individual and societal goals
>
> ■ **Effectiveness** - means end relationships in terms of educational outcomes for learners. Completion rates and achievement levels are hard indicators of effectiveness
>
> ■ **Efficiency** - level and distribution of resources and the economical investment of resources to achieve specified aim under given condition: ratio of cost to benefits.
>
> ■ **Sustainability** - results of learning should be sustainable in the long term and should not harm the environment or society at large.

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[1] Based on a Review of the 'international' literature on the concept of quality in education in 2006 by Angeline Barrett , Rita Chawla-Duggan, John Lowe, Jutta Nikel, Eugenia Ukpo

[2] Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, and: Programme for International Student Assessment

[3] Only focusing on the economic approach falls short because it only looks at two aspects: the programme itself and different outcomes. But as Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley (1997) have rightly pointed out, this approach offers an incomplete picture.

[4] Inspired by the Four key principles of quality in Adult Learning that were developed by UNESCO in the framework of the CONFINTEA VI. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2009), Global Report on Adult Learning. Hamburg: UIL.

These components are often in conflict with each other so that actions to improve one may have negative effects on another. In particular, attempts to increase the equity of a system may be in conflict with concerns over efficiency. Some analyses of quality treat equality as a distinct issue and suggest that there are inherent contradictions in attempting to address both quality and equality[1].

To sum up, quality adult learning means that it is accessible, relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable. Structures and processes should be in place in order to assure that these criteria are met.

2.2.3 Key characteristics of adult learning

After having a notion of the concept quality, one should apply this concept on adult learning. A legitimate question is what makes adult learning different to other educational sectors. There is a vast corpus of (academic) literature on the subject. This literature focuses mostly on the characteristics of the adult learner, the way the provision is provided, by whom, and the competences of the adult learning professionals involved. The main differences are shortly summarised below:

- Regarding the characteristics of the learner, adults have a more **diverse background** in terms of competences, expectations, emotional development, experience, prejudices, and needs. In general, as group, adult learners are more heterogeneous than pupils and students in initial education.

- Adults more often learn in **non-formal and informal learning environments**[2]. For instance, in the case of learning on the work floor, learning can be considered as work-based learning (learning by doing).

- Due to these different learning environments, adult learning is also provided by **different type of providers** ranging from enterprises, community centres, libraries, NGO's, study circles, to traditional schools and learning institutes.

- With regard to the type of learning taking place, in contrast to young learners, the emphasis for adult learners is on **'engaged' learning**, instead of traditional learning[3].

- With regard to the competences of **adult learning staff (including teachers, managers, supporting staff and more)** involved, there is a large degree of overlap between initial education and adult learning, however, there are also differences, related to

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[1] Welch, Anthony R (Ed) Third World Education: Quality and Equality. 2000, New York, Garland. Broek, S.D., Buiskool, B.J. (2013), Quality in Adult Learning: EU policies and shifting paradigms? in: George K. Zarifis & Maria Gravani (2013), Challenging the 'European Area of Lifelong Learning' A Critical Response, Springer, forthcoming.

[2] Field, J. (2006). Lifelong Learning and the New Educational Order, Trentham Press, 2000, pp. 181. Second fully revised edition 2006, 204 pp. Japanese edition 2004.

[3] Dwyer, D. (1994). Apple classrooms of tomorrow: What we've learned. Educational Leadership, 51 (7), 4-10: http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/SER/Diversity/sec-i4.html

the characteristics of the learners (dealing with heterogeneity) and the way adult learning is provided in terms of didactics and methods, mostly affecting adult educators. Nevertheless, due to the specificness of the institutional context adult learning takes place (less institutionalised and often dependent on project funding) requires specific competences for persons managing the learning provider[1].

- ■ The provision should be offered in a **flexible manner** in terms of duration, time, and place, so learners could combine their learning activities with their tight working schedule and family life[2].

Summarising, based on literature, quality adult learning is described as being motivational for the learners, the learning environment is rich and reflective, and the provision is tailor-made, learner-centred and attuned to the specific learning needs of the adult learners[3]. Furthermore, provision respects the background of the adult learner and the knowledge and experience of the adult learner are used as resource in the learning process. In addition, the provision is offered in a flexible manner in terms of duration, time, and place. Finally, the learning is both relevant for the adult learner and – potentially – other stakeholders (e.g. employers, societal organisations).[4] These elements, found in literature, could function as a starting point for developing key quality principles and a future definition of quality in adult learning.

2.2.4 Quality assurance systems

In literature and policy documents different terms are used for (public) interventions assuring quality of learning provision, such as quality frameworks, quality policies, quality systems, quality approaches, quality instruments, quality methodologies and many more. Often different names are given for the same thing.

Starting point for this study is a broad definition of quality assurance, namely a recognisable repertoire of policies, procedures, rules, criteria, tools, verification instruments,

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[1] An overview of paradigm changes in adult learning teaching methods is also given in the OECD report Beyond Rhetoric: Adult Learning Policies and Practices (2003), (EAEA, 2006; European Commission, 2005). Billington, Dorothy D. (2000), Seven characteristics of highly effective adult learning programmes, in: New Horizons for Learning, Seattle. Birkenholz, Robert J. (1999), Effective Adult Learning. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc. Research voor Beleid (2010), Key Competences for Adult Learning Professionals, Zoetermeer: Research voor Beleid.
[2] Broek, S.D., Buiskool, B.J. (2012), Mapping and comparing mobilisation strategies throughout Europe: Towards making lifelong learning a reality, in: JACE 2012, Volume 18, Number 1
[3] Buiskool et al (2005). Local learning centres and learning partnerships in Europe. Leiden
[4] Literature list on this issue: Buiskool, B., Broek, S. D., van Lakerveld, J. (2009), Educators at Work in two Sectors of Adult and Vocational Education: an overview of two European Research projects, in: European Journal of Education, vol. 44, No. 2, 2009. Buiskool, B.J., Broek S.D. (2011), Identifying a common set of key competences for Adult Learning staff: an inventory of European practices, in Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, Volume 17, Number 1, 2011, 40-62. Research voor Beleid and PLATO (2005), Developing local learning centres and learning partnerships as part of Member States' targets for reaching the Lisbon goals in the field of education and training: A study of the current situation, Leiden: Research voor Beleid/PLATO. Research voor Beleid/PLATO, (2008), Adult Learning professionals is Europe (ALPINE), Leiden: Research voor Beleid/PLATO. Research voor Beleid (2010), Key Competences for Adult Learning Professionals, Zoetermeer: Research voor Beleid.

and mechanisms that together have the purpose of ensuring and enhancing the quality of any learning institute[1]. This repertoire include initiatives to be deployed on system (such as accreditation) as well as on providers (such as self evaluation) level. Applying this definition has pros and cons. The advantage of using such a broad definition is the inclusion of a wide variety of types of quality initiatives developed across Europe that could form as inspiration for future policy making after studying these initiatives in-depth. The disadvantage is that by including a diversity of practices, there is no clear unit of analysis, comparing similar quality practices like quality prizes or accreditation systems in different context. Since this study should mainly focus on mapping interesting practices throughout Europe, we decided to keep our approach open, not to exclude practices beforehand.

Nevertheless, to structure this broad working definition, we make a further distinction between three levels: frameworks, systems, and instruments in place, each level becoming more concrete and closer to the implementation of quality procedures at providers level.

> - **Quality framework** is defined as an overarching reference for recommended quality concepts, models, criteria and indicators that can be included in the quality systems (this framework could be embedded in legislation, but also in policy documents or agreements between stakeholders).
>
> - **Quality systems** are subsequently defined as concrete systems that are implemented on national, regional or sectoral level, such as accreditation systems or quality labels for which individual providers need to apply for or get awarded. Also here, quality criteria and indicators are in place, as well as procedures. In addition, providers have their own quality assurance systems in place (falling under an accreditation system, quality label or on own initiative) including processes and procedures on organisational level to assure quality. Each system has its own structures, processes and outcome (on system as well as providers level).
>
> - Subsequently, we have **quality instruments** that are implemented on system as well as on providers level, including self-evaluation and external evaluation. Self-evaluation, or self-assessment, includes processes or methodologies that are carried out on providers' level to evaluate its performance or position in relation to their services and wider environment. Self-evaluation also applies to professionals themselves. External evaluations are carried out by external experts (inspectors, evaluators, or peers) and often take place in the context of accreditation or inspection.

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[1] Faurschou, K. (2002). Quality management approaches for vocational education and training. Cedefop (ed.): European Forum on Quality in VET.

This study focuses on quality systems, such as accreditation systems and quality labels, in place on national / regional / sectoral level and their criteria, indicators and procedures, and instruments in place. Nevertheless, in case where relevant, we discuss the frameworks in place in which these systems are developed and implemented and how these affect quality systems on providers' level.

2.3 Demarcation of the study (thematic and geographic scope)

Backed up by the concepts discussed in the previous section, we are able to better demarcate the study, in terms of:

- **Thematic scope**: as stated in the previous section, this study departs from a broad definition of adult learning, including all forms of learning in which adults takes place, as well as for quality systems, in order to gather a maximum variety of initiatives across Europe. This, however, makes it difficult to compare countries on all specific quality systems in place for each sub domain of adult learning, actually coming up with "thousands" of systems in place, also taking into account all the initiatives initiated and implemented at regional or local level, going beyond the scope of this study. Therefore we decided to collect different manifestations of quality systems in adult learning over Europe that shows their representativeness in diversity of practices. Nevertheless, even then, some further demarcations are needed. Although trying to include a maximum of practices, this study focuses to a greater extent on the quality systems in place in the non-formal part of adult learning, and that is publicly funded. Nevertheless where interesting practices appear in formal learning, that make specific reference to adult learning, or in the privately financed part of adult learning, these are taking into account in the analysis, knowing that private practices are less documented and more widely spread across countries. This study will not elaborately assess requirements and continuing professional development policies in place for adult learning staff, since this has already extensively done in the context of two previous studies on adult learning staff[1]. The result of these studies will, however, be fully integrated in the outcome of this study. Nevertheless, where staff issues are included in the quality systems studied, these are taken into account. Also for quality of guidance and counselling provision we base on the work already done by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) and Cedefop producing reports on this matter contributing to the specific priority on quality assurance mechanisms as

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[1] Buiskool, Bert-Jan, Jaap van Lakerveld, Frowine de Oudendammer, Erik Kats. Hemmo Smit, Simon Broek (2008), Adult Learning Professions in Europe (Research voor Beleid). Buiskool, B.J. and S.D. Broek (Research voor Beleid) (2010), Key competences of adult learning professionals, Zoetermeer, 2010

identified in the Council resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies[1]

■ **Geographical scope**: According to the Terms of Reference, this study should cover a representative range of the 27 European Union Member States, the EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) and the accession candidate countries (Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro). Knowing that the adult learning sector covers almost all sub-domains of the education system and the study should represent the wide diversity of systems in Europe, we collected basic information on quality frameworks and systems in place in 32 countries[2], with the goal of providing an overview on diversity of systems, while zooming in on 15 countries, having interesting quality systems in place, forming the backbone of this study (including AT, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EL, FR, IT, IE, MT, NL, NO, SE, SI, and the UK (Wales)). Having more in-depth information on the context, background, implementation, and results of a selected number of practices over Europe allows us to draw lessons and to provide relevant input for any future quality reference framework. The methodology is further described in the next section.

2.4 Methodology

The study started in January 2012 and was finalised in April 2013. The work was carried out by Panteia in collaboration with experts in the field of adult learning. In order to answer the above-mentioned research questions, the following research methods were implemented:

■ **Desk research** on EU documents, EU projects, and academic literature addressing quality approaches in adult learning.

■ Drawing up **32 country fact sheets** based on desk research and interviews on national level. Questions were answered on policy and legal frameworks in place for assuring and developing quality in adult learning, main challenges for adult learning system, differences in quality approaches between HE, VET and non-vocational adult learning, quality approaches (policies, procedures, rules, criteria, tools and verification instruments and mechanisms used), actors involved and an inventory of possible interesting practices for more in-depth study.

■ Drawing up **15 case studies** – forming the backbone of this study - on interesting quality systems (based on a long list of 43 cases identified in the country fact sheets).

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[1] Council of the European Union (2008b). Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into life-long learning strategies. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 4-7. Available from Internet: http://eurlex. europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:319:0004:0007:EN:PDF [cited 15.12.2010].
[2] EU27 + NO, IS, TK, CH, HR

The case studies were selected by the research team based on several criteria like policy relevance, diversity of practices, geographical spread, availability of information and evaluations, proven outcomes. In addition, the Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning was consulted in the final selection of the 15 cases on the basis of its work on accreditation of providers, staff quality, and indicators.

■ Two **meetings** of the research team to discuss research instruments and preliminary outcomes. During these meetings we discussed the research approach, selection of case studies, preliminary outcomes, and some first answers to the research questions feeding into the final report.

■ **Testing seminar** with external stakeholders for discussing and validating the outcomes of the study. The preliminary results of the research were discussed during a one-day seminar in Brussels with approximately 30 participants, including members of the Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning, adult learning experts, representatives of the European Commission, and the members of the core research team.

■ Meetings with **the Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning**[1] to discuss the progress of the study and receive feedback on the research results (intermediary outcomes, but also the selection of interesting practices).

All these research steps are brought together in the final analysis and have resulted in the main body of this report. A more elaborated overview of the methodology can be found in Annex 3.

2.5   Structure of the report

In the following chapters of the report, we follow the structure of the research questions as set out in Section 2.1.

■ **Chapter 3** provides an overview of **quality systems** in the different European countries.

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[1] Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: This group takes its mandate from the recurring priority given to improving quality and efficiency of education in the renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning adopted by the Education Council in November 2011 which builds on past work undertaken by the European Commission, in particular on the Communication on Adult Learning in October 2006, and the subsequent Action Plan on Adult Learning 2008-2010 that was endorsed by national education ministers in May 2008. The group is tasked with developing a quality framework which will inform and guide both Member States and individual providers on the provision of high quality adult learning. The Group aims to explore synergies and strengthen the policy links/interface between EU policy development on quality in VET, higher education and adult learning (see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/exchange/quality_en.pdf). A member of the research team has the role of observer in the group. The group acted as sounding board during the study.

- **Chapter 4** addresses concrete examples of **processes and mechanisms** for quality assurance systems, accompanied by an analysis of the **bodies responsible** for supervising, managing, implementing and supporting these processes.

- **Chapter 5** will go in depth into **quality criteria, descriptors and indicators** deployed in quality systems.

- **Chapter 6** presents **issues and challenges** that are specific to adult learning in relation to quality assurance, and links these to a range **of good practices** as identified during the study, including accreditation systems, seals, quality labels and prizes and examines the **pros and cons of extending such measures** more widely across Europe.

- **Chapter 7** describes the main **difference and common characteristics** of quality assurance systems in non-formal adult learning compared to VET, general education and HE.

- **Chapter 8**, based on chapters 3-7, provides a set of **conclusions** including input for a possible **quality reference framework** for adult learning.

This report include four Annexes, consisting of a long list of 43 cases, overview tables of quality policies in different European countries, further details of the methodology, and a list of sources.

A separate volume to this report includes detailed descriptions of 15 case studies and country factsheets as drawn in the context of this study.

3 Mapping of policies and quality system

This chapter provides an overview of national / regional policies, frameworks / legislation with regard to quality approaches, standards and other relevant developments in the field of adult learning.

To begin with, Section 3.1 discusses and assesses how countries perform on the two benchmarks as identified in ET2020 and shortly discusses the **policies, structure and provision in place**. Subsequently, Section 3.2, provides an **overview of quality systems** in place in the different sub domains of adult learning. Finally, Section 3.4 will look at some **recent developments** further developing quality policies.

This chapter will not discuss individual quality systems (their structures, processes, indicators) in any depth as they will be addressed in the remaining chapters of the report (see chapter 4, 5 and 6).

3.1 Developments in adult learning in the different countries

Before focusing on the overview of concrete quality systems in the field of adult learning, this section will set the scene by describing the state of play in the different European countries in relation to the ET2020 benchmarks, the barriers countries face in achieving these targets, and how adult learning is governed in the different countries. The goal of this section is not to provide a detailed overview, but just to describe the diversity of challenges countries face reaching these targets and providing examples of diversity of systems and provision in place.

3.1.1 ET2020 benchmarks: participation and attainment.

Chapter 1 already discussed the main European challenges and the ET2020 benchmarks relevant for adult learning. One of the key questions to be answered, while assessing the different strategies and policies applied at national level, is whether the policies can be considered effective and whether they contribute to the achievement of these national or EU policy targets. More specifically, the question relates to how national policies, and more specific the quality systems in place, contribute to participation in adult learning (population aged 25-64 participating in formal or non-formal learning) and increasing the share of 30-34 years old with tertiary educational attainment[1]. Based on these benchmarks four groups of countries can be identified[2]:

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[1] ET 2020: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1120_en.htm. Another indicator which is left out of the analysis is the benchmark on early leavers from education and training.
[2] Eurostat 2012 figures on Tertiary educational attainment by sex, age group 30-34 combined with Eurostat 2011 figures on participation in education and training by sex and age groups - % (source: labour force survey).

	Above EU average participation	Below EU average participation
Above EU average score on tertiary educational attainment level	1) Countries that have an above EU average participation rate as well as an above EU average score on tertiary educational attainment level for 30-34 years old (such as **CH, DK, EE, ES, FI, IS, LU, NL, NO, SE, SI, and the UK**). This group contains a lot of the Nordic countries.	2) Countries that have an above EU average participation rate but a below EU average score on tertiary educational attainment level for 30-34 years old (such as **AT, CZ, PT**).
Below EU average score on tertiary educational attainment level	3) Countries that have a below EU average participation rate but an above EU average score on tertiary educational attainment level for 30-34 years old (such a **BE, CY, FR, IE, LV, LI, and PL**). This group includes a lot of the New Member States.	4) Countries that have a below EU average participation rate as well as a below EU average score on tertiary educational attainment level of 30-34 years old (**BG, DE, EL, FYROM, HR, HU, IT, MT, RO, SK, TK**). The countries in this group can be mainly found in the southern part of Europe.

What can be concluded from the statistical data on participation of adults in education and training is that ET2020 benchmarks are not reached yet and that there are big disparities between the countries, both with regard to participation in adult learning and educational attainment. Nevertheless, 13 countries already reached the benchmark 15 per cent participation in adult learning, where some countries are even overperforming with more than 20 per cent participation (CH, DK, FI, IS, NL, NO, SI, and SE). Information not captured in these statistics, however, are imbalances in participation rates amongst specific target groups. Statistics on participation, across Europe report that several target groups are underperforming on the above-mentioned targets, namely the low qualified, older age groups, and migrants, indicating that the policy focus should not only be on increasing, but also on widening participation.

Although these figures provide rich comparative information on countries' performance, as proxies for assessing the effectiveness of adult learning systems, the figures do not provide explanations for why the figures are as they are. Therefore we need a deeper insight in the country backgrounds against which policies and measures are implemented to increase participation and alleviate the barriers adult learners face. A recent study of the European Commission concludes that countries with low participation figures generally experience severe barriers to increasing the participation of adults in

learning (e.g. BG, HR, CY, CZ, EL, HU, IT, LV, LT, MT, PL, RO, SK, ES and TK)[1]. These coun-tries are characterised by the fact that extensive programmes need to be developed to overcome these barriers. Severe barriers can be of different nature and include barriers such as the lack of effective structures for adult learning, lack of finances to boost par-ticipation, a large share of illiterate people, or the lack of a learning culture. Another group of countries face medium barriers (like AT, BE, EE, FR, DE, IS, IE, LT, PT, SI, NL and UK) that can be overcome by targeted programmes. Often, there is a well developed in-frastructure for adult learning in these countries, but for certain parts of the sector, there is a lack of policy attention. Medium barriers in these countries range from certain target groups that are at risk of exclusion to the challenge of combining learning, work and family-duties. A last group comprises countries that face only minor barriers to in-creasing participation, mainly in the Nordic countries (such as DK, FI, NO, LU and SE). Of course, improvements can be made, but in general adults can access education fairly easily. Barriers mentioned include, for instance, costs for individuals.

3.1.2 Governance structures

The barriers indicated above should be tackled with appropriate structures, policies, and finances in the field of adult learning, including quality systems. The evidence of these contributions to the achievement of EU policy targets remains relatively scarce and im-pedes country to country policy learning[2]. Moreover, it is not always easy to establish a clear link, since many strategies display a large variety of instruments that are not di-rectly aimed at increasing participation, such as initiatives in the field of quality im-provement, resulting in problems defining comparable results and impact indicators.

The governance structure of adult education depends on many factors, including histori-cal developments and the structure of the educational landscape in a country. Some countries have a more **centralised** governance structure regarding education, such as France, while others, such as Sweden and Czech Republic can be characterised as having a more **decentralised** governance structure. Many other countries, such as the UK, pre-sent **mixed-models** in governance structures, combining both centralised and decentral-ised tendencies.[3] In countries that have a centralised structure often the Ministry of Education plays a co-ordinating role and has under its responsibility determined the strategy (see for instance CZ, DK and FI). In most countries, however, two Ministries are

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[1] Broek, S.D. and Buiskool, B.J. B. Hake (2011). Assessment of the impact of ongoing reforms in education and training on adult learning sector. A study assigned by the European Commission.

[2] PPMI (2010), A study on the assessment of the impact of ongoing reforms on education and training on the adult learning sector. Often the comparative data on policy and governance in education and training is scarce and therefore opportunities for EU-level comparative analysis are limited. Besides, the situation varies greatly from country to country, thus timing and the nature of reforms vary to a great extent. Moreover, the impacts of these reforms are often under researched and if this is the employ a variety of methodological ap-proaches and the quality of their delivery differs. Besides, it is hardly possible to identify the impact, and causality, of these reforms / practices on national statistics on adult leaning participation, since the initiative always capture a small part of all activities within the adult learning sector.

[3] Daun, Holger (2004), Privatisation, decentralisation and governance in education in Czech Republic, France, Germany and Sweden, in: International Review of Education, Vol. 50, No. 3/4 (July 2004), pp.325-346.

the most important for developing adult learning policies: Ministries of Education and Ministries of Employment and Social Affairs (for instance in the NL, MT, TK and DK).[1]

In some countries, policy-making and the implementation of lifelong learning strategies is supported by a **co-ordinating body** (for instance in FI, ES, NL, although in the Netherlands this body was recently abolished). While in many countries the main responsibility for developing policies for adult learning lies at national level, responsibilities have often been decentralised to regional and local governmental levels (as is the case in AT, DK, EE, FR, IT, NL, NO and SE).

Generally, the way countries govern their quality systems is very much attuned and in line with their governance structure. Sectoral fragmentation could hamper developing overarching quality systems for adult learning, an issue that will be further explored in the following chapter.

3.1.3 Provision of adult learning

Besides different governance models, countries differ **by providers of** adult learning. Having some sight on by who adult learning is provided is needed for determining the context in which quality systems are implemented.

There are many types of providers[2]. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES)[3], employers are the leading providers of non-formal education and training (38 per cent), while non-formal education and training institutions are ranked second (17 per cent).[4] Of course country differences are visible. For instance, in relation to *formal providers*, there are big differences between the Member States, as is the case in the Netherlands, where almost 40 per cent of the respondents indicated that their non-formal adult education and training was provided through formal institutions[5], while in France, only 2 per cent of the respondents indicated the same. With regard to the provision of non-

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[1] Other Ministries involved can include Ministries of Science and Research (for instance in AT and DK), and Ministries of Agriculture (also in AT). Other ministries are mentioned as well, for instance in Belgium (Flanders), where the Ministry of Culture is responsible for all socio-cultural adult education.

[2] The Adult Education Survey, made use of the following classification of providers of non-formal adult education and training activities: employer, non-formal education and training institutions, formal education institution, commercial institution where education and training is not the main activity (e.g. equipment suppliers), employers' organisations, chambers of commerce, trade unions, non-profit associations (e.g. cultural society, political party), individuals (e.g. students giving private lessons), non commercial institution where education & training (ET) is not the main activity (e.g. libraries, museums, etc.).

[3] The Adult Education Survey (AES) is part of the EU Statistics on lifelong learning. The surveys have been carried out by 29 countries in the EU, EFTA and candidate countries between 2005 and 2008. The AES is a pilot exercise, which for the first time proposed a common EU framework including a standard questionnaire, tools and quality reporting. The reference year is set at 2007. The survey covers participation in education and lifelong learning activities (formal, non-formal and informal learning). All definitions apply to all persons aged 25-64, living in private households. See: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/adult_education_survey

[4] See for an elaborated discussion on local learning centres the study from the European Commission: Research voor Beleid and PLATO (2005), Developing local learning centres and learning partnerships as part of Member States' targets for reaching the Lisbon goals in the field of education and training.

[5] These is a discrepancy between national data and the Adult Education Survey since on national level it is estimated that 80% of adult learning is provided by private companies, while 40% of the respondents of the AES indicate that non-formal adult learning is provided through formal institutions.

formal adult learning by *non-formal institutions*, mainly the new Member States report higher percentages. For example, 34 per cent of respondents in Estonia indicate that non-formal institutions are adult learning providers. The figures for Poland and Slovenia are 50 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, countries like Belgium, the United Kingdom and Italy present rates lower than 10 per cent.

Non-formal adult learning providers comprise a wide variety of organisations and institutions. The private sector is extensive in some countries (e.g. LU, NL, UK, DE, BE (Flanders)). This is also the situation in the new Member States where from the 1990s the adult learning market was left completely open to private providers. Many small training companies emerged, scattering the offer of provision and diffusing responsibilities. This process can also be seen in Western European countries. In the Netherlands, for instance, it is estimated that 80-90 per cent of adult learning takes place in the private sector. Other countries indicate that the number of private providers is low and that almost all adult learning is provided by publicly funded schools and institutions (for instance in Iceland). Although some European-wide studies have been carried out, there is little information on this market, the volume and composition of providers, the content of the training provided and the number of people being trained.[1] There is a plethora of other associations, organisations, NGOs, and research institutions active in the adult learning sector. Some of them fall under the responsibility of the government and have the task of developing and supporting the adult learning sector. Examples can be found in Austria, Romania, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and Greece.

Based on these figures, we conclude that most non-formal adult learning takes place outside formal education, and a legitimate question is whether this learning provision is sufficiently quality assured. The following section will further discuss these issues providing an overview of quality systems found in the different countries.

3.2   A wide palette of quality assurance systems: a mapping

Assessing quality systems in place, it is important to take into account that these are reflecting the different governance structures and provision of adult learning in place as described in the previous section. This section provides a mapping of national quality systems and other relevant developments in the field of adult Learning, starting with providing a summarising table of quality systems in Europe (see table 2 below).

In table 3 it has been indicated whether quality systems – on macro level - were found in a particular country for formal adult learning (and more specific HE, VET, and second chance) and non formal learning (and more specific VET, basic skills, and liberal learning). Subsequently, a cross (X) has been put in the table in case there is evidence that a

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[1] See: Institut Technik+Bildung, University of Bremen (2008), Eurotrainer, Making lifelong learning possible: A study of the situation and qualification of trainers in Europe. See also: NIACE (2006), contract number DG EAC 21/05, Final Report for the Study on Adult Education Providers.

quality system is in place for that particular sub domain (having some form of polices, procedures, rules, criteria, tools, and verification instruments implemented that have the purpose of ensuring and enhancing the quality provided by any adult learning provider)[1].

In order to identify possible connections with participation rates in lifelong learning and educational attainment rates, the countries have been clustered according to the four categories of countries already discussed in Section 3.1.3 based on the two ET2020 benchmarks. This clustering enables us to identify patterns and to provide answers to questions such as whether countries with quality systems in place are also the best performing countries on these relevant ET2020 benchmarks

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[1] It is acknowledged here that in providing generalisations of national systems and a mapping of how countries differ in the systems and approaches for assuring quality in adult learning, the table does not always do full justice to the actual situation in specific countries. For example, the fact that we spotted a quality system for a specific domain, does not necessarily mean that it is applicable to this whole domain. It is also acknowledged that the boundaries between formal and non-formal provision is blurry, especially since one and the same provider could provide formal as well as non-formal learning, as well as in different sub domains. This counts as well for the distinction between second chance education and basic skills provision. In some countries (such as IE, NL, MT, and the UK) basic skills learning is part of second chance provision and can lead to a qualification at the lowest level or a "pre" level of the NQF.

Table 2: Overview of quality systems on macro level related to adult learning, covering formal and non-formal learning

		Formal		Non-formal (publicly financed)				Overall assessment on the existing of quality systems assuring quality in non formal publicly funded adult learning (-,-+. +)
		HE	VET	Second chance	VET	Basic skills	Other (liberal)	Specific quality systems in place for adult and interesting practices	

		HE	VET	Second chance	VET	Basic skills	Other (liberal)	Specific quality systems in place for adult and interesting practices	Overall assessment
High performing countries (LLL participation and educational attainment)	CH	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1) eduQua label constitutes the framework in which quality of adult learning in Switzerland is assured; (2) Train the Trainer (AdA) as a 3-level core concept of staff quality	(+)
	DK	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1) The Act on The Danish Evaluation Institute evaluates all levels of education including all types of adult education that get public funding.	(+)
	EE	X	X	X	X	O	O	(1) Private training providers must be licensed according to the Private School Act	(+)
	ES	X	X	X	O	O	O	Not available. A proposal of experts exists to co-ordinate and assure that quality of delivery but it was still not put into consideration, see: http://comunidad-escolar.cnice.mec.es/901/info1.html	(-/+)
	FI	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1) the Liberal Adult Education Act (632/1998) mentions the possibility to get support to quality development. (2) The Decree on the Finnish National Board of Education (805/2008) stipulates that the FNBE is responsible for the evaluation of educational outcomes in education from pre-primary to adult education.	(+)
	IS	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) the Adult Education Act (2010) includes articles on accreditation and certification, evaluation and quality control, funding, information provision and the recognition of prior learning. This Act does not apply to non formal learning and education that is based on legislation for upper secondary or higher education.	(-/+)
	LU	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1) The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training has developed a quality label for non-formal continuing education (since 2000)	(+)
	NL	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) code of conduct private training institutes; (2) quality seal for folk universities; (3) Quality code for APL centres including accreditation	(-/+)
	NO	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1) VOX accredits adult education associations and online schools under the new Act for adult education, introduced in 2010	(+)
	SE	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1) The Swedish National Council for Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet) is responsible for the	(+)

								distribution of the state grants and for developing and monitoring the activities within the popular and liberal adult education; (2) BRUK, a system for support on the quality work for all types of adult education	
	SI	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) The Adult Education Act set no obligations for quality assurance. (2) THE GREEN OQEA LOGO aims to motivate and reward educational organisations and experts who care about how they do their work and are prepared to constantly learn, test new findings, systematically assess the effects of their work and implement measures to develop quality.	(-/+)
	UK	X	X	X	O	X	X	ESTYN Inspection of Adult Community Learning (ACL) in Wales	(+)
Medium performing countries 1 (high participation and low educational attainment)	AT	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1) Ö-Cert provides registration as one of the Quality Providers of Adult Education in Austria; (2) Academy of Continuing Education (wba)	(+)
	CZ	X	X	X	X	O	O	(1) Under the "Concept" programme the government is developing a five-star rating system for educational institutions that provide professional retraining courses.	(-/+)
	PT	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) Quality Charter of the New Opportunities Centres (NCOs), ANQ (2007) - designed to frame the quality approaches of E&T providers within the New Opportunities Initiative, including a set of reference indicators and benchmarks ((3) Ministerial order 851/2010 (6 September) on certification of VET providers	(-/+)
Medium performing countries II (low LLL participation and high educational attainment)	BE	X	X	X	X	O	X	(1) The Support Centre for Non-formal Adult Education (SoCius) also supports quality assurance within the sector. Organisations which are subsidised under the decree concerning socio-cultural adult work are expected to take the principles of integrated quality assurance into consideration. BE (Walloon): (1) The Higher Council for social advancement education developed a guide to quality management (Guide Qualité pour l'Enseignement de Promotion sociale) to promote the integration of a quality in all educational institutions for social promotion.	(+)
	CY	X	X	X	X	O	O	There is no quality framework (legislation / accreditation for formal adult education / second chance, and for the non formal part of AL except that of VET)	(-)
	FR	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) Quality label as Greta Plus (public adult learning including second chance and VET) and (2) Lycee der Metiers (vocational secondary school) serves as measure to boost quality. (3)The label Lycée des Metiers ("Vocational Secondary School") For the non formal learning, only label regarding the quality of language education	(-)

	IE	X	X	X	O	X	X	(1) The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) & the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were established in 2001 under the 1999 legislation. FETAC, HETAC & IUQB & their quality assurances roles have been subsumed into the recently (2012) established Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). (2) The voluntary NALA Evolving Quality Framework (2005) for improving and monitoring the quality of adult basic education (ABE)	(+)
	LT	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) legal persons and natural persons which are not registered in the Educational Institution Register, need a licence from the local municipalities according to the local regulation	(-)
	LV	X	X	X	X	X	O	(1) Education Law determines that all educational institutions, except those which implement only interest related education programmes have to be accredited. Private enterprises who are not in the State Education Register and individuals must receive the local municipalities' licence for implementing the adult non-formal education programmes	(+)
	PL	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) Institutions and centres of continuing education which provide non-formal education can obtain accreditation. However, the accreditation introduced in 2003 is voluntary, therefore the out-of-school establishments providing education in compliance with the principles of free business activity are able to avoid any quality related supervision.	(-/+)
Low performing countries (LLL participation and educational attainment)	BG	X	X	X	O	O	O	Not available	(-)
	DE	X	X	X	X	O	O	Non available at federal level. The responsibility for non-vocational CET does lies with the states. These regulate the quality requirements in the CET and training leave laws. In almost all states CET and adult education laws exist in with the support requirements such as public offer, professional leadership, economic efficiency etc. are defined. There are special quality-related regulations exist in the following states: Bremen, Mecklenburg West Pomerania, Lower Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia.	(-/+)
	EL	X	X	X	X	O	O	(1) a new initiative called '$\prod^3$ framework' (National Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning) is proposed. The $\prod^3$ framework recommends the incorporation of quality system in the LLL, including quality indicators and quality principles	(-/+)
	HR	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) Adult Education Act in 2007 set standards for professional monitoring and setting standards for adult education institutions regarding the	(-)

							form, content and implementation of formal adult education programmes, necessary qualifications for teaching staff in formal adult education, necessary conditions regarding premises and other material conditions.	
HU	X	X	X	X	X	X	(1) Act on Adult Education (CI/2001), modified in 2004, which regulates non-formal adult education and training. According to the law, there is a national system of accreditation of adult education and training, currently under legal reconstruction as part of the act on adult education and training.	(+)
IT	X	X	X	O	O	O	(1) Various providers of non-formal adult learning, such as UPTER (Folk university Rome), have developed an own self-evaluation system.	(-)
MT	X	X	X	O	O	O	A small number of non-governmental AL providers are subsidised by DLL and, therefore, come under DLL QA measures.	(-/+)
RO	X	X	X	X	O	O	Not available	(-)
MT	X	X	X	O	X	O	A small number of non-governmental AL providers are subsidised by DLL and, therefore, come under DLL QA measures.	(-/+)
SK	X	X	X	O	O	O	Not available	(-)
TK	X	O	X	O	O	O	There is no quality framework (legislation / accreditation for formal adult education / second chance, and for the non formal part of AL)	(-)

When looking at the quality approaches identified in table 2 above, we see that quality systems are well covered in formal HE, VET and general education in all countries. With regard the non-formal adult learning sector there is more diversification. We can identify three groups of countries on the basis of the quality frameworks in formal and non-formal adult education:

- (1) Countries that have elaborated quality systems in place on macro level for adult learning, formal as well non-formal learning often determined in a specific strand (such as **AT, BE, CH, DK, EE, FI, HU, IE, LU, LV, NO, SE**). Most of these countries are also the better performing countries in terms of participation in adult learning and have a higher educational attainment. Exception to this rule are BE, HU, and IE.

- (2) Countries that have some fragmented quality systems on macro level for non-formal adult learning, while having quality systems in place for formal adult learning (such as **DE, EL, ES, CZ, IS, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, UK**)

- (3) Countries with no or limited quality systems in place on macro level for non-formal learning, while having quality systems in place for formal adult learning (such as **BG, CY, FR, HR, IT, LT, RO, SK, TK**). Overall these countries are general lacking quality systems for the non-formal part of adult learning. These countries are at the same time also the countries that have a relatively low performance on the ET2020 benchmarks.

This information gives an indication that countries having well developed quality systems in place, most of the time also score higher on the ET2020 benchmarks. Although it goes too far to speak about a positive correlation, since participation in lifelong learning is also determined by other factors such as availability of financing, adult learning provision, and the existence of a learning culture, it is safe to say that in well developed adult learning systems, that score high on the E&T2020 benchmarks, more often quality systems are in place.

Each sub domain will be further discussed in the sub sections below, without attempting to describe each system identified in too much detail (such as procedures, responsible bodies, criteria, indicators, and principles in place). This will be done in the remaining chapters discussing more in-depth the interesting systems found across Europe.

3.2.1   Quality systems in formal adult education

Although different definitions exist for the concept of formal learning, this study considers formal adult learning as structured activities leading to diplomas and certificates equivalent to those which may be obtained in the school, VET, or higher education systems. Although these learning activities are the central focus of this section, it is important to recognise that the term 'formal adult education' can include a wider range of learning activities provided by public as well as private providers, but can both be publicly as privately financed.

In all countries studied, the public provision of adult learning is for a large part integrated within the public system of initial education that is opening up for adult learners. In these cases – including basic, secondary, and tertiary education – the same quality approaches and standards are implemented as for initial education. The general principles of quality standards and control for providers (including teaching staff) and provision are set out in the education law and field laws for each type of education, having the same standards for accreditation, self-evaluation, and external evaluation. Other countries have education and training provision for adults that parallels the structure of the public system, such as private training institutions providing formal qualifications. The general rule is that in these countries the same regulatory framework applies to these adult learning providers as for public institutions providing primary, secondary and higher education and vocational training, when they issue the same types of state-regulated qualifications. Since most countries have segmented policies for quality assurance in formal education, each sub-sector is discussed separately below.

- ■ In all countries studied, a legal framework and accreditation system is in place for **higher education institutions** offering programmes leading to a formal qualification. Since HE providers are in general autonomous in their quality policies, specific characteristics of quality policies at providers' level are still quite diverse and therefore also the specific attention paid to adult learning. The level of autonomy of institutions is often higher in the Anglo-Saxon countries in comparison with the more centralised European and Nordic countries. Many other examples of differences between the countries could be provided from the countries studied. However, despite the dif-

ferences, countries share commonalities in their quality assurance framework for HE provision, most of the time strongly influenced by the European Standard and Guidelines for quality in HE[1], having specific legislation in place, setting up of quality bodies, accreditation procedures for providers and / or programmes, obligations with regard to setting up quality plans, self-evaluation, and external evaluation. In all countries, quality assurance organisations are in place. Nevertheless, what is striking is that no specific conditional requirements are formulated for the provision of adult learning in the assessment frameworks for the higher education accreditation system. Hence, it is up to the institutions or departments themselves to make specific reference to adult learning in their quality plans.[2]

■ Quality systems for **(C)VET provision**, leading to a formal qualification, are in all countries subject to supervision and accreditation, whether it is provided by public or private providers. Nevertheless, just like the situation of higher education, but also second chance education (described hereafter), often no specific reference is made to adult learning provision. For instance in Spain, the rules concerning the general organisation of vocational training indicate that vocational training for adults (including CVET) must have the same characteristics and follow similar guidelines as mainstream vocational training. Another example of such an integrated framework can be found in Lithuania, where the law shapes provision for quality assurance by setting the principles for VET quality assurance, and these principles also apply to VET provision for adults. In the Dutch Adult and Vocational Education Act adult learning is not addressed specifically, however the quality criteria are formulated in such a (flexible) way that providers can make reference to adult learners themselves. Nevertheless there are some clear examples of separate quality systems for formal VET. Iceland, serves as example that provides accreditation for adult education and training providers, as described in Adult Education Act of 2010. The accreditation is among else based on the existence of a quality control system focused on adult education. A further example is the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) in Ireland being the single national awarding body for the non-tertiary further education and training sector in Ireland[3]. In order to ensure confidence in its awards, FETAC established a comprehensive strategy to assure the quality of the programmes leading to its awards. Some countries also set standards for public employment services. In Germany, for example, by law, not only employment agencies, but also external certification bodies are responsible for quality control of measures and their providers. The details of the implementation are settled in an implementation regulation. In ad-

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[1] ENQA (2009), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Helsinki: ENQA.

[2] Annex 2 includes a table with more details of quality systems and responsible bodies identified per country for the higher education sector.

[3] Note: FETAC has recently merged into QQI

dition to this national regulation, individual states (Länder) also have agreed on quality regulations in their range of actions.[1]

- In all countries, quality systems for formal **second chance education** are similar to those of formal secondary education, since most second chance provision is delivered by the same provider targeting adult learners as well. As a result, the legislative and policy framework and instruments like accreditation, external evaluation, and self-evaluation, are also applicable to this type of adult learning provision, and hardly any examples can be detected in which specific quality criteria are formulated for adult learning. A concrete example is this respect is the Netherlands in which for the examination of VAVO (second chance provision for adults) the same rules are applicable as for regular secondary education, which are provided in the Law on Secondary Education and the frameworks of the Inspectorate of Education. Here again, no specific reference is made to adult learners. An interesting case where specific requirements are set for secondary education providers offering adult learning is Austria. Institutions that want to take part in the "Initative Erwachsenenbildung 2012 – 2014", providing basic skills have to apply for an accreditation, which consists of several rounds of quality procedures including continuous external monitoring and evaluation. The objective of the initiative is to enable adults who lack basic skills or never graduated from a lower secondary school to continue and finish their education. Austrian institutions wishing to take part in the initiative have to apply for an accreditation and provide evidence on three quality criteria.

Overviewing the quality systems studied at national level, one can conclude that quality is generally assured in formal adult learning, although falling under different sector-based regimes. Despite these different regimes, they tend to share some basic quality instruments and quality philosophy, including a requirement for a quality system at providers' level, the application of self-evaluation, requirements regarding the transparency and openness of the systems and some form of external evaluation. Providers in most cases have freedom to decide and construct this quality system (ISO, EQM, EFQM, etc.), although examples can be found of specially developed quality seals / labels for adult learning such as eduQua (CH) and Greta Plus (FR). Similar quality philosophies can be found, such as the use of the concept of a quality circle (plan, do, check, and act) commonly used in different fields of education. Assessing the listed quality assurance systems for the formal adult education, the majority of them have no specific principles, criteria or indicators that refer to adult learning or adults. Hence, it is up to the institutions or departments themselves to make specific reference to adult learning in their quality plans.

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[1] Annex 2 includes a table with more details of quality systems and responsible bodies identified per country for the VET sector.

3.2.2 Quality systems in non-formal adult learning

With reference to non-formal adult learning, i.e. learning not leading directly to a formal qualification (often related to acquiring basis skills, but including liberal adult education), it is common to find that no state-level quality policies or frameworks are in place and that more often than not, the quality framework depends on bottom-up initiatives by the sector or providers themselves. Quality assurance systems for this were however reported in AT, CH, DK, EE, FI, NO, CZ, DE, HU, LV, BE, IE, LV, mostly related to non-formal VET and basic skills education.

Without going into detail describing every system, some examples that represent this diversity are provided below.[1]

- In HU and NO models were identified were non formal adult learning providers are accredited by government law. **In Hungary** there is a national system of accreditation of adult education and training, regulated by the Hungarian Act on Adult Education, with specific reference to among else andragogical requirements. Every institution / organisation providing non-formal adult learning, must register its activities in the local labour/ employment office administered by the County Government Office. In **Norway**, VOX accredits adult education associations and online schools under the new Act for adult education, introduced in 2010, to regulate organised learning activities outside the formal sector.

- In AT, CH, FR, NL, and IE **quality seals and labels were identified**, specifically developed for adult learning provision. This is the case in **Austria that requires a registration** to become one of the quality providers of adult learning (Ö-cert). Another example is provided by the EduQua label in **Switzerland** that constitutes the framework within which the quality of adult learning in Switzerland is assured. Some labels are developed by the government to stimulate quality provision, such as the French label, Greta-plus, that has been introduced by the **French government** with the goals to create uniformed standards for all educational institutions involved with professional education for adults. There are also examples of initiatives by sectors themselves to develop a quality seal, such as the Folk universities in the **Netherlands,** which developed a code of conduct/quality, seal for folk universities in 2007. Another example is the voluntary Aontas[2] / Women's Community Education Quality Assurance Framework in **Ireland** that was developed by Aontas, the National Adult Learning Association, in partnership with seven women's community education groups and networks throughout Ireland. What is common in all the labels is that these are voluntary labels

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[1] Annex 2 includes a table with more details of quality systems and responsible bodies identified per country for the non-formal adult learning sector.

[2] AONTAS is the National Adult Learning Organisation. The name AONTAS is an acronym in the Irish language; Aos Oideachais Náisiúnta Trí Aontú Saorálach, meaning 'national adult education through voluntary unification'. The word AONTAS itself is also the Irish word for 'unity' or 'union', so the intention of the founders was that AONTAS would be identified by its inclusiveness (http://www.aontas.com/about/whoweare.html)

and do not provide legal rights, but have a strong marketing value or satisfy requirements for getting public funding.

- In SE and BE non formal adult learning providers **are inspected and reviewed (without accreditation)**. In **Sweden**, the Swedish National Council for Adult Education is responsible for the distribution of the state grants and for developing and monitoring the activities within the popular and liberal adult education. The state defines the purpose of governmental grants while objectives are set independently by the liberal education providers. The state exercises control by means of reviews, assessments and development efforts carried out by the national inspectorate agency. Another example is **Belgium (Flanders)**, where organisations that are subsidised under the decree on socio-cultural adult work are expected to take the principles of integrated quality assurance into consideration in the course of their activities and to ensure professionalisation and professionalism. The manner in which this is done forms part of the evaluation of their activities by the administration (by the Agency socio-cultural work for Youths and Adults). SoCiuS, the Support Centre for Non-formal Adult Education supports organisations in their quality assurance within the sector.

- In DK and SE **quality requirements are implicitly stated in regulating frameworks**. The **Danish** Act on peoples´ enlightenment (folkeoplysning[1]), including day folk high schools and the university extension. Although the section on university extension activities does not mention quality directly, it sets the rules, and defines the structures for the educational activities, together with a description of the conditions for receiving public support. Where public money is involved most of the time governments are still setting quality standards for quality, as in the case in **Sweden** where in all education, except for liberal adult education, as discussed above, goals/learning outcomes and regulations are defined by the state and fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research.

- In LT quality requirements are closely linked to what has been requested in the formal domain of adult learning. More liberal requirements regarding to the provision of non-formal adult education have been set in the education law. Educational institutions are entitled to implement non-formal adult education programmes without obtaining a licence, but other legal persons and natural persons which are not registered in the Educational Institution Register, need a licence from the local municipalities according to the local regulation. Another exception to this rule is when providers wish to make use of tax incentives, such as in the case tax is only deductible for training when the training institute satisfies certain quality criteria.

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[1] The term *folkeoplysning* is difficult to translate into English because no corresponding concept exists in English-speaking countries. The most frequently used translations are 'liberal adult education' or 'popular adult education'

Apart from the initiatives described above which provide a snapshot of national practices, there is still a broad range of provision of non-formal adult learning that is not covered by any quality system. This mostly concerns for adult learning provision which does not receive public funding and does *not* lead to an accredited / state-regulated qualification. This is the domain of NGOs and the private sector and the needs of employers and individual learners. In these cases, quality approaches are most of the time developed to ensure that learning provision meets the needs of the learner, for purposes of transparency, to ensure consumer protection, and also as marketing tool. This often involves individual providers applying some form of quality assurance model like, ISO, EQM, TQM, and EFQM. With regard to privately- funded adult education, there are certain base-line regulations, such as **consumer protection schemes**. Consumer satisfaction is an important driver for quality assurance in this sub-domain, since the laws of the market mean that providers are directly punished when clients are dissatisfied with the learning provision (bad publicity, complaints etc.).

3.3   Recent policy developments addressing quality in adult learning

In most countries, quality is a relatively new issue in education that did not appear on the political agenda until the late 1980s. At that time, quality policies were often related to formal initial education. During the last decade, quality policies are also entering the field of adult learning. Especially in the new Member States quality policies are emerging, often as a consequence of the implementation of European instruments like European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and EQAVET, or financial programmes as European Social Fund (ESF) and the lifelong learning programme (LLP).

In the last few years, many countries produced white papers, communications, policy proposal and more often in the context of the development of lifelong learning strategies in which they emphasise the importance of quality assurance (such as AT, CY, CZ, EE, IS, LV, SK, FI, EL, IT, UK, ES, LT, SI, CH, LU)[1]. These generally include an update or revision of adult education, and addressing quality issues more dominant in the regulation, or strategic papers addressing the important of further developing quality assurance systems including accreditation, and self and external evaluation.

Other countries are still in the phase of developing their lifelong learning strategies such as Malta. A top-down approach to the development of such a strategy in Malta was at-

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[1] like AT adopting a common LLL:202; CY adopting national reform programme; CZ having the 2007 strategy for lifelong learning; Estonia having the lifelong learning strategies for 2007-2013 and the development plan for adult education 2009-2013; LV with Guidelines for lifelong learning policy for 2007- 2013" and relevant implementation programmes; SK having the lifelong learning strategy 2011; FI with the Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training; EL with the national strategy for Lifelong Learning (LLL). A new initiative called 'Π³ framework' (National Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning); IT with the National Plan for Quality Assurance of VET of 2012, UK (Wales) with the 2008 document called Skills that work for Wales signalled the introduction of a new Quality and effectiveness framework for the skills sector in 2009; ES published a proposal to renew the system of adult learning in 2011 (El Aprendizaje Permanente en Espana); LT with their National Education Strategy 2003-2012; SI that included some concrete recommendations in their 2009-2011 White paper on the further development of quality procedures in the field of adult learning, updating the Adult Education Act that was established in 1991; In CH people voted in 2006 to include a "National Law of Adult Education" to their Constitution; In LU the government is in the process of designing a coherent quality assurance system and is currently in the process of establishing a quality label for CVET in consultation with the social partners (based on the 2008 law).

tempted but did not work. A proper consultation process on the lifelong learning strategy is required. A Ministerial Steering Group is currently working on developing a strategy. A Green Paper on lifelong learning has already been published. It is considered 'early days to get co-ordination (on quality assurance) at a national level' in Malta.

3.4   Conclusions

As a review of this chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn.

- First of all, many countries still report low participation figures and are not achieving the ET2020 target yet. Many countries still need to open up their educational systems to adult learning, providing access and flexible provision.

- In reviewing the quality assurance systems in place, this study identified three groups of countries: (1) a group have elaborated quality systems in place on macro level for adult learning, (2) a group of countries that have some fragmented quality systems for non-formal adult learning on macro level; and (3) a group of countries with no or limited quality systems in place for non-formal learning on macro level.

- Nevertheless, overarching quality system crossing different sub-sectors are hardly evident. Some concrete examples are Ö-Cert and EduQua, having labels that could be used in all sub-domains of adult learning.

- With regard to system level quality assurance, the differences between HE, VET and non- vocational adult learning are less related to the fact that the provision is intended for adults, but more to the fact that the HE and VET provide state-regulated qualifications. The non-formal sectors are less regulated through the government and more often grass-root; bottom-up approaches are applied to work on quality assurance (such as codes of conducts and development of sectoral quality labels).

- A high number of countries are currently developing or revising their legislative framework for adult learning and the general trend is that they are putting more emphasis on quality assurance mechanisms.

4 Quality assurance systems: processes, mechanisms and bodies responsible

This chapter provides an analysis of the processes and mechanisms in quality assurance systems accompanied by an analysis of the bodies responsible for supervising, managing, implementing and supporting these processes and mechanisms at national / regional level (including systems and bodies responsible for the accreditation of providers) in order to support quality measures at provider level. Hence, the focus is on quality assurance systems at system level in order to accredit or monitor the quality of providers.

In Section 4.1 an introduction will be provided of **the empirical information on procedures and mechanisms** applied in quality assurance systems. Section 4.2 will continue with presenting the **focus of the quality assurance systems**. **The approach of quality assurance systems: processes and mechanisms** will be discussed in Section 4.3 and after this; Section 4.4 is devoted to a **discussion on bodies responsible**. Section 4.5 goes into the question of **costs involved** and finally, Section 4.6 provides the **conclusions** of this chapter.

4.1 Introduction empirical information on procedures and mechanisms in quality assurance systems

The mapping of quality assurance policies in chapter 3 revealed a wide diversity of accreditation systems for providers focussing on VET, HE, general education, and non-formal adult learning. This chapter will focus primarily on quality assurance in non-formal adult learning, but it will also take into account quality assurance in other educational sectors as well when they explicitly refer to adult learning. The selection of accreditation systems is enriched with quality assurance systems which are not considered as accreditation systems, such as quality labels and quality seals. As a broad term to cover accreditation and quality labels, the term 'quality assurance systems' is used, these systems share the following common characteristics:

- The quality assurance systems are macro level systems , i.e. the procedures and regulations apply to a group of adult learning providers (cross-provider instruments);

- The quality assurance system includes a clearly stated set of minimum quality requirements for providers;

- The system includes specific procedures for being validated. The quality assurance systems include an external assessment, either on-site, or other;

- The holders of the certificate/quality label/accreditation obtain specific rights that others do not have (i.e. eligible to funding, carrying a logo, being registered etc.)

On the basis of these demarcation rules, quality assurance systems were selected to be included in the analysis. The quality assurance systems include:

- Inspectorates/ accreditation systems (UK, MT, IE, EL, NL);

- Quality labels/seals (AT, CH, DE, LU, NL, FR, SI).

Quality prizes are not included in this analysis as these quality assurance systems do not strictly comply with the demarcation rules as set out above. These quality improvement instruments do not depart from a set of minimum quality criteria, but assess which provider is the best one.[1]

The following quality assurance systems will be analysed in this chapter. For each quality assurance system, a short description is provided, together with a description of the scope of the system and what kind of quality assurance system it is (inspectorate, accreditation, quality label).

Table 2: Introduction quality assurance systems

Name and short description[2]
Austria: Ö-CERT *
Description: Ö-CERT (at-cert) is an overall framework of quality ("umbrella label"). Ö-CERT is an instrument for transparency of the use of QMS (quality management systems) and serves at the same time as a quality standard for granting funds and awards; Furthermore, Ö-CERT constitutes an instrument of professionalisation. **Scope:** Ö-Cert is attuned to adult education providers and is developed and recognized nationwide in Austria. **Type:** Quality label
Switzerland: eduQua *
Description: eduQua is the first and only Swiss quality label geared towards adult continuing education. **Scope:** The eduQua certification is open to those institutions active in continuing adult education, including those involved in the "re-education" of the unemployed, the so-called labour market relations. eduQua is also intended for state subsidized continuing education institutions (public and private providers), labour market relations providers; providers of modules; and any institution offering continuing education that would like to be recognised as a quality institution. **Type:** Quality label
Germany: Quality association CET Hamburg *
Description: Continuing education and training establishments are obliged to meet quality standards through their membership in the association and receive a quality seal after the examination of an evaluation team.

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1 There is clearly a diversity in approaches of quality prizes and awards. There are approaches that focus on organisational quality from a top-down perspective such as in Sweden and Finland. For instance, in Sweden, the Quality Prize targets all kinds of Swedish schools including the municipal adult education. The Prize can function as a motivation and inspiration in the work on quality in all schools including adult education. In Finland, there is a quality prize specifically for civic institutes (SE: kvalitetspriser för medborgarinstitut). The purpose of the Quality price is to support and inspire the "medborgarinstitut" to further development of their activities and their quality. On the other hand, there are consumer-driven approaches which focus on the educational offer. This is the case in the German example of the quality assessments of Stiftung Warentest.

2 Of the quality assurance systems with an asterix (*), case study descriptions are included in the annex of the report. In addition to the mentioned quality assurance systems, the study also drafting case study reports on other interesting practices which are not further discussed in this report as the focus is more on quality assurance systems (i.e. model for teacher training; organisational reforms in guidance).

Name and short description[2]

Scope: The model is practiced as an intra-industrial mutual control device for the promotion of quality assurance as well as participant and consumer protection within the Hamburg region.

Type: Quality label

Greece: ∏3 framework (National Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning) *

Description: π^3 sets a framework of priorities and principles on quality assurance in non-formal lifelong learning. It further provides to all relevant structures a tool for organising and delivering the evaluation of learning outcomes for those participating in any of the programmes provided.

Scope: the π^3 framework of priorities and principles on quality assurance applies to non-formal lifelong learning. This covers all forms of educational and learning provision for people over 16 years old and includes initial VET, all apprenticeship schemes, continuing VET, second chance education and all liberal and/or popular adult education programmes.

Type: Accreditation/monitoring system

France: Label Greta-Plus *

Description: The Greta-Plus label is a tool to boost the quality of the continuing vocational education and training provided in the *Gretas (groups of adult learning providers)*. It allows the state to promote a coherent set of quality standards in this sector, without having to interfere too much in the *Gretas* own policies.

Scope: The quality label Greta-plus is designed at the national level and implemented at the provider level. The label can only be acquired by a *Greta* or part of a *Greta*, noting that *Greta* are structures that group together local public educational establishments such as the *lycées and colleges*.

Type: Quality label

Ireland: Quality Assurance System for further education and training (QQI, former FETAC[1]) *

Description: The system involves the coordinated application of three separate functions: agreement of a quality assurance (QA) system with a provider of programmes leading to a FETAC award; validation of programmes submitted by a provider; and monitoring and evaluation of a provider's learning programmes and quality assurance system.

Scope: The FETAC quality system concerns non-tertiary further education and training provision in Ireland. It focuses on programmes leading to a qualification included in the National Framework of Qualifications.

Type: Accreditation

Luxembourg: Label de Qualité

Description: The label can be obtained voluntarily by non-formal continuing education providers, but is coupled to state subsidies, which makes it attractive for municipalities and associations to obtain the label; hence it has a high degree of coverage. The label can also be used to attract new participants.

Scope: The label relates purely to the non-formal sector and is used only by municipalities and non-profit associations.

Type: Quality label

Malta: Quality Assurance Structures in the provision of basic literacy, numeracy and computer awareness*

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1 On 6 November 2012, FETAC completed its amalgamation with HETAC, NQAI and IUQB and a new integrated agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), was established. FETAC, HETAC and the NQAI are now dissolved. The new agency will continue to provide continuity of service as it evolves: http://www.fetac.ie/fetac/aboutfetac/aboutfetac.htm. In this report we continue to use the name of FETAC to point to the quality assurance system for further education in Ireland as the underlying case study was conducted before the amalgamation.

Name and short description[2]
Description: The Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLLL) quality assurance framework for evening courses covers hiring staff and the provision of ongoing CPD; curriculum / materials development; learner assessment; and monitoring and evaluation. **Scope**: the quality assurance requirements concern all adult education courses leading to a qualification on the MQF (Maltese Qualifications Framework) awarded by the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC). **Type:** Accreditation
The Netherlands: NRTO Code of Conduct
Description: NRTO members, the representative organisation of private training institutes, sign the Code of Conduct for Training and Education and are also obliged to use the Terms and Conditions as drawn up by the NRTO and the consumer organisation, "Consumentenbond". **Scope:** All privately funded provision. All types of adult learning can be included **Type:** Quality label
The Netherlands: Folk universities quality seal
Description: The non-formal, non-vocational sector (folk universities) has developed a quality seal for Folk universities maintaining certain quality procedures. **Scope:** non-formal adult learning **Type:** Quality label
The Netherlands: Quality code APL[1] *
Description: The Quality code APL is a framework for accreditation and standardisation for APL-procedures in the Netherlands. The Quality Code APL is focused on the quality of APL provision, providing guidance and an experience certificate to learner that could be used in working life and learning. **Scope:** The quality code concerns the quality of providers offering APL trajectories. **Type:** Accreditation
Slovenia: Quality label Offering Quality Education for Adults – OQEA /Green quality logo *
Description: The OQEA (Offering Quality Education to Adults) and related Green Quality Logo, is a continuous improvement model for providers focussing on self-evaluation, assessment, and guidance. The logo indicates that the provider complies with the improvement model. **Scope:** The OQEA model has been designed and prepared to be used in different adult education organisations, like adult education centres, private education and voluntary organisations, secondary and post-secondary education organisations, VET institutions, etc. It covers around one-third of publicly accredited programmes of adult education. **Type:** Quality label
United Kingdom: ESTYN Inspection of Adult Community Learning (ACL) in Wales *
Description: The overall objective is to ensure the ongoing quality of ACL in Wales through inspection of providers on a cyclical basis. **Scope:** Adult Community Learning (ACL) is defined as: flexible part-time and full-time formal and non-formal/non-accredited learning opportunities for adults, delivered at a range of times in community venues to meet local needs. ACL caters mainly for adults aged 19+. **Type:** Inspectorate

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[1] In Portugal a similar quality charter for APL is developed. The Quality Charter of the New Opportunities Centres (NOCs) is designed to frame the quality approaches of E&T providers within the New Opportunities Initiative. The charter is organized under the following headings: mission, guiding principles, requirements and the dimensions of the development processes including a set of reference indicators and benchmarks (Omes, Maria do Carmo; Simoës, Francisca (2007), Carta de Qualidade dos Centros Novas Oportunidades).

4.2 Focus of the quality assurance systems

This section discusses the objectives of quality assurance systems introduced and described in Section 4.1. The aims expressed by the quality assurance systems are largely uniform. They are established to increase **transparency** in the sector, **guarantee a minimum of quality** and to **protect consumers**. Often, the quality assurance system is linked to some kind of public interest; this can mean, for example, being eligible **for public funding** (local, regional, national or European), or being authorised to issue formal qualifications. Other objectives are developing quality culture in the sector; monitoring of the sector/inform policy makers; and reduced administrative burdens.

Table 3 provides a concise overview of the main objectives of establishing the quality assurance systems presented in Table 2 above, while some further examples are provided further below.

Table 3: Overview objectives of QA systems studied

Objectives of the QA systems/ reasons for establishment	AT	CH	DE	EL	FR	IE	LU	MT	NL1*	NL2**	NL3***	SI	UK
Transparency	X	X	X			X	X	X					X
Developing quality culture in the sector			X		X		X	X		X		X	
Monitoring of the sector/inform policy makers			X	X			X						X
Consumer protection							X			X	X		X	X
Accountability of public funding			X				X	X	X	X		X		X
Reduced administrative burdens	X	X											
Guaranteeing a minimum level of quality	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assuring quality of formal qualifications						X		X					

*NRTO code of conduct/ ** Quality seal Dutch folk universities / *** Quality code APL*

With regard to **transparency**, the Austrian Ö-Cert explicitly states that one of the objectives was to increase transparency for customers/learners and for public authorities. The quality certificate of Ö-Cert makes it possible for the customers and public authority to see who's a quality provider.

Developing a quality culture is regarded one of the most important objectives of the Slovenian OQAE initiative. The attached Green quality logo aims to motivate and reward educational organisations and adult learning experts who care about how they do their work and are prepared to constantly learn, test new findings, systematically assess the effects of their work and implement measures to develop quality. The Green quality logo signals that work of individual staff within the organisation is becoming valuable and is critically important to enable the services of the organisation to be delivered to adult learners. This system represents cooperation as the basis of quality development rather than competition. The objective of developing a quality culture is recognised in other initiatives as well, such as in the Dutch quality seal for folk universities and the Luxembourg's quality label for non-formal continuing education.

In Luxembourg, the quality label was established to ensure that a minimum set of quality standards is guaranteed in the difficult-to-regulate non-formal continuing education sector. It also allows the government to gather data and publish statistics on non-formal continuing education. Hence, the quality label supports the **monitoring of the sector**. Amongst the key objectives of the UK (Wales) Inspectorate for Adult Community Learning, it is stated that the inspectorate should inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Assembly Government; and to promote the **spread of best practice** in the delivery of ACL.

Consumer protection is an important objective of quality assurance systems. One of the four objectives of the quality assurance association in Hamburg (DE) is as follows: "to protect participants from inappropriate contract conditions". The Dutch NRTO code of conduct states that "the information which is provided to potential consumers orally or in writing will be truthful and accurate at all times." The code primarily aims to protect the consumers since they should benefit from quality provision. Considerable emphasis is placed upon the complaints procedure which needs to be put in place.

In relation to **accountability of public funding**, the Swiss eduQua certification proves to be an advantage when dealing with the authorities: in increasingly more cantons the certification is a requirement for public funding. The Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Educating Directors recommends that the cantons check "the quality of the providers in the education sector in all of Switzerland based on the same criteria and make national subsidies dependent on a proof of quality (eduQua)". The UK (Wales) Inspectorate is by law required to report on whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used to provide value for money. In the Netherlands, in order to be eligible for VAT reduction in providing education to adults, the Dutch private providers need to be registered in the CRKBO-register.[1] The principles and requirements are in line with the code of conduct developed by NRTO. Therefore, complying with the code of conduct of the NRTO enables providers to make use of the rules on VAT reduction.

Both the Austrian Ö-Cert and the Swiss EduQua quality assurance systems indicate that the certificate **reduces administrative burdens**. Previously, before these certificates were established, there was a multitude of quality labels, systems and seals. Each region had its own label or requirements and in addition private quality labels were also used. This made it difficult for Austrian and Swiss governments to assess the quality of the providers when they applied for public funding. The establishment of a single quality label therefore, creates uniformity, both in quality assurance, as in managing the sector.

Guaranteeing a minimum level of quality is the purpose of many (all the selected) quality assurance systems, with the exception of the Greek example. An illustrative example of how this is the UK (Wales) inspectorate on Adult Community Learning (ACL). The ESTYN inspectorate aims at maintaining and improving the quality of ACL, through na-

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1 Central Register for Short Vocational Education: Centraal Register Kort Beroepsonderwijs (CRKBO): http://www.crkbo.nl/Default.aspx

tional, sectoral, provider and learning on-site level inspections. Others indicate that providers need to comply with basic quality principles

In relation to assuring the **quality of formal qualifications**, the Irish FETAC quality assurance system is a good example. In order to ensure confidence in its awards (ranging from level 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications), the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) has established a comprehensive strategy to assure the quality of the programmes leading to its awards. It assessed the quality and consistency of the awards from setting to setting, course to course, learner to learner, level to level and year to year. Malta also provides a good example in this regard since the quality assurance requirements are focused on adult education courses leading to a qualification on the MQF (Maltese Qualifications Framework) awarded by the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC).

The **lack of clear objectives** in a quality assurance system can hamper its implementation as is illustrated by the French Greta-Plus label. Even though the label is not a prerequisite for carrying out their functions, GRETAs are encouraged by the central government to apply for this label as a means of global quality assurance.[1] In November 2012, only 37 GRETAs out of 220 GRETAs (spread out over 30 académies) had a Greta-plus label. In terms of direct labour market relevance, the Greta-plus label seems of limited value[2]. If local businesses, the largest client of GRETAs do not attach any value to this label, there seems little incentive for GRETA to pursue the label. It may even be considered a deliberate choice by the educational establishment not to request a Greta-plus label, since this may increase undesired involvement of the central government in this relatively decentralised category of the education system. Without the quality-label, local business may be better able to influence the education at the group of local educational establishments.

4.3   Approach of quality assurance systems: processes and mechanisms

Quality assurance systems have different working procedures in place to assure the quality of the providers, however there are steps that are common in all, or most practices. Table 4 maps the use of different steps in the quality assurance systems studied, thereafter, examples of procedures are presented to illustrate how procedures have been operationalised in practice.

In general, a distinction is made between preparation, assessment, approval, and monitoring activities. Table 4 provides an overview of whether these steps are included in the procedures of the QA systems in question.

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1 Circulaire 2009-107 du 17-8-2009 MEN – DGESCO A2-4
2 See CEDEFOP – Assuring quality in Vocational education and Training
 (http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3061_en.pdf)

Table 4: Overview procedural steps in quality assurance systems studied

Procedural steps to get quality assured	AT	CH	DE[1]	EL[2]	FR	IE	LU	MT	NL1*	NL2**	NL3***	SI	UK
A) Preparation by provider													
Filling in application form /submitting a request to be quality assured (e.g. conducting self-evaluation)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
B) Assessment (external evaluation) by responsible body													
Control self-report	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X
On-site checks		X	X		X					X			
Expert involvement	X		X		X								
Inspection					X								X
Process of programme validation					X	X		X					
C) Approval by responsible body													
Registration as quality provider	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X		
Judgment/recommendations					X			X			X		X
Validation of programmes					X			X					
D) Monitoring/follow-up by responsible body/ provider													
Reporting / monitoring	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Renewal of the procedure		X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	
Follow-up activities					X	X							X

*NRTO code of conduct/ ** Quality seal Dutch folk universities/ *** Quality code APL*

As can be seen, most quality assurance systems focus on all four broad categories of procedural steps (preparation, assessment, approval and monitoring/follow-up). Exceptions to this are the Greek monitoring system and the Dutch NRTO code of conduct. Both systems are focused primarily on monitoring the sector and the quality developments taking place in the sector. Furthermore, the UK (Wales) inspectorate lacks a clearly defined preparation phase: the inspection is mandatory and hence, there is no application process in place.

With regard to procedures, the situation is also different in Malta, where the focus of the quality assurance system is on the quality of courses linked to the lower levels of the National Qualifications Framework (MQF level 1). The Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLLL) is the responsible agency to guarantee the quality. In ensuring that the learning outcomes of the courses are at the standards required, the DLLL focuses on examining the course descriptions and learning outcomes; periodically conducts visits by subject coordinators and invest in the continuous professional development of staff. Hence, the Maltese quality assurance system, despite involving accreditation and validation, fo-

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[1] Hamburg region

2 The Greek monitoring system is not yet implemented and therefore is it not possible to report on the procedures. The system will receive more attention in Chapter 7 on indicators.

cuses more on programme-level accreditation and quality of staff and it therefore, follows different procedures to the other initiatives studied.

Here below, illustrations of the different procedural steps are provided from the QA systems studied.

A) Preparation by the provider

Providers need to **prepare** their application; this can be via filling in an application form, conducting self-evaluations, self-reports. This is the case in most systems studied, however, the way the preparation is organised, differs. For instance in Hamburg, the starting point of the application for membership is the obligation to adhere to the 37 quality standards by the applying establishment. The providers need to conduct a self-report on the items included as quality standards. In Austria, for obtaining the Ö-Cert, the provider has to fulfil basic requirements. The criteria to be accepted as a provider of adult education (definition of adult education) include basic requirements in general; concerning the organisation of the provider; concerning the offers of the provider; concerning principles of ethics and democracy, and finally; concerning quality assurance.

In Ireland, the FETAC quality system (now taken over by QQI) involved FETAC reaching agreement with a provider on the basis of policies and procedures in relation to nine core areas of quality as follows: communications; equality; staff recruitment and development; access, transfer and progression; programme development, delivery and review; fair and consistent assessment of learner; protection for learners; sub-contracting / procuring programme delivery. Self-evaluation is a critical element of a provider's quality assurance processes. All programmes delivered by a provider must be self-evaluated within a five-year period. The provider appoints an internal person to co-ordinate / conduct the self-evaluation. Feedback from key stakeholders is a required element of self-evaluation. A person independent of the provider and programme delivery and capable of comparing the quality of programmes with that of similar programmes elsewhere is appointed by the provider to the role of external evaluator. The products of the self-evaluation process must include a report and a programme improvement plan.

To obtain the eduQua certificate, adult learning providers need to put together a dossier following the guidelines expressed in a manual. This dossier must be submitted to the certificating body. The manual distinguishes four preparatory steps: Registration at the certificating body; selection of an offer / a programme; compiling the dossier; and handing in the dossier. The Dutch Council for Training and Education (NRTO: Nederlandse Raad voor Training en Opleiding) developed a Code of Conduct for the members (i.e. the providers). Any agency aspiring to become a member of the NRTO needs to sign the code of conduct. The NRTO application procedure is not intensive. However, other examples show a different picture. For instance applying for the French Greta-Plus label is considered as an intensive process. Before applying for a Greta-plus label at the Ministry of Education, the group of educational institutions must show that it has worked in line with the quality requirements of the norm associated with Greta-plus for at least one year. To do so, it must be internally audited by the Académie, the local education

council, before submitting its request with the Ministry. Based on this internal audit, the chairman of the Académie (*le recteur)* has to approve the GRETA decision to pursue the Greta-Plus label. Secondly, the GRETA is required to prove to be financially capable of ensuring quality provision for its clients. These requirements must be met by all educational establishments that form the GRETA, in order to apply for Greta-plus.

The application procedure for obtaining the Slovenian Green Quality logo is somewhat different to the other quality assurance systems studied. First of all, all organisations participating in the OQAE project receive the right to carry the logo. If they would like to continue carrying this logo after the quality project is completed, they need to file an application in which the organisation indicates that it complies to a set of five criteria (namely, uses the quality indicators developed; has a quality plan; a quality team; indicates annual and medium-term plans related to quality; and systematically conducts activities to improve the quality).

In general, the preparation phase includes proving by the provider that the institute complies with some set of minimum quality standards.

B) Assessment by the responsible body

In all the practices studied, the **assessment** is carried out by the responsible bodies. This can be done by different methods: validating the application form, on-site visits, expert consultation, etc.

In Austria, the Ö-cert can be characterised as a light-touch assessment, as the assessment relies for the larger part on confirmation of existing quality certificates. The assessment takes place in two steps; first, the provider must have one of the valid Quality Management Systems or Quality Assurance Procedures – according to the Ö-Cert-List, which itemize nine accepted Quality Management Systems and Quality Assurance Procedures. The most important selection criterion is the existence of external audits. Secondly, the Ö-CERT agency and the group of experts control the application by means of going through a checklist.

In the Hamburg region in Germany, the assessment takes place in three steps: firstly, the management of the association carries out a first formal examination (in some cases, in consultation with the responsible validation board or even external expertise), that, for example, ensures if the applicant even represents an establishment for continuing education and training, if the establishment is based within the state of Hamburg or if a continuous offer can be assumed. Secondly, after the formal examination, the management may, if necessary, consult the applying establishment on quality assurance issues. The applicant receives the checklist and is requested to send it back signed. Thirdly, the management carries out a first assessment on the basis of the filled-out check list and visits of the establishment. The visit is thereby undertaken by the managing director and an auditor of the responsible committee. In this context, discrepancies in answers of the checklist and further remaining questions are clarified by inspection (e.g. of event lists, training contracts), by plausible explanation or concrete viewing (e.g.

by visitation). The management of the association takes minutes of the visit and prepares a recommendation for the validation committee and/or the managing director.

F: In France, when all the application criteria for the Greta-plus label are met, a team of auditors will be appointed by the Committee for labelling (*Comité National de Labellisation*). This team will review the aforementioned criteria by documents that the GRETA sends at its request. The auditors will also organise site-visits to check the accuracy of the previous audits and documents. After this visit, the audit team draws up a report for the Committee for labelling. In this report an action plan has to be included, so that the Committee and the GRETA are both informed how to further improve or maintain quality standards. The Committee on Labelling provides a recommendation for the Ministry on the basis of these audit results. After completion of the report, the Committee will recommend the Minister of Education whether or not to grant the label.

In Ireland, the focus of the assessment was on both provider management and processes, and the programmes to be delivered. The provider needed to meet the minimum requirements regarding the policies and procedures in relation to the nine core areas of quality described above in order to be registered as a provider of programmes leading to a FETAC (now QQI) award. In addition, to be able to deliver a programme leading to a FETAC award the programme needed to be validated by FETAC to ensure that it could provide a learner with the opportunity to achieve a specified award.

According to the UK (Wales) ESTYN inspectorate framework, the inspectors need to report on a number of key questions (criteria), such as: How good are outcomes? How good is provision? How good are leadership and management? On the basis of a detailed checklist and accompanying instructions, the inspector will provide a judgment on the quality of the Adult Community Learning provider and he/she will provide recommendations for improvement. The ESTYN framework does not involve a preparatory part, but the inspectors base their assessment on their own analysis.

Each Dutch NRTO member is assessed by the NRTO Committee on Quality. An evaluation is made of the degree of compliance with the requirements of the Code of Conduct. The Committee on Quality also investigates any indications of poor quality which they are aware of. The NRTO carries out examinations reactively, which means that it will examine a case on request by a third party; such a request may also be a complaint or observation which calls into question the quality of a NRTO member. The working method may differ depending on whether it is a complaint from a consumer, a NRTO colleague or a third party. The ultimate sanction for a member remaining in default is expulsion from the NRTO including publication of this expulsion on the website.

The eduQua assessment procedure includes an on-site audit, following an evaluation of the dossier.

C) Approval by the responsible body

After successfully completing the assessment, the responsible bodies **approve the application**. This gives the right to provide adult learning services and make use of the quality label.

In the German Hamburg region this means that on the basis of the assessment, the responsible validation committee votes on the application. It discusses the application, postpones the application, in some cases, involves external experts or directly informs the Executive Board of its vote. In principle, the Executive Board only has four possibilities: 1) unconditional admission; 2) admission under certain conditions; 3) admission only after fulfilment of certain conditions and; 4) rejection. In the case of an admission the establishment may use the certification seal of the Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V. (e.g. for advertising purposes, in event announcements). In Austria, upon completing the assessment, the provider is registered as one of the Quality Providers of Adult Education in Austria and receives the Ö-Cert.

In Ireland, the programmes can be offered upon validation. The outcome can be deemed to be: a) effective; b) effective with minor areas for improvement; c) moderately effective with significant areas for improvement; d) not effective with essential remedial actions. In the case of d) certification is withdrawn until a satisfactory standard is reached through an action plan. The report on each provider is published. The agreement of a provider's quality assurance procedures will be reviewed within a maximum period of five years. The effectiveness of those procedures, as measured through self-evaluation and FETAC monitoring, will be examined during this review.

In the case of the UK (Wales) ESTYN inspectorate, the conclusion of the assessment is not so much that the provider is registered as a quality provider, but rather that a verdict is given on the provider's performance and recommendations may be provided which the ACL provider needs to take into account to improve the quality of the institution.

In the Swiss eduQua quality assurance system, the auditor will draw up a report on the basis of the assessment (on-site visit, examination of the dossier). The audit report describes the result of the certification procedure. It is based on the six eduQua-quality criteria and takes both the examined content of the institution and the chosen offers and programmes in consideration. The report covers two subject areas: firstly, the decision (unconditional certification; certification under certain conditions that are clearly stipulated; no certification due to major flaws that are clearly stipulated); secondly, remarks about the examined subjects and suggestions for improvement. In case the certification body decides not to hand out a certificate the institution can make an appeal. The instance of appeal can be found in the certificating body's regulation.

In France, the Committee for labelling draws up a report for the Ministry including its recommendation with regard to approving the provider. The Committee has four options: a) grant the label for 3 years; b) deny the label; c) demand additional information; and finally, d) demand another audit.

The Dutch APL providers with good evaluation reports are registered in the National Register for accredited APL procedures. These APL providers are called 'registered providers'.

To conclude, the assessment decisions of responsible bodies are more varied than a judgement of 'approved' or 'not approved'. Judgements of the performance of a provider frequently includes scales of merit and may include conditional approval and rec-

ommendations with a specific indication of the areas for improvement that it will need to be addressed in follow-up actions.

D) Monitoring/follow-up by the responsible body/ provider

In some of the quality assurance systems, **time-to-time monitoring** of the quality of the providers is included; or the accreditation is valid for a certain period of time. This monitoring can be via delivering yearly reports, filling in checklists, on-site visits, or renewal of the procedure. In Wales (UK), emphasis is given to follow-up activities. Depending on the balance of strengths and areas for development in a provider and its capacity to deliver improvements in standards and quality, there are various levels of follow-up activity**,** as follows:

- Post-16 link inspector monitoring visit where a small number of key questions or quality indicators are judged to be adequate, a post-16 link inspector will monitor these specific areas to ensure improvement is made.

- Estyn team monitoring visit - this type of follow-up happens when at least one of the overall judgements is adequate, but is not causing concern to the extent that a re-inspection is required.

- Re-inspection - normally, when at least one of the overall judgements for a provider is unsatisfactory, Estyn will carry out a re-inspection.

- A provider which is judged to have excellent practice in a particular area of work is invited to write a case study of sector-leading practice for publication on Estyn's website.

Providers provide feedback on their experience of the inspection by completing a post-inspection questionnaire, one part to be completed at the end of the inspection week and the second part to be completed when the report is published.

Concerning renewal procedures, usually the procedures have to be repeated after 3 to 5 years. In Hamburg, after three years the application for the certification seal needs to be renewed and an examination follows after the same procedure. In Ireland, the effectiveness of a provider's programmes and services is monitored and a 5-year review of a provider's quality assurance agreement and registration takes place. The eduQua (CH) certification process includes yearly intermediate audits and after three years a certification process ends automatically, therefore the institution must undergo a renewal every three years. When issued by the Minister of Education, the Greta-plus label is valid for three years. It is however required that the GRETA undertakes an internal audit report every year to monitor implementation of the quality objectives. The Dutch quality seal for folk universities is valid for four years. After this period, the procedure for acknowledgement initiates again. The NRTO carries out an annual survey of all members on the degree of compliance to varying aspects of the code. In Luxembourg, the approval is valid for two years. In France, as mentioned earlier, the label is granted for 3 years. Also for the Dutch Quality code for APL providers, the validation remains valid for 3 years.

In Ireland FETAC recognised providers' quality assurance as the main engine of quality improvement and monitored its effectiveness in maintaining and improving the quality of programmes. FETAC's monitoring policy aimed to ensure the credibility of FETAC awards, thereby ensuring the integrity of the awarding process. These processes will continue under the QQI.

4.4   Responsible bodies

The studied quality assurance systems are implemented by different types of responsible bodies. There are differences with regard to legal status (public/private); and focus (strict quality assurance, or other functions). The table below situates the responsible bodies encountered in the quality assurance system studied. After presenting the table, further in-depth information is provided on the responsible bodies.

Table 5: Mapping responsible bodies

		Legal status	
		Public body (publicly governed)	**Private/sectoral body**
Focus	**Strictly QA**	Ö-Cert office (AT); EduQua agency (CH);Greta-plus (Committee for labelling) (FR); ESTYN (UK (Wales))	-
	Other functions (e.g. advise, information, consultancy)	SIAE (SI); Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (represented by the department of adult training; SFA) (LU); Directorate of Lifelong Learning (DLL), of the Ministry of Education and Employment (MT); Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (NL); QQI (former FETAC) (IE)	Quality association CET Hamburg (DE); NRTO (NL); BNVU (NL)

Public bodies strictly focused on quality assurance

The Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture developed the Ö-CERT - in cooperation with leading Austrian experts, representatives of the nine Austrian provinces and providers of Adult education). Ö-Cert is operated by the Ö-Cert office (Geschäftsstelle), which is a cooperation between the Federal Ministry and the nine provinces. The Ö-Cert office is responsible for all activities related to the certification.

A similar structure can be found in Switzerland, where the EduQua agency coordinates all quality assurance activities. The following organisations are members of eduQua's expert group and represent the Swiss stakeholders: Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft (seco) / State Secretariat for Economic Affairs; Schweizerische Berufsbildungsämter-Konferenz (SBBK); Verband schweizerischer Arbeitsämter (VSAA); Schweizerische Konferenz der Kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren; Schweizerischer Verband für Weiterbildung (SVEB) / Swiss Federation for Adult Learning.

In the UK (Wales), the responsible body for the Welsh framework is Estyn. Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. Estyn is independent from, but funded by, the Welsh Assembly Government. The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards of education and training in Wales.

In France, the responsible body for awarding the Greta-plus label is the *Comité National de Labellisation*. This national committee consists of members appointed by the ministry of Education. The committee is chaired by the vice-director of vocational education at the Ministry of Education and consists of representatives of the ministry and several external members. This committee meets twice a year and has the authority to change the quality criteria required by a Greta-plus label.

Public bodies involved in other activities than quality assurance

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (Andragoški center Republike Slovenije) is the main national institution for research and development, quality and education, guidance and validation, and promotional and informative activities in the field of adult education. Within the OQAE project, the institute provides advice, organises workshops and further supports providers in improving their quality systems. Similar institutes can be found in other countries.

The Maltese Directorate of Lifelong Learning (DLL), of the Ministry of Education and Employment has a quality assurance role in relation to the adult learning courses it funds. Besides this role, the Directorate is in general responsible for the adult learning courses provided on the Islands.

With regard the Dutch Quality code for APL providers, from 2006, the APL providers had to apply for accreditation and were evaluated by Dutch review and assessment boards (Visiterende en Beoordelende Instanties), the VBIs. The standard used is the national quality code for APL. In early 2010 the Minister of Education took control of the execution of 'the Quality Code APL'. This followed a critical evaluation by the Inspectorate of Education of the quality of the accredited APL providers. In this evaluation the quality of the 113 accredited APL providers both on the levels of VET as well as of HE was regarded as insufficient. It is intended that during a period of three years the bottlenecks in the process should be overcome. It is expected that in the future this responsibility will be taken over by an intermediate organisation or a conglomerate of such organisations.

In Ireland, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)[1] was established in 2001 under the 1999 legislation. Its remit was to become the single national awarding body for the non-tertiary further education and training sector in Ireland. In addition to unifying the awarding function of the sector, this role involves the determination of standards, promotion of awards and monitoring the quality of programmes and assessment. FETAC made awards from Levels 1 − 6 on the National Framework of Qualifica-

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1 www.fetac.ie; On 6 November 2012, FETAC completed its amalgamation with HETAC, NQAI and IUQB and a new integrated agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), was established. FETAC, HETAC and the NQAI are now dissolved. The new agency will continue to provide continuity of service as it evolves: http://www.fetac.ie/fetac/aboutfetac/aboutfetac.htm

tions Ireland (NFQ) in a vast range of education and training fields covered in provision such as school education, basic skills education, second-chance education and training, adult education, community-based learning, VET, workplace learning and early-school leaver provision[1]. By the end of 2011, FETAC had made awards to almost 1.2 million people aged 15+ on programmes (full- and part-time) offered by diverse providers ranging from individual commercial training providers and small community groups to large publicly-funded national organisations operating in a range of different contexts. In order to ensure confidence in its awards, FETAC had established a comprehensive strategy to assure the quality of the programmes leading to its awards with the ultimate aim of ensuring the integrity of the awards and of the overall National Framework of Qualifications. The functions of FETAC were taken over by Quality and Qualifications Ireland in late 2012.

Private bodies involved in other activities than quality assurance

Other organisational forms have been selected when the adult learning concerns provision not in receipt of public funds. The German Weiterbildung Hamburg association is an association which has close links with stakeholder organisations such as trade unions. The association conducts a number of other activities besides quality assurance, such as providing information on continuing education possibilities, consumer/participant protection and consultancy. The Dutch BNVU (Bond van Nederlandse Volksuniversiteiten/ Association of Dutch folk universities) is an association of non-profit folk universities. It facilitates the cooperation between approximately 85 folk universities in the Netherlands. The Dutch Council for Training and Education (NRTO: Nederlandse Raad voor Training en Opleiding) is the umbrella trade association of all private training and education agencies in The Netherlands. The NRTO promotes the interests of private providers of training and education. The NRTO stimulates accredited and recognized high-quality, flexible and diverse education and training courses based on equal and open competition with other providers.

Private bodies strictly focused on quality assurance

No private bodies have been found that are strictly focussed on quality assurance, except for the general organisational quality assurance institutes responsible for instance for ISO. As we saw, often these private bodies are involved in a number of other activities such as information provision, promotion of the sector, consultancy etc.

4.5   Costs for getting accredited/certified

For some of the quality systems, costs are calculated by the quality assured providers. This involves mostly the use of the quality assurance systems logo for marketing reasons. For instance, the total costs of the certification for the eduQua label are 2,400

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1 Agriculture, science, computing; arts, craft and media; business and administration; construction and built environment; core skill, language and general studies; education, health and welfare; engineering / manufacturing; services; tourism, hospitality and sport as categorised by ISCED and FETAC systems: see http://www.fetac.ie/fetac/documents/FETAC_Awards_Report_14_jun_12.pdf

Euro (3,050 CHF). Of this total price, 300 CHF (240 Euro) is used to finance the eduQua office. The fee for the Ö-Cert quality label is 100 Euro. Applying and receiving the Ö-Cert is free, however, using the certificate and the logo comes with the price of 100 Euro. Other quality assurance systems do not come with costs. For getting registered and accredited in the Irish FETAC system or going through the Welsh ESTYN inspection, no direct costs are involved although staff costs arise in relation to the implementation of quality measures in an institution. Complying with the code of conduct of the Dutch NRTO does not cost money. However, to be member of the NRTO, providers need to pay a contribution. This contribution is approximately a thousand Euro per million Euro turnover. The Slovenian case received some criticism that the process it quite burdensome and brings with it administrative costs.

No information was available on the administrative costs – in terms of human resources and other costs - of providers to apply and keep the accreditation or certification, and more specifically the cost of running quality procedures as such. During this study only some normative judgment were gathered that some system are resource intensive or not. The systems can be classified as being resource extensive and resource intensive for providers:[1]

- Extensive systems are: Quality seal folk universities (NL); Quality label non-formal providers (LU); Private provider code of conduct, NRTO (NL); Ö-Cert (AT); Hamburg quality label (DE); Quality code for APL providers (NL).

- Intensive systems are: ESTYN inspectorate (UK (Wales)); QQI (FETAC) accreditation system (IE); OQAE (SI): EduQua (CH); Greta-plus (FR); DLLL (MT).

The administrative burden sometimes hold back providers from applying for an accreditation or quality label, such as was explicitly mentioned by providers in the context of the quality label Greta-plus. Also the Dutch NRTO was developing and promoting a specific ISO-certificate amongst its members (privately provided education and training). Due to a lack of interest of the members of the NRTO to actually use the ISO certificate, this process has been put on-hold. The reasons for this was that the fear that the introduction of the ISO certificate would lead to a high administrative burden.

Cost of systems should also be seen in relation to the benefits. In theory, quality systems should lead to rationalising processes in the organisation, leading to quality improvement, better performance, and in the end increased learner satisfaction, higher success rate and better learning outcomes. During the case studies, limited evidence was provided by stakeholders about the benefits of quality assurance, mainly indicating that it helped to rationalise processes and stimulate debates on issues related to quality; to contribute to developing a more professional administration and education support structures; and to create new routines and systems for handling data and information on educational performance and quality. Limited evidence was provided on better performance, increasing learner satisfaction and better outcomes such as reducing drop out rate and increasing learning outcomes. This outcome is not surprising since it has

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[1] Note: the Greek EL ꓔ3 framework is not yet implemented

been argued that testing the effects of quality assurance instruments, is empirically difficult.[1]

4.6   Conclusions

In this chapter we discussed the focus of the quality assurance systems; the approach of quality assurance systems: processes and mechanisms; the bodies responsible and finally the costs involved for getting quality assured. Based on this chapter the following conclusions can be drawn:

■ The quality assurance systems focus on different objectives. The most important objectives of quality assurance systems were firstly, setting minimum quality requirements for providers; secondly, improving the transparency of the adult learning sector; and thirdly, assuring accountability of public funding.

■ Furthermore, most of quality assurance systems studied include a sequence of procedural steps for being quality assured. These steps include application by the provider; assessment by the responsible body, validation by the responsible body, and finally monitoring, follow-up activities both by the provider and the responsible body. Most quality assurance systems include self-evaluation procedures at provider level.

■ Moreover, it is clear that the responsible body can be a public, or a private organisation, solely focussed on quality assurance, or not. Most responsible bodies are public bodies (either involved solely in quality assurance or not). For some more sectoral initiatives, the responsible bodies are private organisations, also involved in other activities.

■ Indirect costs, e.g. working on the application or self-evaluation, are more important than the direct costs for getting quality assured.

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[1] Svorny, S. (2000), 'Licensing, Market Entry Regulation', in Bouckaert, B. and G. De Geest (eds), *Encyclopedia of Law and Economics, Volume III: The Regulation of Contracts*, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, pp. 296-328.

5 Mapping and documentation of what constitutes quality criteria, descriptors and system level indicators

This chapter provides a mapping and documentation of what constitutes quality criteria / indicators, quality management approaches and effective techniques for monitoring / evaluation of quality in relation to adult learning. This Chapter starts with an introduction of **the empirical information on quality criteria used** in quality assurance systems (Section 5.1). After this, we will discuss the quality assurance systems thematically. Section 5.2 concerns **quality of the organisation**; Section 5.3 deals with **quality of didactics and the learning process**; Section 5.4 discusses **quality of staff**; and Section 5.5 is devoted to **measuring results**. After this, we take a short side-step to present an **example of a sector-level monitoring system** (Excursion) and hereafter, **principles underlying quality approaches** in adult learning are discussed (Section 5.6). This Chapter is complemented with Section 5.7; **conclusions.**

5.1 Introduction: empirical information on quality criteria used in quality assurance systems

To identify quality areas and indicators, we will take the quality assurance systems identified and discussed in Chapter 4 as point of departure. In addition, although such examples are scarce, an example is provided of system level indicators to monitor the adult learning sector as a whole.

The quality assurance systems included in the analysis differ with regard to the issues they focus upon. Some focus more on input-output issues for accountability purposes, while others try to get into the black-box and determine the quality of processes within providers. In this section, the issues, or quality areas the QA system focus upon are discussed and the focus of QA systems is further explored. We start by an overview of the themes that are covered by the quality assurance systems studied. After presenting the table, illustrative examples are presented.

In Table 6 four broad categories of quality areas are distinguished: firstly, 'organisational issues', focussing on quality assurance of the organisational aspects of providers. Secondly, 'didactics and the learning process', monitoring the way providers organise the delivery of adult learning. Thirdly, 'staff', dealing with setting requirements for employees of the adult learning providers. Fourthly, 'quality of results', identifying whether outcomes are measured.

Table 6: Overview quality areas covered by the quality assurance systems studied

Issues:	AT	CH	DE	EL	FR	IF	LU	MT	NL.1*	NL.2**	NL.3***	SI	UK
Quality of the organisation													
Mission statement of provider	X	X	X									X	X
Organisational structure/management	X	X	X		X	X	X		X			X	X
Administration	X	X	X		X	X	X					X	
Finance	X	X	X		X	X	X					X	X
Establishment of a quality plan	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X
Physical infrastructure/equipment (building, class-room, computers, etc.)	X	X	X	X	X				X	X			
Anticipation to new developments					X								
Quality of didactics and the learning process													
Communication (Internet, folders, PR)	X	X	X			X			X				
Education and training methods and didactics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Learner rights and needs / complaints procedures	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Procedures assessing LO and civil effect of learn-ing/quality of exams		X	X			X	X	X	X			X	X
Information and advice for learners/ guidance and counselling					X	X	X		X	X			X
Quality of staff													
Adult learning staff (competences, training, qualifi-cations)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Support/guidance for staff, volunteers						X			X	X	X		
Recruitment policies						X		X	X				
Quality of the results													
Measuring results of the adult learning offered/ Evaluation of education /training programme	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
Measuring/monitoring quality developments	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				X	X

*NRTO code of conduct/ ** Quality seal Dutch folk universities /*** Quality code APL*

This table and the division between quality areas may not always do justice to how providers' quality assurance systems themselves identify key quality areas and indicators. They sometimes use other terms, include other categories and have different content. For example, organisational issues may include HR and recruitment procedures, which in other cases are included under staff quality.

5.2 Quality of the organisation

Most quality assurance systems focus on the **organisational issues.** Is the mission of the institute well described? Is the organisation well-structured to work towards the stated mission? A striking example is found in the 'seven core elements of quality' set out in the Ö-Cert:

- Mission statement of the organisation/ guiding principles (description of criteria of the guiding principles and goals of the provider)

- Offer (programme) of the organisation (provider) (description of the target groups, needs and interests, general information and data of the target groups and educational sector, information management, diversity and gender issues

- Management of the provider organisation (quality profile)

- Quality of staff (quality profile)

- Management of quality development and culture of feedback (error management), definition of quality

- Quality of the infrastructure (resources), best conditions for the learner (clients)

- Quality of public relations and feedback culture (outreach work)

The focus in these core elements is on organisational issues in quality assurance. This related to the fact that Ö-Cert is a meta-framework, leaving room for providers to use their own procedures to assure the quality of the provision.

The Swiss eduQua quality label devotes one out of six quality criteria to organisational aspects: Awareness for quality development and quality assurance is at hand. In relation to this criterion, the following indicators are set: the use of a systematic tool to develop quality, with feedback to all involved parties; methodical, multiple internal and/or external evaluations about the functioning of the institution; the presence of a continuous process of evaluation of the further education activities, transparent structure and functions, regular events about didactical-methodical and/ adult educational themes among educators, cooperation with other educational institutions, the willingness to work together with qualified external professionals.

The UK (Wales) Estyn quality framework for inspection devotes one of the three parts of the inspection to leadership and management issues. The following quality indicators are defined in order to arrive at judgements of the quality of leadership and management:

Estyn quality indicators on leadership and management

Quality Indicator 3.1 Leadership
Aspect 3.1.1 strategic direction and the impact of leadership
Aspect 3.1.2 governors or other supervisory boards
Aspect 3.1.3 meeting national and local priorities
Quality Indicator 3.2 Improving quality
Aspect 3.2.1 self-evaluation, including listening to learners and others
Aspect 3.2.2 planning and securing improvement
Aspect 3.2.3 involvement in networks of professional practice
Quality Indicator 3.3 Partnership working
Aspect 3.3.1 strategic partnerships
Aspect 3.3.2 joint planning, resourcing and quality assurance
Quality Indicator 3.4 Resource management.
Aspect 3.4.1 management of staff and resources

The French Greta-plus quality label identifies the following quality criteria related to organisational issues:

- Equipment, support and tools: Every enrolled individual is provided with suitable materials and updated resources, and the GRETA also takes care of the comfort of the individual.
- Administrative and financial follow up, traceability: The administrative and financial tasks related to the educational program are taken care of in time and in a transparent way.
- Organisational management: The management is required to define and work on the policies of the organization, while also working on its implementation. Policies are subject to internal evaluation and are adjusted if necessary.
- Anticipation and innovation to new developments: The organisation ensures attention to social-economic developments and seeks to innovate, while cultivating its know-how.

In general, quality assurance systems demand that organisations are run professionally. Their requirements are in line with general organisational models and quality assurance principles, such as ISO; EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Excellence Model; Investors in People and other. Also, the distinction with providers in other educational sectors is not so large: VET and HE providers need to comply with similar requirements to be run professionally.

Particularly interesting is that almost all QA systems require the providers to have a quality plan or procedures in place to self-evaluate the quality of the provider

5.3   Quality of didactics and the learning process

The key issue in relation to the quality of didactics and the learning process is the way the educational offer is attuned to the needs and demands of adult learners. In most quality assurance systems studied, this dimension is addressed in some way, being more pronounced in some more than others. In the French Greta-plus quality label the emphasis is on the quality of the learning taking place. There is a genuine learner-centeredness in the quality label. This is expressed in the following quality criteria:

- Information / Advice to clients / beneficiaries: The GRETA has to offer its clients and beneficiaries individualised information and advice and facilitate access to information.
- Individualised planning according to clients' demands: a tailor-made response is given by the GRETA following a request, based on an analysis of the clients' demands. If necessary, the GRETA offers personalised services such as the validation of acquired experiences and the recognition of the most suitable certificates.
- Tailor-made services to individual clients: All services are written down in a contract, to be signed with each client. Once enrolled, a mentor will be assigned for the duration of the training. During the course the programme is adjusted as necessary in terms of methods, assistance, tools and work schedules. Everyone will receive an individual assessment.

The Quality seal used by the Dutch folk universities puts people, participants, teachers, staff and volunteers first. The educational offer should be of high quality, the resources, learning material and other facilities should be in place, but more importantly, the learning environment should be safe for learners, teachers, staff and volunteers.

The Swiss eduQua quality label devotes four out of six key criteria for quality to the educational provision of the institute and having the learner at the centre of the development and provision of courses:

- Criterion 1: Provision that satisfies the needs and the wishes of the customer and society
- Criterion 2: Lasting learning effect for the participants
- Criterion 3: A transparent representation of the provision and the pedagogical concept
- Criterion 4: A customer-oriented, economical, efficient and effective provision of services

In the Netherlands, the NRTO code of conduct puts considerable emphasis on trustworthy advertising of courses and hence on providing information to potential adult learners. Concerning recruitment campaigns and recruitment material the following advertising code for courses is observed: "Advertising (publicity) of courses should reflect truthfully the institution offering the course, the auspices under which the course is offered, and the course itself. The advertising must not include any suggestion of results that cannot be accomplished reasonably and of "grades" that have not been recognised or licensed. In addition to this, NRTO members respect one another as colleagues and refrain from negative and competitive communication and publicity." One of the reasons for this emphasis is that the private training sector is large and needs to compete with the state-funded provision. There is some tendency to slightly misuse names of formal qualifications to market qualifications which are not formally recognised. The NRTO, as sector organisation, takes action against these practices.

5.4   Quality of staff

Quality of staff is a recurrent issue in almost all quality assurance systems. This involves the setting of minimum qualifications or competence levels and offering possibilities for the professional development of staff members. Quality criteria for staff are not only put in place for teaching staff, but affects other staff members as well, such as guidance staff, organisational staff (i.e. management, secretariat, support staff) and even volunteers and freelance staff. However, in this section, the focus is on quality of facilitators (i.e. of the teaching staff).[1]

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[1] For a more elaborated discussion on quality of adult learning professionals see: Buiskool, Bert-Jan, Jaap van Lakerveld, Frowine de Oudendammer, Erik Kats. Hemmo Smit, Simon Broek; Buiskool, B.J., Broek S.D. (2011), Identifying a common set of key competences for Adult Learning staff: an in-ventory of European practices, in Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, Volume 17, Number 1, 2011, 40-62. (2008), Adult Learning Professions in Europe (Research voor Beleid); Buiskool, B.J. and S.D. Broek (Research voor Beleid) (2010), Key competences of adult learning professionals, Zoeter-meer, 2010

The French Greta-plus label emphasises the importance of human resources and it demands that the GRETA "offers its services through qualified and competent staff". The Dutch NRTO code of conduct states that the provider should ensure that "All teachers must be experts in their subjects." The Swiss EduQua quality label includes a criterion (number 5) which states that the provider should have "committed pedagogical personnel ("educators"), who are methodically and professionally up to date". This is further operationalised by demanding that the educators have the professional qualification as well as practical experience in the area the educator is working in. Furthermore, there should be educators with methodical-didactical qualifications and experience in adult education. In addition, they should undertake regular professional and pedagogic further education activities. The outcomes of having quality staff is that participants are satisfied and that the offers are organised in an appropriate way for the target group identified.

An interesting staff-related initiative linked with the Austrian Ö-Cert is the Weiterbildungs Akademie (WBA). Where the Ö-Cert focuses on the provider-level quality, WBA provides a framework to improve the staff quality in adult learning.

One of the most important requirements in the quality assurance system in Malta is the quality of staff. Staff is a key determinant of the quality of adult education provision. Qualification standards / requirements and continuing professional obligations for adult learning staff are set by the DLLL in relation to the courses it funds.

5.5   Measuring results

One way of measuring results is to see whether the quality assured providers comply with the criteria and indicators set in the quality assurance system. As indicated in Chapter 4, approval and follow-up (monitoring) activities are present in most, if not all quality assurance systems. In many cases, the quality assurance systems demand from the providers that they themselves can provide some key data on the outcomes of their activities.

For example, the Swiss eduQua model includes one criterion on the learning success (learning outcome). As the DLLL in Malta is striving to develop and implement a quality assurance system for the courses it offers, it is also developing indicators. It is currently building structures to gather evidence on quality. Current indicators / descriptors include:

- the number of adults attending the courses;

- the number who succeed in gaining a qualification;

- learning outcomes achieved;

- feedback from students;

- involvement of social partners in the development of courses.

Many of these are very close to the indicators identified by EQAVET, but their reporting for QA purposes still needs to be developed by DLLL.

Other quality assurance systems have similar indicators, for instance the Irish system and the UK (Wales) system report on the numbers of adults and success rate by courses and examinations. The quality label in Luxembourg which has as one of its aims to make the sector more transparent and to provide a better overview of the sector for policy-makers includes indicators which can monitor the general performance of the non-formal provision. It enables the government to gather data and publish statistics on non-formal continuing education. However, the information which providers need to deliver in order to receive the quality label includes mostly qualitative indicators, such as: is there an evaluation conducted annually? Are there certification criteria for staff members?

Excursion: sector level monitoring system for quality of lifelong learning in Greece (under construction)

The study found scarce evidence of existing sector level monitoring systems focusing on non-formal adult learning. On the basis of the described and analysed quality assurance systems, overviews can be provided (e.g. number of accredited providers) per quality assurance system; however, only one system was found which tries to develop a monitoring system on the basis of specific lifelong learning-relevant quality principles. In this short 'excursion' we provide further details on this monitoring system. The box provides a detailed description of this Greek example.[1]

Π3 sets a framework of priorities and principles on quality assurance in non-formal lifelong learning. This covers all forms of educational and learning provision for people over 16 years old and includes initial VET, all apprenticeship schemes, continuing VET, second chance education and all liberal and/or popular adult education programmes. It further provides to all relevant structures a tool for organising and delivering the evaluation of learning outcomes for those participating in any of the programmes provided. This is essentially delivered on the grounds that firstly, π^3 defines quality by setting a number of principles and criteria in all three dimensions of education and learning, namely inputs, processes and outputs, and secondly, π^3 provides a large number of measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators for the evaluating the degree implementation of quality assurance principles by all relevant providers.

The approach is firmly elaborated by a number identified "quality principles" that operate more as imperatives or even better as given facts that rationalise the framework itself in this case. These principles are the following: LLL is attractive (1); LLL is effective (2); LLL is relevant to the needs of the labour market (3); LLL is sustainable and promotes social cohesion (4); LLL promotes creativity and innovation (5); LLL uses resources of high standards (6); LLL is provided with social responsibility (7); and finally, LLL exploits networking and cooperation (8).

The degree to which lifelong learning institutions incorporate the aforementioned principles in their systems and operational procedures is evaluated, at a top level via a set of fifteen measurable qualitative and quantitative key indicators, presented in the table below:

#	Indicator	Calculation	Quality Principle
1	Degree of attraction of adult learners in LLL programmes	*Number of applications submitted by adult learners (≥16 years old) to participate in LLL programmes*	1

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[1] More details on this Greek example can be found in the annex: case study report.

2	Degree of satisfaction of the recipients of LLL services compared to their expectations	*Average score to the respective question to the recipients of LLL services*	**1**
3	Recognition of qualifications of the adult learners from the labour market	*Average score to the respective question to the employers*	**1**
4	Degree of certification of qualifications acquired through LLL programmes	*Percentage of adult learners who successfully completed the certification procedure*	**2**
5	Degree of use of the qualifications acquired through LLL programmes	*Average score to the respective question to the employed adult learners*	**2**
6	Degree of alignment of VET Programmes to the corresponding professions	*Ratio of VET programmes that are based upon a certified professional profile against the total number of VET programmes*	**3**
7	Degree of participation of unemployed people to LLL programmes	*Ratio of unemployed people participating in LLL programmes against the total number of people participating in the programmes*	**3**
8	Degree of participation to more than one LLL programmes	*Ratio of adult learners that have participated in more than one LLL programme against the total number of adult learners*	**4**
9	Degree of use of Consultancy and Career orientation services	*Percentage of adult learners that have successfully participated in a LLL programme and have used consultancy and career orientation services, against the total number of the adult learners who have successfully participated in a LLL programme*	**4**
10	Degree of use of innovative teaching methods that promote creativity and autonomous learning in the LLL programmes	*Number of innovative teaching interventions that promote creativity and autonomous learning during the delivery of LLL programmes*	**5**
11	Degree of participants' satisfaction from the LLL service providers	*Average score to the respective question to the participants of each programme*	**6**
12	Knowledge update of the trainers	*Percentage of training hours for knowledge update vs. the total number of trainers*	**6**
13	Degree of participation to LLL programmes of socially vulnerable groups	*Percentage of people belonging to socially vulnerable groups who participate in LLL programmes, against the total number of participants*	**7**
14	Incorporation of quality systems in the LLL and accreditation service providers	*Ratio of LLL and accreditation service providers with a quality system against the total number of certified service providers*	**7**
15	Degree of participation to networks (national and international)	*Number of collaborations (networks, work groups, participation in projects, etc.)*	**8**

The role of these indicators is multiple and involves the description of the situation at any given time; the quantification of all qualitative objectives that are put in place; the provision of constant information flow on how the objectives are fulfilled; and finally, it providers an indication of the factors involved in fulfilling the objectives. The key indicators can and should be enhanced, analysed and further developed by the organisations involved in terms of their content and the Ministry of Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs has developed a "toolbox" of forty seven additional indicators to support this effort.

This example, although it is had not as yet been implemented, could provide a model and a possible incentive and, even, inspiration for policy-makers / institutions seeking to develop sector level monitoring systems.

5.6   Principles underlying quality approaches in adult learning

In this chapter, we saw how quality assurance systems related to adult learning focus on particular quality areas and set indicators to measure quality developments. We also examined an example of a system-level monitoring approach. One issue has not fully been touched upon however, namely, the principles which underlie the quality assurance systems in adult learning. In the majority of the examples examined above the underlying principles are often implicitly assumed rather than being explicitly stated or they are included as descriptions of the mission and objectives of the responsible bodies. However there are examples among the systems described above of where the underlying principles are made clearly explicit.

One of the more elaborated descriptions of the underlying principles of adult learning can be found in the Ö-Cert quality label in Austria. The basic principles and paradigm of the concept "adult education" includes a life-stage orientation to foster political participation (citizenship), social participation, professional orientation, related to one's own biography; education is more than the application of tools and skill-orientation, adult education means more than "qualification" or "training". Furthermore, lifelong learning embraces all formats for learning (formal, non-formal, informal), the diverse places where learning takes place, and all ages. Learning comprehends all target-oriented activities to improve knowledge and knowing, skills and competences, insights e.g. In addition, adult education (adult learning and continuing education are used here as synonyms) is defined as all formats and forms of learning of the adult population in the context of professional and vocational, non-vocational and general education, citizenship education and community education, culture and the arts, privately, in public institutions or in economic context; conducted by teachers or self-directed. Adult education activities follow a political strategy and social responsibility and are structured by organizations on a legal and financial basis.

The Greek π^3 approach is firmly elaborated by a number of identified "quality principles" that operate more as imperatives that rationalize the framework itself in this case. These principles are the following[1]: 1) LLL is attractive; 2) LLL is effective; 3) LLL is relevant to the needs of the labour market; 4) LLL is sustainable and promotes social cohesion; 5) LLL promotes creativity and innovation; 6) LLL uses resources of high standards; 7) LLL is provided with social responsibility, and 8) LLL exploits networking and cooperation.

5.7   Conclusions

This Chapter looked at the quality areas and descriptors the quality assurance systems focus on. In addition, system level indicators have been discussed in the cases where they are encountered. On the basis of the material studied, the following is concluded:

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[1] Available in the π^3 - The National Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning – Executive Summary (in English).

- The quality assurance systems mostly cover all four broad categories of quality descriptors: organisational issues; quality of the didactics and the learning process; quality of staff; and quality of measuring results.

- Quality descriptors related to organisational issues include often the requirement of having a quality plan in place. In addition, having a clear view on the organisational structure and financial systems is included as important organisational aspects of quality assurance.

- Quality descriptors related to the didactics used and the learning process, often having detailed descriptions of the education and training provided and the required didactics used for deliverance. In addition, complaints procedures and stated learners' rights are considered pivotal in quality adult learning provision.

- Quality descriptors related to staff quality includes in most quality assurance systems setting requirements for staff members in terms of competences, prior training and qualifications.

- Quality descriptors related to measuring results deal both with measuring the outcomes of the education and training provided, and the follow-up on quality developments in the institute.

- With regard to the quality descriptors and indicators of the quality assurance systems, one can differentiate between quality assurance systems having a focus on procedural aspects on quality assurance, such as organisational issues (whether there is a quality plan for instance); quality assurance systems focussing on content of provision, such as didactical aspects (is the provision tailor made?); and quality assurance systems which have a holistic perspective and cover both procedural and content aspects of quality.

- System, or sector level monitoring systems including adult learning tailored sets of indicators are scarce.

6 Linking challenges with good practices

> This chapter further discuss some **specific challenges for quality in adult learning** found in the country analysis (section 6.1), and match these **with concrete good practices** found in this study (case studies), presented a models for inspiration / solution in section 6.2. In addition, **strengths and weaknesses and success factors** are identified in section 6.3, which need to be taken into account when extending these quality systems more widely.

6.1 Challenges and issues related to quality in adult learning

This section discusses the main issues and challenges identified in the study that are specific to assuring the quality of providers and provision in adult learning. Challenges can be identified in relation to different aspects: firstly, the context in which adult learning takes place (Section 6.1.1); secondly, the system-level quality assurance in place (Section 6.1.2); thirdly, the situation of provider and staff quality assurance and (Section 6.1.3); finally, the contribution of quality adult learning to the EU-wide objective of increasing and widening participation in adult learning (Section 6.1.4).

6.1.1 The context in which adult learning takes place

 "Quality" in general terms covers almost every aspect of adult learning, ranging from policy and legal frameworks in place, financing models, cooperation between actors, providers, provision of adult learning, staff, curriculum and infrastructure, all of which have a role to play in a well-functioning adult learning system and which contribute to increasing participation and effective learning outcomes. In general terms, there are challenges for adult learning throughout Europe in all these areas, but this report focuses only on those that have most direct bearing on the existence or not of quality systems and their successful implementation or not. The most salient contextual challenges relating to adult learning identified in the study are:

- Several European countries (mainly in BE, BG, CY, CZ, BE, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SK, ES) are **lacking an overarching legal framework** in the field of adult learning. In addition, the lack of an overarching lifelong learning strategy (such as in NL, NO, UK, PL, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), IT, MT, PT, TK ES, FR, HR, IT, LT, MT, RO) is impeding the development and implementation of overarching quality systems for the adult learning sector. In many countries the development of quality systems covers a wide range of field laws covering each educational sector. This diversity of regimes impedes the development of an overarching strategy and standardisation.

- Many countries (mainly EE, SE, CZ, CY, HR, HU, LT, LV, PL, RO, IT) report on a **lack of cooperation between stakeholders** (e.g. Ministries, social partner, and learning providers). Since adult learning has a wide diversity of stakeholders, mostly depending on the goal and type of learning (basic skills, labour market, innovation, self-development), it is a challenge to develop integrated strategies and to create clear

ownership among stakeholders. This can result in the situation that there is no single (state) organisation that takes responsibility (such as in CZ). Moreover, cooperation between regional and national stakeholders is challenging (see for instance IT). On the other hand, positive examples can also be seen, where the government stresses that adult education and training is a shared responsibility of individuals and the social partners (DK and until recently, NL[1]).

■ In many countries the current **economic crisis impedes further development of quality systems** and the implementation of more developed lifelong learning strategies in general (mainly in the countries EE, ES, IS, CY. HR, HU, LT, LV, PL, RO, EL, IE, MT, PT). In addition, decreasing budgets for adult learning increases the attention to the accountability of (public) spending, with a consequent shift in the balance between key principles of quality such as equity, effectiveness and efficiency. Reducing budgets also undermines the status and the working conditions of the staff in the field of adult learning, which on the medium term may affect the quality of provision.

Taking these challenges together, they paint a picture in many countries of adult learning as being diverse and fragmented and lacking the necessary frameworks, infrastructure, funding and co-operation for systematic quality assurance of the spectrum of adult learning, especially non-formal adult learning.

6.1.2 Quality assurance instruments / regulation on system level

Challenges also exist in relation to actual quality development and quality assurance measures (where they exist). Reviewing developments in the different countries, the following challenges can be identified concerning system level quality assurance instruments.

■ In all countries there is a **wide diversity of quality assurance systems** and procedures, often falling under different field laws of the governments leading to a fragmentation of quality approaches and lack of comparability. The challenge is to achieve an integrated quality framework (these were specially absent in NL, BG, CZ, CY, HR, PL, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), LU, MT, TK; while positive examples were provided in AT, CH, SI, UK, EL. Although there are positive examples, still in these countries the heterogeneity of quality assurance systems is mentioned as a challenge).[2]

■ All countries have quality systems in place for HE, VET and secondary schools. In most cases the quality frameworks in place have the same principles for initial as well as continuous learning. The key question in this respect is to what extent **quality proce-**

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[1] The project unit Learning and Working, which coordinated adult learning policies in the Netherlands, was abolished in 2011.
[2] Where a common framework has been developed, such as in Sweden, it was acknowledged, that the heterogeneity of adult learning made it difficult to develop a commonly accepted and useful quality tool. In fact, it took years to develop the first version of a quality assurance and development tool for providers (BRUK: stands in Swedish for Bedömning, Reflektion, Utveckling, Kvalitet (Assessment, Reflection, Development, Quality)), that was both useful and acceptable for the whole formal adult learning sector.

dures take into account of basic principles for adult learning as identified earlier in this report (Section 2.2.3). Especially for NL, BG, CZ, CY, HR, HU, PL, RO, LU this challenge was reported and to a minor extent for CH, EE, FI, SI, UK, and PT.

■ While quality assurance system are in place for formal adult learning (as indicated, often falling under the same legal act or system as for initial education), this is not the case for the **non-formal part of adult learning**, and more specifically where it is privately funded (by individuals, companies or charity organisations). Quality systems are especially lacking in DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, IS, BG, CZ, CY, BE (Walloon), FR, IT, MT. When it concerns non-publicly financed adult learning, providing learning not leading to a formal, state-regulated qualification, it is mostly up to the sector, provider, or client to define the standards.

■ In general, the occupational field of **adult learning staff (predominantly adult learning teaching professionals) is subject to 'light touch' regulation in terms of, for example, entry and continuing professional development requirements.** In many countries and settings, no specific qualifications are required for becoming an adult educator, not to mention other positions such as manager, guidance counsellor, supporting staff etc. However, considerable differences can be detected between the formal and non-formal part of adult learning in this regard. Requirements for adult learning staff are more formalised in formal adult education which usually take place in initial education, VET or HE institutions. Staff requirements for the non-formal sector are less developed, and need further attention in several countries (like such as in NL, ES, CY, DE, IE, MT, TK, AT, DK, FI, NL, NO, SE, UK, IS, CZ, DE, HR, LT, LV, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, FR, IE, IT, PT). Nevertheless, some countries have interesting practices in place (like AT, CH, MT, EE).

■ Although many countries are addressing accreditation of prior learning to assure permeability and progression through the education system, most countries do not have quality systems in place for assuring the quality of **accreditation of prior learning** (this was considered a major challenge in DK, EE, UK, ES, BG, CY, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, LU, MT, TK) . A similar issue is the provision of **guidance and counselling** for which quality assurance is considered a major challenge in a number of countries (such as EE, UK, ES, DE, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, MT).

■ In most countries (such as in DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, IS, BG, CY, DE, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, EL, IE, MT, PT, TK) **there is very limited (monitoring) information** available on the provision, learning outcomes and quality standards in place in non-formal of adult learning. Many countries still do not have a standardised national information database to present a clear picture on the direct and indirect economic and other benefits of adult learning and training programmes. This is a drawback in terms of quality development and quality assurance. Especially information is lacking on learning taking place outside the formal system. A substantial part of adult learning is provided by private providers or the company the person works for and this part of the adult

learning sector is poorly monitored, although initiatives exist but often on ad hoc basis[1].

- As already indicated in chapter 3, many strategies, white papers and policy documents on quality assurance have been produced in the last few years by different countries. But the challenge **is to implement the strategies**. Experience of developing an overarching quality system in different countries, tells us that it takes a long time to come to an understanding of quality in adult learning and to build **a consensus** around the idea of quality assurance system (this was considered to be the case in AT, DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, CY, DE, HR, HU, LT, LV, PL, RO, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), EL, FR, IE, IT, LU, MT, PT, TK) .

- The development and **implementation of national qualifications frameworks** and the associated focus on learning outcomes in describing qualifications are playing a part in the 'quality' issue in adult learning in many countries. This arises from the need to quality assure qualifications awarded on the framework and to ensure the integrity of the national qualification framework itself. This is leading to steps to accredit providers of programmes leading to such qualifications and to the external validation of the programmes in questions (IE, MT for example). This applies equally to all providers alike, both publicly- and privately-funded.

To summarise, looking at developments in different countries one can conclude that the main criterion is whether there is a quality system in place for a specific domain of adult learning.

6.1.3 Quality assurance within providers and staff development

Assessing the main challenges and issues at provider level, the following points can be made:

- Besides the challenge of providers not having a quality system, some challenges are identified for providers that have a quality system in place, such as the **formal attitude towards the quality assurance systems** (e.g. compliance with minimum requirements set rather than seeking to excel in their adult learning provision). Moreover, external evaluation and self-evaluation are mainly impacting on structural, organisational, and managerial processes rather than on teachers, learners and the learning process. This raises the question of whether quality processes focus on the right set of activities.

- A similar issue raised is the **lack of a quality culture within providers**, meaning that the provider have an intrinsic attitude to continuously improve and develop the quality, and the fact that the outcomes of the quality assurance systems are not used very

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[1] For example in the Netherlands, in the last years some studies has been carried out to gain a better sight on adult learning providers, and more specifically what is delivered out side the public financed system (such a recent study assigned by "NRTO" and "Stichting lezen en schrijven")

often for improving standards and procedures, and where this is actually happening, providers are often reactive instead of proactive. This of course hampers the effectiveness and efficiency of the quality assurance system. Furthermore, providers often lack human resources qualified to develop and implement quality assurance systems.

- Although countries differ in the requirements set for adult learning staff at provider level, additional requirements can be set (AT, DK, FI, SI, UK, ES, DE, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), EL, PT have clear set of requirements for staff in formal adult learning) . As indicated, in the formal part of adult learning quality standards are in most cases aligned with those of the professionals working in primary, secondary and tertiary education, without paying specific attention to pedagogical / andragogical skills. For the non-formal sector it is often up to the sector and provider to decide.[1]

When it comes to quality assuring adult learning, especially non-formal adult learning, the inventory of system and provider level challenges identifies many weaknesses and gaps at both levels in many countries. However, direct evidence is missing as to whether quality is absent where no frameworks exist. This is of course possible to understand, since there is often no monitoring data available for these sectors to support such a judgement.[2]

6.1.4 Impact on increasing and widening participation

Challenges exist in relation to participation rates in lifelong learning and many countries are a long way off the ET2020 target of 15 per cent participation (see also chapter 3). Many countries also experience low participation rates by some specific target groups, such as older people, migrants, and low-skilled persons and they still need to open up their educational systems to adult learning (main challenges were identified in BG, CZ, HR, HU, PL, RO, BE (Walloon), EL, IT, and TK). Reviewing the challenges, one could conclude that the countries that score lowest in the participation figures also face the most severe challenges developing quality systems.

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[1] Often subject knowledge and practical experience are leading criteria while recruiting staff. A recent study shows that continuous professional development and external evaluation play only a relatively small role in quality enhancement policies within adult learning providers. See: Buiskool, Bert-Jan, Jaap van Lakerveld, Frowine de Oudendammer, Erik Kats. Hemmo Smit, Simon Broek (2008), Adult Learning Professions in Europe (Research voor Beleid)

[2] Interestingly, the only concrete examples provided in the study arose in the UK and Ireland where quality assurance mechanisms are in fact, in place in adult learning. A report published in the UK on Further Education Colleges and Adult Community Providers indicated that too many providers inspected in 2011 achieved a grade of 'satisfactory' and too few achieved 'good' or 'outstanding' (Ofsted (2011), The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2010/11). In Ireland questions raised (in 2010) in relation to the integrity of a small number of the then FETAC qualifications and the robustness of the providers' quality assurance monitoring procedures led to concerns among stakeholders about what had been characterised as 'light-touch regulation' on the part of FETAC. The resultant perceived threat to the integrity and value of the then FETAC awards was discussed in a Sub-committee of the national Parliament before which FETAC was called to testify. Closer monitoring at all levels was put in place as a result.

6.2 What system is appropriate to addressing which challenge at system level?

Chapter 4 and 5 described a high number of system-level quality assurance systems. Each system has its own rationale, structure, objectives, processes in place and sets of indicators. Hence, each system is attuned to a specific situation and intends to address a particular challenge. It can be clearly concluded that there is no one-size fits all and that each situation calls for a specific quality assurance approach. The quality assurance systems can therefore be regarded as a source of motivation and information for extending quality assurance in adult learning in Europe: the variety of contexts in Europe is equalled by the diversity of systems identified. Since in the previous section, system-level challenges have been identified, in this section, we seek to link these challenges to the quality assurance systems identified and described. The key question is therefore: what quality assurance system is most appropriate to address which challenges at system level?

The following table summarises the key challenges at system level (column 1); indicates in what direction a solution can be found (column 2); provides an interesting practice related to this solution (column 3) and finally indicates to which countries this solution can apply (column 4).

Table 7: Key challenges, responses and practices

Key challenge	Response to the challenge	Relevant quality assurance system[1]	Countries to which this challenge applies
1) Lack of overarching QA system / regulation for assuring quality in the whole adult learning sector (national level)	Develop an overarching system with minimum requirements	Meta-frameworks: AT (Ö-Cert)* Overarching frameworks: CH: EduQua*; IE FETAC framework*	**Major:** NL, BG, CZ, CY, HR, PL, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), LU, MT, TK **Minor:** DK, EE, FI, NO, SE, ES, IS, DE, HU, LT, LV, RO, FR, IE, IT, PT
2) Lack of system / framework / regulation for assuring quality in the non-formal part of adult learning	Develop a quality assurance system for non-formal adult learning, with setting minimum quality requirements	Systems organised by public bodies: CH: EduQua*; FR: Greta-plus*; LU: Quality label	**Major:** DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, IS, BG, CZ, CY, BE (Walloon), FR, IT, MT **Minor:** FI, SE, SI, UK, DE, HR, LT, LV RO, IE, LU, PT, TK
		Systems organised by private bodies: DE: Hamburg model*; NL: quality seal folk universities; NL: NRTO code of conduct	
	Stimulating quality developments without	Quality prizes: DE Stiftungwarenpreis, SE, FI	

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[1] The asterix (*) indicates that on these particular practices detailed descriptions are included in the annex of the report (case study reports).

	setting minimum quality requirements		
	Providing additional support structures	Quality guidelines/manual: SE (BRUK)*; Staff development programme: NO*, MT*; SI: Offering Quality Education to Adults*; CZ: Concept project*	
3) Lack of attention to adult learning specific elements in quality systems / regulation for formal education	Increase attention to adult learning elements in formal education	VET: UK (Wales): ESTYN inspectorate*; IE: FETAC framework*; FR: Greta-plus* General education: MT: QA Structures in basic skills*	**Major:** NL, BG, CZ, CY, HR, HU, PL, RO, LU **Minor:** AT, DK, NO, SE, ES, IS, DE, LT, LV, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), EL, FR, IE, IT, MT, TK
4) Lack of (specific) legal requirements for adult learning staff/ Lacking initial training and continuing professional development	Set staff requirements at national level	MT: QA Structures in basic skills* AT: Wba; CH: Train the Trainer (AdA)	Requirements (formal): **Major:** CY **Minor:** CH, EE, NL, NO, SE, IS, BG, CZ, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, IE, MT, TK
			Requirements (non-formal): **Major:** NL, ES, CY, DE, IE, MT, TK **Minor:** AT, CH, DK, EE, FI, NO, SE, UK, IS, BG, CZ, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), EL, PT
			Initial training (formal): **Major:** TK **Minor:** AT, DK, NL, NO, SI, ES, IS, BG, CZ, CY, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, EL, FR, IE, MT
			Initial training (non-formal): **Major:** AT, NL, CY, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, EL, IE, MT, TK **Minor:** CH, DK, EE, FI, NO, SE, SI, UK, ES, IS, BG, CZ, DE, BE (Flanders), PT
5) Lack of system / regulation for assuring quality of APL provision and guidance	Set minimum quality requirements for APL providers	NL: Quality Code APL*; PT: quality charter New Opportunity Centres (closed in 01-2013)	**Major:** DK, EE, UK, ES, BG, CY, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, LU, MT, TK **Minor:** AT, CH, FI, SE, SI, IS, DE, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, IE
	Set minimum quality requirements for guidance providers	DK: quality in guidance*	**Major:** EE, UK, ES, DE, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, MT **Minor:** AT, CH, FI, NL, NO, SE, SL, IS, BG. CY, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, FR, IE, LU, PT, TK
6) Lack of monitor-	Establish sector-level	EL: Quality Always	**Major:** DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, IS, BG, CY,

| ing data in the AL sector (provision of AL and effects) | indicators for monitoring | Everywhere* | DE, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, EL, IE, MT, PT, TK |
| | | | **Minor:** AT, FI, SE, SI, UK, CZ, PL, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), FR, IT, LU |

6.3   Extending quality assurance mechanisms more widely: pros and cons

In the previous section, we linked challenges and quality assurance systems. This provides a perspective as to which systems can be used to address which national challenges related to quality in adult learning. In this section, we continue this route and provide information about extending quality assurance mechanisms more widely. In section 6.3.1 the strengths, weaknesses are assessed, in section 6.3.2 more general factors of successful implementation of quality assurance systems are identified.

6.3.1   Strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance systems

As indicated, there is diversity in approaches to facilitate the quality assurance of providers dependent on the intensity of the quality assurance procedure. The ESTYN framework in the UK (Wales) is a rather top-down approach, while on the other hand the Luxembourg's Quality Label, Ö-Cert and EduQua are characterised as bottom-up approaches. The Ö-Cert, in addition, is considered a meta-framework building on the existence of other quality assurance systems. Each quality assurance system is developed within its own context, having different aims and hence, different approaches. Here below, for each of the quality assurance systems studied the main strengths and weaknesses are mentioned; in addition, for three of the most interesting systems, the pros and cons for extending these quality assurance systems more widely are identified after presenting the strengths and weaknesses

Table 8: Strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance systems studied

QA system	Strengths/ Weaknesses
AT Ö-CERT (AT-CERT)	(+) Widely used; low resource intensity; Concept of LLL as basis for QA
	(-) Builds on other QA systems, hence less specific AL
CH eduQua	(+) Widely used; Nation-wide acceptance, strong AL focus (specifically AL), responsibility at provider level
	(-) Intensive workload of the certification process
DE Quality association CET Hamburg	(+) Widely used; affordable; low-threshold, consumer oriented, high marketing value
	(-) Low intensity in follow-up
EL ∏3 framework	(+) Only overarching framework identified focussing on non-formal lifelong learning
	(-) Not implemented yet, hence effect is unknown

FR Label Greta-Plus	(+) Adult learner focus; nation-wide system
	(-) High administrative costs, low added value for providers
IE Quality Assurance System for further education and training (QQI, former FE-TAC)	(+) Overarching framework; trust in qualifications; broad stakeholder involvement and consensus; lengthy development period
	(-) One system for a heterogeneous sector; resource intensive in a period of budgetary constraints; dissolution of FETAC and establishment of QQI could give rise to transition challenges for providers and practitioners and a certain amount of 'innovation fatigue'
LU Label de Qualité	(+) Specific label for non-formal adult education; widely used; low resource intensity
	(-) -
MT Quality Assurance Structures in the provision of basic literacy, numeracy and computer awareness	(+) Overarching framework, very content-related (quality of staff); directly linked to NFQ; strong link to EU-wide developments
	(-) Framework is designed for the particular situation of Malta where the DLLL is responsible for the provision and hiring of staff
NL Code of Conduct private providers (NRTO)	(+) Widely used, negotiated with relevant stakeholders, linked to eligibility for VAT redemption, low resource intensity
	(-) high process focus, low intensity of follow-up activities and rules concerning non-compliance
NL Folk universities quality seal	(+) Developed by the sector itself; low resource intensity
	(-) Not widely used, low marketing value
NL Quality code for APL providers	(+) Strong commitment from the sector (the development was initiatives by the sector)
	(-) lack of regulation on who accredits the APL providers
SI Quality label Offering Quality Education for Adults – OQEA /Green quality logo	(+) Strong support model from the responsible body; high involvement of providers in the development; high level of mutual learning
	(-) high resource intensity, bureaucracy
UK ESTYN Inspection of Adult Community Learning (ACL) in Wales	(+) strong communication with stakeholders; strong support from the responsible body; (mandatory); transparency at all stages of the process; strong focus on quality development; nation-wide coverage
	(-) high resource intensity

6.3.2 Success factors

Given the strengths and weaknesses, success factors of the quality assurance systems are identified. Success factors are factors that were identified as being a condition under which a good-working quality assurance system was/is implemented. These success

factors can be taken into account in determining new initiatives or in transferring initiatives developed elsewhere into new contexts. The following factors of success are identified:

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

- The quality assurance system is transparent for all stakeholder;

- The quality assurance system is organisationally strongly backed;

  - The responsibility body possess authority in the sector;
  - The quality assurance system has commitment within the provider of the management and the employees;
- The quality assurance system should be affordable given the adult learning provision and the context;

- The quality assurance system should be relevant for the given context (no one-size fits all);

- The development/ acceptance of quality assurance systems takes a certain period of time.

Here below, these factors of success are described in more detail.

An issue particularly emphasised in almost all quality assurance systems, **is the focus of the initiative on the learner, or consumer**. This is mentioned explicitly for instance, in the German initiative in the Hamburg region, but also in the Swiss EduQua framework. In fact, concerning the eduQua model, the learner-centeredness is considered an advantage in comparison to the Austrian Ö-Cert model. This learner-centeredness is operationalised in different ways. This learner-centeredness can as well be explained as taking into account explicitly the fact that adults (can) learn in a different way as younger people and might need different tools, didactics, structures, learning material, and more flexibly ways of delivery. This success factor can be found in all cases studied. The Austrian Ö-cert clearly takes the concept of lifelong learning as starting point in the development of the quality model. As basic principle it include life stage orientation to foster political participation (citizenship), social participation, professional orientation, related to ones own biography; education is more than the application of tools and skill orientation, adult education means more than "qualification" or "training".

Quality assurance systems should be **transparent** for all stakeholders. The rules and procedures should be clear and understandable for all. This explains the success of the longstanding **Swiss** and **German** quality initiatives.

Another factor, which is often mentioned as a determinant of success is a stable and **strong organisational backing of the initiative/instrument**. This can be operationalised at different levels. For instance the development of the Irish model consisted of extensive consultation and involvement of stakeholder, including providers, representative bodies, and learners. This was critical in getting 'buy-in' to the FETAC qualifications and quality system. Related to the strong organisational backing of the quality assurance system is the fact that successful systems are organized by responsible bodies closely

linked to the adult learning sector. This is the case in all systems related to the non-state funded provision (DE, NL), but also in systems where the responsible bodies is as well the sector organisation, providing advice, information, and funds courses (SI, MT, IE, LU, UK). The responsible body should possess authority in the sector.

Strong organisational backing does not only concern support from policy makers and other stakeholders, but even more of own management and personnel. With regard to quality assurance, it is important to **have commitment within the provider from management and employees**. This is the starting point of the **Slovenian** quality model. The management and staff of the organisation are directly involved in the process of quality assessment and development. All employees are allowed to decide upon how and according to what dimensions they use self-evaluation results.

Furthermore, the quality assurance systems have to be **affordable** for adult learning providers, both in terms of budget and time spend on assuring the quality, or monitoring the quality. Here there is a difference between the formal education systems leading to formal qualifications and the non-formal systems not leading to formal qualifications. In general, if formal qualifications are at stake, the quality assurance initiatives tend to be more severe in terms of costs and time allocation (for instance inspectorates). In the non-formal system one sees more often less restrictive quality assurance systems such as quality labels.

The quality model should be flexible. Each quality approach is attuned to the **specific adult learning context**. In a way, the context, aim, organisation, structure and type or learners determine the scope, size, strength, and complexity of the quality approach chosen. Asking therefore for an all-encompassing, overarching quality framework runs into serious difficulties and the challenge is to make it as flexible and open as possible, so that the diversity in adult learning sectors can be accommodated and respected. **There is no one-size-fits-all**. Even in national approaches, such as in Switzerland and Austria, the frameworks (especially the Austrian one) leaves a lot of freedom to individual providers in relation to their choice of quality assurance approach / system. In addition, as mentioned, the history and maturity of a quality approach, and hence the state of development of the adult learning domain in which the quality approach is implemented is an indication for the potential complexity of the approach. Well-developed sectors, closely related to formal education, reveal stricter quality models (including external inspectorates, for instance), than less developed adult learning sectors (see for instance the examples of well-established systems in UK (Wales), and Ireland.

Finally, as a factor of success, the **long incubation time, or period of existence** can be mentioned. This is the case in German Hamburg quality seal and the Swiss eduQua quality assurance system as well (both more than 20 years of experience). The Austrian quality assurance system clearly lacks this period of time to receive acceptance within the field, however is getting there. This success factor entails that quality approaches in general have a long development period before they really start to make a difference. Quality has everything to do with trust. Providers, policy makers, learners, stakeholders, employers need time to understand an approach, see the benefits of an approach and finally trust the quality approach. This trust therefore, is not established directly at the

moment of initiating a quality approach, but it has to grow over the years, calling for the sustainable involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

6.4   Conclusion

This chapter has identified system and provider level challenges to quality in adult learning and related them to relevant examples of practices throughout Europe that could offer solutions or at least sources of inspirations for policy-makers.

The main challenges concern the fragmented approach towards quality assurance and hence the lack of overarching QA systems in the adult learning sector, and especially for the non-formal part of adult learning. Fragmentation does not necessarily lead to a lack of quality as such, but makes it difficult to stimulate quality development and quality improvement in the sector. Motivating models in this respect include Ö-cert (AT), Edu-Qua (CH), and the FETAC framework (IE), Greta-plus (FR), Quality label (LU) or systems organized by private bodies lie the Hamburg Model (DE), quality seal folk universities or code of conduct private providers (NL). Models for stimulating quality development without setting minimum requirements are consumer-oriented quality prizes (DE) or other quality prizes as identified in Sweden and Finland.

Another challenge is the lack of attention to adult learning specific elements in quality systems for formal (adult) learning for which inspiring models can be found in the ESTYN inspectorate, FETAC framework, and Greta-plus for VET and for basic education in Malta.

Further challenges relate to the lack of requirements in relation to adult learning staff; lack of quality systems and standards for guidance and APL provision, and the lack of monitoring data. Some challenges are more striking for some countries rather than others, but in all countries these apply to some extent.

7 Differences and common characteristics between VET, HE and adult learning

This chapter provides an overview of differences and common characteristics in the non-formal adult learning sector compared with the development of quality assurance systems in VET and Higher Education. In this Chapter, Section 7.1 provides an **introduction of difference and common characteristics**; Section 7.2 provides a **comparison of quality assurance on providers level between educational sectors**. Section 7.3 discusses the **comparison of system level quality assurance between educational sectors**. After this, Section 7.4 concerns a **comparison of quality in adult learning with existing European frameworks**. This Chapter will conclude Section 7.5; **conclusions**.

7.1 Introducing differences and common characteristics

Chapter 2 and 3 already elaborated on the overlap between sectors and how adult learning is provided in all three sectors. Given the overviews provided in Chapter 3, 4 and 5, some differences and common characteristics can be found on quality assurance systems in HE, VET, general education and the non-formal adult learning part. Differences and common characteristics are identified at three levels: firstly, the provider level, secondly, the system level, and thirdly, the European level developments that have been taken place. Table 9 summarises the differences and common characteristics, followed by a discussion afterwards.

Table 9: Overview of differences and common characteristics

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

7.2 Comparison of quality assurance systems on providers level between educational sectors

The way providers organise their internal quality procedures depends on two related issues, namely the governance structure in the sector and secondly, the funding principles underlying the provider. The governance structure is related to the afore-mentioned level of regulation of the sector and the funding is related to the principle that 'the one who pays, determines the level of quality assurance in place'.

Providers in the formal sector, although they often have an autonomous status, are highly regulated by the state, in case they are providing formal qualifications. This often goes with a specific request to have **internal quality procedures to be in place**. Since the non formal sector is less regulated, internal procedures are less forthcoming. This does not necessarily mean that quality procedures are lacking on providers level, as

there can be other driving forces to stimulate providers to set up quality assurance procedures, such as specific requirements for receiving (mostly public) funding.

The non-formal sector is financed by different stakeholders. Funding comes from governments, employers, participants, and other organisations/institutions. As the funders often set the conditions under which the programmes are provided, there can be emphasis on different internal quality issues. Funding parties have different reasons for doing that:

- Accountability: this can be both towards public and private funding schemes. Those who pay for the programmes delivered want to sure that their money is well spent and that they receive value for money.

- Consumer protection: when learners have to pay for the courses, the are considered consumers/clients and as consumers quality procedures need to be in place so that their consumers' rights are respected

- Transparency: those who pay for the courses (public authorities, private funders, learners) can demand transparency and comparability of the educational offer provided so that they are able to base their choice for the provider that meets their demands best; hence they can demand similar quality standards and quality procedures for providers of comparable programmes.

With regard to staff requirements, a similar picture emerges as it depends on the same principles (governance structure and funding): in the formal sector, more often **requirements are set for staff members** (most of the time this is limited to teaching staff).

7.3 Comparison of quality assurance systems between educational sectors on system level

With regard to system level quality assurance, the differences between HE, VET and non-formal adult education are less related to the fact that the provision is intended for adults, but more to the fact that the **HE, general education and VET provide state-regulated qualifications**. The National Qualifications Frameworks often require that all awards included in the NQF are quality assured, and a key objective of these frameworks is to promote and maintain standards. The development of EQF is therefore a stimulating force encouraging Member States to further develop quality standards for educational programmes which lead to a formal qualification.

Therefore, the quality assurance for education programmes leading to formal qualifications (HE and VET) is well regulated and quality assured. Often, the requirements are stated in the education laws and accreditation bodies and inspectorates control the quality of the institutions. Both provider level and programme level inspections/ assessments are conducted. However, a specific focus on adult learners is frequently missing. The non-formal sectors are less regulated through the government and more often **grass-root, bottom-up approaches are applied** to work on quality assurance (such as codes of conducts and development of sectoral quality labels). On the other hand, as has been mentioned earlier the development of NQFs and learning trajectory independ-

ent assessments of peoples competences (attention to informal and non-formal learning) call for increasing emphasis on quality assurance of the non-formal programmes which can, by means of validation, lead to recognised qualifications.

Given the fact that the formal sectors are more regulated than the non-formal sector, **monitoring of the sector** also **differs**. The formal sectors are generally more uniform in their objectives, type of organisation, target groups, and societal results, where the HE sector is even more uniformly organised than the VET sector. For the formal sector, in general, clear sets of indicators and objectives are developed. For instance, number of students, drop-out rates, stakeholder involvement, labour market relevance of programmes, etc. The non-formal sector portrays, as we saw, a more diverse landscape, comprising organisations with different objectives, different modes of delivery, different funding mechanisms, diversified backgrounds of participants and target groups, types of outcomes and results. As a consequence, monitoring on a clear set of indicators becomes more difficult.

As a common characteristic in quality assurance systems between the HE, VET and non-formal adult learning sector, **the procedural focus of quality assurance systems** can be mentioned. The organisational issues quality assurance systems pay attention to in general are therefore similar (mission statement of provider, organisational structure/ management, administration, finance, establishment of a quality plan, physical infrastructure/ equipment (building, classroom, computers, etc.), anticipation to new developments, etc.). This is confirmed by the fact that providers from the three different sectors use the same organisational quality labels, such as ISO.

In addition, the procedures applied in quality assurance do not diverge largely across sectors. They all involve application, assessment, validation and monitoring/renewal. However, in VET and HE, more emphasize is given to the quality of programme than in the non-formal sector that focus more on organisational issues. This, again, has everything to do with the fact that the programmes lead to a formal, state-regulated qualification.

7.4   Comparison quality in adult learning with existing European frameworks

As already indicated in the introductory chapter, in the VET and HE sector there have been developments at European level during more than a decade to establish quality reference frameworks. The developments related to general education are at a standstill after the publication of the set of indicators in 2000. In section 7.4.1-7.4.3 we discuss the principles behind the EQAVET framework, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and indicators in school education to learn from these initiatives for future developments of a European quality reference framework for non-formal adult learning. After we have discussed these European frameworks we identify what may be relevant for the adult learning sector (in section 7.4.4).

7.4.1 EQAVET

The **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET)** was approved by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009[1]. EQAVET provides a European wide system to help Member States and stakeholders to document, develop, monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their vocational education and training (VET) provision and quality management practices. The EQAVET builds on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit for VET (ECVET) system and previous European quality assurance systems (such as the Common Quality Assurance Framework – CQAF). The aim of EQAVET is to be a reference instrument, to help Member States to promote and monitor continuous improvement of their VET systems based on common European references. The framework should contribute to quality improvement in VET and to increased transparency of, and consistency in, VET policy developments between Member States, thereby promoting mutual trust, mobility of workers and learners, and lifelong learning.[2] According to the Recommendation, it "should be applied at the VET-system, VET-provider and qualification-awarding levels. It provides a systemic approach to quality, covering and interrelating the relevant levels and actors. The framework should give strong emphasis to monitoring and improving quality by combining internal and external evaluation, review and processes for improvement, supported by measurement and qualitative analysis. The framework should be a basis for further development through cooperation at European, national, regional and local levels."[3]

The EQAVET framework is based on a quality circle consisting of four steps: (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) evaluation and (4) review. The EQAVET framework promotes quality assurance at VET system level and VET provider level. Concerning system level quality assurance/development the following indicative descriptors are suggested for each of the four steps in the quality circle:

> **System level indicative descriptors EQAVET[4]**
> ■ **Planning:**
>   ■ Goals/objectives of VET are described for the medium and long term, and linked to European goals.
>   ■ The relevant stakeholders participate in setting VET goals and objectives at the different levels.
>   ■ Targets are established and monitored through specific indicators (success criteria).
>   ■ Mechanisms and procedures have been established to identify training needs.
>   ■ An information policy has been devised to ensure optimum disclosure of quality results / outcomes subject to national / regional data protection requirements.
>   ■ Standards and guidelines for recognition, validation and certification of competences of individuals have been defined.

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[1] OJ C 155/1 8.7.2009, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Text with EEA relevance) (2009/C 155/01).

[2] OJ C 155/1 8.7.2009, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Text with EEA relevance) (2009/C 155/01).

[3] OJ C 155/1 8.7.2009, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Text with EEA relevance) (2009/C 155/01).

[4] http://www.eqavet.eu/qa/gns/home.aspx

- **Implementation:**
  - Implementation plans are established in cooperation with social partners, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders at the different levels
  - Implementation plans include consideration of the resources required, the capacity of the users and the tools and guidelines needed for support
  - Guidelines and standards have been devised for implementation at different levels
  - Implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers
  - VET providers' responsibilities in the implementation process are explicitly described and made transparent
  - A national and/or regional quality assurance framework has been devised and includes guidelines and quality standards at VET-provider level to promote continuous improvement and self-regulation
- **Evaluation:**
  - A methodology for evaluation has been devised, covering internal and external evaluation
  - Stakeholder involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process is agreed and clearly described
  - The national/regional standards and processes for improving and assuring quality are relevant and proportionate to the needs of the sector
  - Systems are subject to self-evaluation, internal and external review, as appropriate
  - Early warning systems are implemented
  - Performance indicators are applied
  - Relevant, regular and coherent data collection takes place, in order to measure success and identify areas for improvement. Appropriate data collection methodologies have been devised, e.g. questionnaires and indicators/metrics
- **Review:**
  - Procedures, mechanisms and instruments for undertaking reviews are defined at all levels
  - Processes are regularly reviewed and action plans for change devised. Systems are adjusted accordingly
  - Information on the outcomes of evaluation is made publicly available

The following indicators at system level are proposed:
- Overarching Indicators for Quality Assurance

  - Indicator 1. Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers
  - Indicator 2. Investment in training of teachers and trainers
- Indicators supporting quality objectives for VET policies

  - Indicator 3. Participation rate in VET programmes
  - Indicator 4. Completion rate in VET programmes
  - Indicator 5. Placement rate in VET programmes
  - Indicator 6. Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace
- Context information

  - Indicator 7. Unemployment rate
  - Indicator 8. Prevalence of vulnerable groups
  - Indicator 9. Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
  - Indicator 10. Schemes used to promote better access to VET

Example of an indicator: No 1: Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers:

- (a) share of VET providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative

The EQAVET framework identified indicative descriptors at providers' level as well (see box).[1]

Providers' level indicative descriptors EQAVET

■ **Planning:**
  ■ European, national and regional VET policy goals/objectives are reflected in the local targets set by the VET providers
  ■ Explicit goals/objectives and targets are set and monitored
  ■ Ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders takes place to identify specific local/ individual needs
  ■ Responsibilities in quality management and development have been explicitly allocated
  ■ There is an early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development
  ■ Providers plan cooperative initiatives with other VET providers
  ■ The relevant stakeholders participate in the process of analysing local needs
  ■ VET providers have an explicit and transparent quality assurance system in place

■ **Implementation:**
  ■ Resources are appropriately internally aligned/ assigned with a view to achieving the targets set in the implementation plans
  ■ Relevant and inclusive partnerships are explicitly supported to implement the actions planned
  ■ The strategic plan for staff competence development specifies the need for training for teachers and trainers
  ■ Staff undertake regular training and develop cooperation with relevant external stakeholders to support capacity building and quality improvement, and to enhance performance

■ **Evaluation:**
  ■ Self-assessment/self-evaluation is periodically carried out under national and regional regulations/frameworks or at the initiative of VET providers
  ■ Evaluation and review covers pr
  ■ Processes and results/outcomes of education including the assessment of learner satisfaction as well as staff performance and satisfaction
  ■ Evaluation and review includes adequate and effective mechanisms to involve internal and external stakeholders
  ■ Early warning systems are implemented

■ **Review:**
  ■ Learners' feedback is gathered on their individual learning experience and on the learning and teaching environment. Together with teachers' feedback this is used to inform further actions
  ■ Information on the outcomes of the review is widely and publicly available
  ■ Procedures on feedback and review are part of a strategic learning process in the organisation
  ■ Results/outcomes of the evaluation process are discussed with relevant stakeholders and appropriate action plans are put in place

The EQAVET model is further operationlaised in ten building blocks (see Table 10).[2]

Table 10: Building blocks of EQAVET

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[1] http://www.eqavet.eu/gc/tns/building-your-system/introduction.aspx
[2] http://www.eqavet.eu/ga/tns/building-blocks/introduction.aspx

Building blocks (BB)	Description
1. Set clear rules for deciding who offers VET provision	Member States manage the supply of high quality training by having clear systems to decide which organisations can offer courses and/or qualifications.
2. Recognise and build on existing internal arrangements	The EQARF recommendation can be supported through the use of existing provider-based systems and VET quality assurance arrangements.
3. Set clear roles and responsibilities for different parts of the VET system	At both provider and system level (either nationally or regionally) it is important to be clear about what each organisation is expected to do.
4. Identify what information and data should be collected and used in VET system	There is extensive data on vocational training, the challenge is to identify and use a relevant core set of data consistently – with a focus on providers, inspectors, evaluators and government using the same definitions of the indicators and measures.
5. Define and implement a communications strategy	Whilst mainly relevant at the system level, there are clear needs for up-to-date, consistent and accurate information on the quality assurance process to be shared and understood.
6. Pilot initiatives and value success	Quality assurance can be achieved through recognising effective practice. Staged approaches which include pilot programmes, awards and funding can all play a part in recognising successful quality assurance systems.
7. Use feedback to improve VET	VET has to both meet employers' and learners' needs. Key to any quality assurance system is the way feedback is used to improve the national or regional system, and training providers systematically collect and use the experiences and feedback from learners and employers to modify and improve their provision.
8. Provide clarity over funding	Public and private sector funds are not limitless. The link between high quality provision and funding provides both an incentive as well as an accountability measure for quality assurance arrangements.
9. Ensure quality assurance covers all aspects of VET provision	Quality assurance covers both the content of training and the administrative and staff arrangements which support teaching and learning. The EQARF should be seen as all encompassing.
10. Ensure VET is founded on a strong involvement of external and internal partners and relevant stakeholders	VET is based on effective partnerships. These exist between government, social partners and national stakeholders; employers and training providers; and learners and society. They create the foundation stone of the VET system which gives it strength, relevance and acceptability.

7.4.2 European Standards and Guidelines (HE)

The **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area**[1], drawn up by the ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB and endorsed by the ministers of education of the Bologna signatory[2] forms the response to the twin mandates given to ENQA in the Berlin communiqué of September 2003 to develop 'an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance' and 'to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies'. The purposes of the standards and guidelines are:

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[1] ENQA (2009), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Helsinki: ENQA.
[2] See European Ministers of Education meeting in Bergen in May 2005.

- to improve the education available to students in higher education institutions in the EHEA;

- to assist higher education institutions in managing and enhancing their quality and, thereby, to help to justify their institutional autonomy;

- to form a background for quality assurance agencies in their work;

- to make external quality assurance more transparent and simpler to understand for everybody involved.

According to the ESG report, the "standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance, […], have been developed for the use of higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies working in the EHEA, covering key areas relating to quality and standards. The purpose of these standards and guidelines is to provide a source of assistance and guidance to both higher education institutions in developing their own quality assurance systems and agencies undertaking external quality assurance, as well as to contribute to a common frame of reference, which can be used by institutions and agencies alike. It is not the intention that these standards and guidelines should dictate practice or be interpreted as prescriptive or unchangeable."[1] The standards and guidelines are based on a number of basic principles about quality assurance, both internal in and external to higher education in the EHEA. These include:

- providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;

- the interests of society in the quality and standards of higher education need to be safeguarded;

- the quality of academic programmes need to be developed and improved for students and other beneficiaries of higher education across the EHEA;

- there need to be efficient and effective organisational structures within which those academic programmes can be provided and supported;

- transparency and the use of external expertise in quality assurance processes are important;

- there should be encouragement of a culture of quality within higher education institutions;

- processes should be developed through which higher education institutions can demonstrate their accountability, including accountability for the investment of public and private money;

- quality assurance for accountability purposes is fully compatible with quality assurance for enhancement purposes;

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[1] ENQA (2009), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Helsinki: ENQA, p. 15.

- institutions should be able to demonstrate their quality at home and internationally;

- processes used should not stifle diversity and innovation.

Hence the ESG report makes a distinction between (1) internal quality assurance within HEI, (2) the external quality assurance of higher education and (3) finally the quality assurance of external quality assurance agencies. For each, the headings are mentioned of the standards and guidelines and one detailed example is presented.

Internal quality guidelines include:

1.1) Policy and procedures for quality assurance;
1.2) Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards;
1.3) Assessment of students;
1.4) Quality assurance of teaching staff;
1.5) Learning resources and student support;
1.6) Information systems and
1.7) Public information

Example: 1.3 Assessment of students

STANDARD: Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

GUIDELINES: The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and that it takes into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners' support. Student assessment procedures are expected to:

- be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives;

- be appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative;

- have clear and published criteria for marking;

- be undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the progression of students towards the achievement of the knowledge and skills associated with their intended qualification;

- where possible, not rely on the judgements of single examiners;

- take account of all the possible consequences of examination regulations;

- have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances;

- ensure that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the institution's stated procedures;

- be subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures.

In addition, students should be clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

The **external quality assurance** emphasises:

2.1) The use of internal quality assurance procedures
2.2) Development of external quality assurance processes
2.3) Criteria for decisions
2.4) Processes fit for purpose
2.5) Reporting
2.6) Follow-up procedures
2.7) Periodic reviews
2.8) System-wide analyses

Example: 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes

STANDARD: The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

GUIDELINES: In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, external quality assurance methods should be designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. The procedures that are finally agreed should be published and should contain explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the processes as well as a description of the procedures to be used. As external quality assurance makes demands on the institutions involved, a preliminary impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are appropriate and do not interfere more than necessary with the normal work of higher education institutions.

Furthermore, **external quality assurance agencies** are expected to develop ideas on the following topics:

3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education
3.2 Official status
3.3 Activities
3.4 Resources
3.5 Mission statement
3.6 Independence
3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies
3.8 Accountability procedures

Example: 3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies

STANDARD: The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

■ a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;

■ an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;

■ publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;

■ a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in

the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

Guidelines: Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes. Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people. Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions or conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

7.4.3 Quality in school education: sixteen quality indicators

At the conference held in Prague in June 1998, the Education Ministers of the European Union and the candidate countries proposed setting up a working group made up of national experts, with the aim of identifying a series of indicators or benchmarks to facilitate the evaluation of education systems at national level. The report was drawn up by experts from the Education Ministries of the 26 countries that took part in the Working Committee on Quality Indicators and was submitted to the Education Ministers of the European Union and the candidate countries at a meeting held in Bucharest in June 2000[1]. The 16 indicators on quality of school education provide a complementary set of information, which begins to paint a picture of quality in European schools. The 16 indicators are shown in the table below:

Table 11: Areas and indicators school education

AREA	INDICATOR
Attainment	1. Mathematics 2. Reading 3. Science 4. Information and communication technologies (ICT) 5. Foreign languages 6. Learning to learn 7. Civics
Success and transition	8. Drop out 9. Completion of upper secondary education 10. Participation in tertiary education
Monitoring of school education	11. Evaluation and steering of school education 12. Parental participation
Resources and Structures	13. Education and training of teachers 14. Participation in pre-primary education 15. Number of students per computer 16. Educational expenditure per student

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[1] The working committee includes experts selected by the Ministers of Education of the following countries: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia.

As is presented, four areas are identified:[1]

- **1. Attainment**. In this area are seven indicators of attainment which are seen as critical for all European countries in the present and for the future. In some fields — 'mathematics', 'reading', 'science' — data already exist. To some degree this reflects the relative ease of measurement in these curricular areas. At the other end of the spectrum 'learning to learn' is an indicator covering a much less easily measurable set of skills but nonetheless critical for an unpredictable social and economic future where no comparable data is presently available. In between are subjects such as 'civics', for which little data as yet exists, and 'foreign languages', which has also still to be developed. 'Information and communication technology' (ICT) is also included in this attainment set because, although little good data currently exists, it will be a key indicator in years to come. All of these areas of attainment remain important goals for the future.

- **2. Success and transition**. Into this area fall three indicators of highly significant policy relevance. They are closely inter-related — 'drop-out rate from school', 'completion of upper secondary education' and 'participation in tertiary education'.

- **3. Monitoring of school education**. Two indicators currently fall into this area. These are 'evaluation and steering of school education' and 'parental participation'. Both are concerned with stakeholder participation where heads of schools, teachers, students and parents are key stakeholders, consumers of information and active players in school improvement.

- **4. Resources and structures**. This category includes four indicators, each concerned with key aspects of infrastructure which underpin school performance and pupil success. These are 'educational expenditure per student', 'education and training of teachers', 'participation rates in pre-primary education' and 'number of students per computer'.

Each indicator is further operationalised and existing data sources, such as Eurostat and Eurydice, are used to provide country comparisons in the report. The focus of the indicator-set is in the first place a system-perspective.

7.4.4   What could the adult learning sector learn from other sector frameworks?

The EQAVET framework and adult learning

In general, the EQAVET **framework** is relevant to adult learning. However, there are several elements, where the adult learning sector strongly diverges from VET systems (although CVET is part of the field of adult learning). This concerns the following:

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[1] See: EUROPEAN COMMISSION Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2000) EUROPEAN REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION SIXTEEN QUALITY INDICATORS, Report based on the work of the Working Committee on Quality Indicator, p. 7.

- The adult learning sector is less uniform, and less regulated than the VET sector. Also, there are less courses leading to formal qualifications. Finally, the adult learning sector includes many non-state supported providers operating on the education market. This means that at national level it might not be feasible to have clear systems to decide who can offer what kind of course.

- Concerning information and the use of information on the adult learning sector, there is less formal information available on non-vocational needs and it is not widely used. Further work to make the adult learning sector more responsive to stakeholders' needs might be required.

- Feedback from participants and feedback-loops involving stakeholders are both for VET and adult learning important ways to improve the quality. For adult learning this is even more the case than for VET, as adults often learn for their own sake, follow their own learning trajectories, (partially) pay for the courses themselves and an one-size-fits-all approach is less acceptable to them. Therefore, the 'consumer' perspective may be more applicable to adult learning than it is to VET.

Overlapping issues between VET and adult learning:

- Making use of existing internal quality frameworks and models. This applies both for the VET sector and the adult learning sector.

- Communication and transparency is key in quality assurance. This is recognised both in the VET sector and the adult learning sector.

- Mutual learning, knowledge exchange and piloting interesting and promising practices is an important way of developing a quality culture both in VET and adult learning.

- Both in VET and adult learning, the relationship between financial resources and quality should be clear. High quality requires financial resources.

- Quality frameworks that cover both the content of the learning/training and the administrative structures to support the learning can be seen in both VET and adult learning.

- Stakeholder involvement is essential for both VET and adult learning so as to have the provision close to labour market and societal needs. Although, certain parts of the adult learning sector have less institutionalised stakeholder involvement (non-formal, non-vocational, liberal education), this does not mean that these sectors should not be aware of their surroundings in terms of the principal stakeholders, benefiting/supporting organisations, participants.

The **system level indicative descriptors**, with a more procedural nature, are relevant to adult learning. For instance, involving stakeholders in developing VET/ lifelong learning programmes and policies; developing implementation plans, which include considerations of the resources required, the capacity of the users and the tools and guidelines

needed for support; devising a methodology for evaluation, covering internal and external evaluation; and defining procedures, mechanisms and instruments for undertaking reviews at all levels. Whether the **EQAVET system indicators** are applicable to all adult learning sectors in the Member States is questionable as it refers to a different governance model. The VET sector is *more* uniform in terms of structure, content, level, target groups and policy aims as the broader adult learning sector. The EQAVET indicators are mainly attuned to VET and might be relevant to CVET as well, but they cannot be used for the entire adult learning sector. As the previous chapters indicated scarce evidence of the existence of system level indicators to monitor the quality in adult learning, there is only limited information on relevant additional indicators which could be added to the EQAVET list of system indicators to cover adult learning. On the other hand, the Greece π^3 framework, developed on the basis of the EQAVET recommendation, includes valuable suggestions on how to operationalise indicators for monitoring lifelong learning in general. These include for instance:

Degree of attraction of adult learners in LLL programmes	Number of applications submitted by adult learners (≥16 years old) to participate in LLL programmes
Degree of certification of qualifications acquired through LLL programmes	Percentage of adult learners who successfully completed the certification procedure
Degree of participation of unemployed people to LLL programmes	Ratio of unemployed people participating in LLL programmes against the total number of people participating in the programmes
Knowledge update of the trainers	Percentage of training hours for knowledge update vs. the total number of trainers

In addition, the indicators could take into account the Lisbon and EU2020 benchmarks on participation in lifelong learning, educational attainment and, as contextual indicator, the level of early school leaving. Furthermore, other statistics could be involved as well, such as the Adult education survey, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), and the Eurostat social inclusion statistics (Living conditions and social protection).

The EQAVET **indicative descriptors at providers' level** are generally applicable to adult learning providers. Although the learning environment might be different, the procedures and structures needed to guarantee that the learning environment is of high quality are generally the same and focus on transparency in the objectives and strategy of the organisation, the quality of support structures, clear communication, quality of staff, involvement of stakeholders, feedback loops to continuously improve the quality. The EQAVET framework describes what should be included in quality plans, how these plans should be implemented, evaluated, and reviewed. As we saw in Chapter 5, the studied examples of quality assurance systems, mostly took the above-mentioned issues into account. They focus on setting requirements related to the quality of the organisation; the quality of didactics and the learning process; the quality of staff; the quality of the results. Often these quality frameworks require an internal quality model, including setting objectives, implementation plans, monitoring results etc. which fits well with the general philosophy behind the EQAVET framework. For instance, the 'seven core ele-

ments of quality' set out in the Ö-Cert reflect what is included in the EQAVET indicative descriptors at providers' level (see box):

- Mission statement of the organisation/ guiding principles (description of criteria of the guiding principles and goals of the provider)

- Offer (programme) of the organisation (provider) (description of the target groups, needs and interests, general information and data of the target groups and educational sector, information management, diversity and gender issues

- Management of the provider organisation (quality profile)

- Quality of staff (quality profile)

- Management of quality development and culture of feedback (error management), definition of quality

- Quality of the infrastructure (resources), best conditions for the learner (clients)

- Quality of public relations and feedback culture (outreach work)

The studied examples of quality assurance systems could use the EQAVET framework quite easily and reference their own practice to the provider level indicative descriptors set. The table below provides a preliminary assessment on how the studied practices would fit the EQAVET plan, do, act, and review cycle. It is assessed whether the indicative descriptors are closely related to what is included as quality areas in the systems studied.

Table 12: Comparison EQAVET indicative descriptors and the quality areas in systems studied (Chapter 4 and 5).

Providers' level indicative descriptors EQAVET[1]	Examples	Assessment
Planning:		
European, national and regional VET policy goals/objectives are reflected in the local targets set by the VET providers		The mission statement can explicitly mention the position of the institute in relation to higher-level goals/objectives
Explicit goals/objectives and targets are set and monitored	AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, MT, SI, UK	Quality assurance systems generally ask providers to set explicit goals.
Ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders takes place to identify specific local/ individual needs	MT, EL	This depends very much on the type of adult learning and is more developed in the more vocational oriented sub-sectors
Responsibilities in quality management and development have been explicitly allocated	AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, MT, NL3***, SI, UK	This is often included in the requirements for being quality assured.
There is an early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development		This could implicitly be the case in many of the examples encountered
Providers plan cooperative initiatives with other VET providers		This appears to be less developed
The relevant stakeholders participate in the process of analysing local needs		This depends very much on the type of adult learning and is more developed in the more

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[1] NB: where reference is made to 'VET' instead 'adult learning' is used.

		vocational oriented sub-sectors
VET providers have an explicit and transparent quality assurance system in place	AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, MT, NL3***, SI, UK	This is often included in the requirements for being quality assured.

Implementation:

Resources are appropriately internally aligned/ assigned with a view to achieving the targets set in the implementation plans	AT, CH, DE, FR, IE, LU, MT, NL3***, SI, UK	This is often included in the requirements for being quality assured.
Relevant and inclusive partnerships are explicitly supported to implement the actions planned		This appears to be less developed
The strategic plan for staff competence development specifies the need for training for teachers and trainers	AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, MT, NL1*, NL3***, SI, UK	Staff competence is one of the more important aspect of quality assurance in AL and hence is covered by most quality assurance systems
Staff undertake regular training and develop co-operation with relevant external stakeholders to support capacity building and quality improvement, and to enhance performance	AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, MT, NL1*, NL3***, SI, UK	Staff competence is one of the more important aspect of quality assurance in AL and hence is covered by most quality assurance systems

Evaluation:

Self-assessment/self-evaluation is periodically carried out under national and regional regulations/frameworks or at the initiative of VET providers	AT, CH, DE, FR, IE, LU, MT, NL1*, NL3***, SI, UK	In most systems, providers' self-evaluation is included in the assessment procedure
Evaluation and review covers processes and results/outcomes of education including the assessment of learner satisfaction as well as staff performance and satisfaction	AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, LU, MT, NL1*, SI, UK	Receiving feedback from learners is considered one of the more important quality checks in the quality assurance systems studied
Evaluation and review includes adequate and effective mechanisms to involve internal and external stakeholders	AT, CH, DE, FR, IE, LU, NL2**, NL3***, SI, UK	The control of self-evaluation reports by external evaluators is included in the assessment procedures
Early warning systems are implemented		This appears to be less developed

Review:

Learners' feedback is gathered on their individual learning experience and on the learning and teaching environment. Together with teachers' feedback this is used to inform further actions	AT, CH, DE, FR, IE, MT, NL1*, NL2**, SI, UK	Receiving feedback from learners is considered one of the more important quality checks in the quality assurance systems studied
Information on the outcomes of the review is widely and publicly available	UK	This is less developed in the practices studied
Procedures on feedback and review are part of a strategic learning process in the organisation		This is less developed in the practices studied
Results/outcomes of the evaluation process are discussed with relevant stakeholders and appropriate action plans are put in place		This is less developed in the practices studied

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From the table it can be concluded that the indicative descriptors of EQAVET at providers' level to a large extent overlap with the quality areas found in the quality assurance systems studied:

■ The indicative descriptors related to **'planning'** overlap on the issues of setting objectives; consultation with stakeholders; allocation of responsibilities for quality assurance; having a transparent quality assurance system in place. In many quality assur-

ance systems, these quality areas concern mandatory requirements for being quality assured as a provider. Descriptors which are less covered by the quality assurance systems studied concern the relationship with European, national and regional (VET) policies; involvement of staff in planning; cooperation with other providers; involvement of stakeholders in analysing local needs. In general, these descriptors refer to the broader environment in which provision is provided and in some cases these are less relevant for particular domains of adult learning. For instance, private providers might see less of an advantage in cooperating with other providers, or, for providers focussing on personal development of participants; it might be less necessary to link with European, national and regional policies.

■ The indicative descriptors related to **'implementation'** overlap to an even larger extent. The allocation of resources in order to achieve targets set is considered an important condition for a quality provider. In addition, staff competences are an important element of quality at provider level and is hence covered by most (if not all) quality assurance systems studied (the extent to which criteria and requirements are set differ, however not the fact that staff quality is considered important). This is expressed as well in the finding that quality assurance systems require staff to continuously update their competences in order to enhance performance. The indicative descriptors on relevant and inclusive partnerships is not emphasised in the quality assurance systems studied.

■ The indicative descriptors related to **'evaluation'** also show an extensive overlap with quality areas identified in the quality assurance systems studied. Provider level self-evaluation and assessment are considered essential in most quality assurance systems; retrieving feedback from the learners in order to improve the provision is key as a quality check (in fact, as in many countries adult learning providers operate at a open training 'market', 'client-satisfaction' is an important element in the business). Finally, as the self-evaluations are often a first step in becoming quality assured these reports of these self-evaluations are critically examined by the responsible bodies. Early warning systems are not as such mentioned in the quality assurance systems studied.

■ The indicative descriptors related to **'review'** are in general less pronounced in the quality assurance systems studied. Only, the already discussed 'receiving feedback from learners and teachers' is included as important quality assurance procedure. The other descriptors (making available information on outcomes of reviews, having feedback as part of the strategic learning process of the organisation, discussing outcomes of reviews with relevant stakeholders and develop appropriate action plans) are less developed in the quality assurance systems studied.

On the other hand, there are some elements to which the EQAVET indicative descriptors pay less attention than the quality assurance systems studied. These quality areas concern more the didactical aspects of the delivery (using the right set of methods, making

the education programme tailored to the audience, etc.) and the general infrastructure of the provider. Some of the quality assurance systems indicate that the providers need to have a fit-for-purpose infrastructure, both in terms of building/equipment and support structures (administrative support, accessibility of information).

The differences between the indicative descriptors and the quality areas of the quality assurance systems studied relate to differences between the sub-sectors in general as indicated earlier in this section.

It can be concluded, that in general the framework (indicative descriptors and building blocks) of EQAVET applies to adult learning as well, albeit some slight amendments should be made, having to do with the characteristics of the governance models applicable to adult learning and the characteristics of adult learners and adult learning in general. However, as a general framework, EQAVET clearly has relevance and can be applied for adult learning as in practice the quality assurance systems studied already to a large extent point to similar indicative descriptors in relation to quality.

The ESG framework and adult learning

The internal quality guidelines within the ESG framework differ in focus in relation to the EQAVET descriptors. Where EQAVET is structured as a quality circle, the ESG is focussed on guidelines how to organise the quality assurance. With regard to these internal quality guidelines (policy and procedures for quality assurance; approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards; assessment of students; quality assurance of teaching staff; learning resources and student support; information systems and; public information) there is clearly an overlap in relation to the cases studied in the context of this study. Also in these quality assurance systems reference is made to rationalising the objectives and aims (AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, MT, SI, UK) ; internal procedures to quality assure programmes and courses (AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, LU, MT, NL1*, SI, UK); quality assurance of teaching staff (AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, MT, NL1*, NL3***, SI, UK); quality of the learning resources (AT, CH, DE, EL, FR, IE, MT, NL2**, SI, UK); information systems and transparency and communication (AT, CH, DE, FR, IE, NL1*, NL2**, UK). Hence, the guidelines given in the ESG are applicable to adult learning providers as well. See for instance, the guideline concerning quality of staff is applicable to providers of adult learning as well (see box).[1]

> **Quality assurance of teaching staff**
> STANDARD:
> Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.
> GUIDELINES:
> Teachers are the single most important learning resource available to most students. It is important that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to transmit their knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their

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[1] ENQA (2009), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Helsinki: ENQA.

own performance. Institutions should ensure that their staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that all new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of competence. Teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills. Institutions should provide poor teachers with opportunities to improve their skills to an acceptable level and should have the means to remove them from their teaching duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective.

Concerning **the external quality assurance guidelines**, these could be a bit too restrictive for adult learning provision. They can be applicable to specific sub-sectors of adult learning, but cannot be applied to the wide variety of adult learning sub-sectors as there might be too burdensome for some sub-sectors. In general, when adult learning provides formal qualifications, more restricted and externally quality assured procedures can be put in place, similar to the higher education standards and guidelines.

An interesting element in the ESG is the quality assurance of quality assurance bodies. This is in fact more a meta-framework of quality assurance. This assures that accreditation organisations conduct the accreditation with a certain level of quality. For the adult learning sector, embracing a meta-framework perspective could provide a way of addressing the diversity of the sector: each sub-sector could have its own system; however, they would need to comply with uniform rules on how a quality assurance agency is organised.

The quality indicators in school education and adult learning

The quality indicators in school education are intended to describe a highly institutionalised sector, with clear education pathways, clear profiles of the pupils and clear objectives. This is reflected in the indicators set, which include content-related indicators, indicators on success and transition, indicators on monitoring of school education, and finally, indicators on resources and structures. The adult learning sector is less institutionalised, less clear in terms of education pathways of learners; less clear is the profile of the learners (prior experiences, age) and less clear in terms of objectives set. For this reason, the indicator set for school education is in general less relevant for the adult learning sector.

7.5   Conclusion

In this Chapter the characteristics of quality assurance in the non-formal adult learning sector is compared with the development of quality assurance systems in VET, HE, and general education. On the basis of this Chapter the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Quality assurance in adult learning on providers level is less developed compared to VET, General education and higher education. When it concerns setting requirements for staff, in general a larger variety of types of requirements are used (qualifications, subject knowledge, age, etc.) in adult learning.

- At system level, compared with the VET, general education and higher education, the adult learning sector is less regulated, often lacking a system level quality assurance system and has no uniform set of indicators to monitor progress.

- At European level, the HE and VET sector have already years of experience in developing a European framework for quality. When looking at which elements are relevant to adult learning the following can be concluded:

  - In general, the EQAVET is relevant to adult learning. Issues that require more attention concern the fact that the adult learning sector is less uniform; the stakeholder's needs are less pronounced; the feedback from learners should receive more attention.
  - Whether the **EQAVET system indicators** are applicable to all adult learning sectors in the Member States is questionable as it refers to a different governance model. The quantifiable indicative indicators are too much focussed on VET. Other relevant indicators that need to be taken into account to make the EQAVET list of indicators more applicable to monitor the quality in adult learning are the Adult Education Survey, the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), and the Eurostat social inclusion statistics (Living conditions and social protection). In addition, newly compiled indicators could be used at country level such as developed in the Greek π^3 framework. The more procedural **system level indicative descriptors** can be applied to adult learning as well.
  - The **EQAVET indicative descriptors** at providers' level are generally applicable to adult learning providers. The Plan, Do, Act, Evaluate quality cycle works for adult learning as well. In general, the quality assurance systems studied to a large extent fit the indicative descriptors at providers level; however, there could be more focus on the learning environment of adults.
  - With regard the ESG, the provider level guidelines are clearly relevant for the adult learning sector; the guidelines for external evaluation might however be too restrictive. The meta-level evaluation of accreditation bodies is an interesting way of dealing with diversity of systems.
  - When comparing both EQAVET and ESG on their applicability in the adult learning sector, the EQAVET framework is better suited to be applied to the wide variety of adult learning domains.
  - The indicators for quality in school education describe a sector which is very different from the adult learning sector and hence this framework is less relevant to draw lessons from.

8   Conclusions and input for reference framework

Conclusions and recommendations are derived from the findings in the content chapters. Moreover, we involved in our considerations the groups of experts, consisting of our network of correspondents; a number of additional experts; and the members of the Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning during an interview and seminar organised in the context of this project. These sources provided the information, review and feedback to formulate and prioritise our recommendations.

The recommendations apply to many stakeholders, all playing a role in policy-making and consecutive development and implementation processes. These stakeholders include politicians, ministries, policy-makers, public agencies and public providers, regional and local authorities, social partners, NGOs and churches, but also staff and adult learners themselves.

This chapter starts by defining the most important conclusions that can be drawn from the findings in the individual chapters (Section 8.1)[1]. Hereafter, specific recommendations for European countries to improve their quality systems (Section 8.2)[2]; and finally recommendations are provided related to the development of a European quality framework (Section 8.3).

8.1   Conclusions

(1) The main challenges in the countries studied

The findings of the study provide an argument that in most countries, **quality assurance systems**, **especially for the non-formal adult learning sector can be further developed**. Three arguments feed this conclusion. First of all overarching quality systems crossing different sub-sectors are hardly evident in the studied countries (with the exception of Ö-Cert and EduQua having labels that could be used in all sub-domains of adult learning). Besides, quality systems for the formal part of adult learning leading to state recognised qualifications are generally in place, often strongly interlinked to the standards set for formal education, but often, no specific reference is made to the group of adult learners. Finally, assessing quality systems existing in the non formal part of adult learning we can conclude that in many countries quality systems are still lacking or are only implemented for a very specific segment in the field of adult learning (see for a detailed overview chapter 3).

The countries that lack or are having limited number of quality systems in place **face at the same time the most severe challenges**. Besides of the lack of quality systems, some

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[1] For an overview of the key findings we refer to the concluding sections of each chapter.

[2] It should be noticed that political decisions are made at central, regional or local level and sometimes at different levels concurrently, with many countries showing a high degree of decentralisation. However, not all policy implications apply equally to all countries included in this study. In some cases these policy direction are already in place, while for others they may have less relevance because of different learning cultures, government structures and regulations. Besides, interesting initiatives from one country cannot automatically be replicated in another country.

countries report on highly fragmented systems (sometimes leading to the situation that one provider is falling under different regimes). In these countries standards or requirements for assuring the quality of adult learning staff, but also guidance and APL provision, are also often lacking. At the same time these countries generally also score low on the ET2020 benchmarks that are particularly relevant for adult learning, such as participation in LLL and educational attainment level of adults.

For the countries that face the most sever challenges **the study identified a high number of interesting practices** which can serve as inspiration for improving and setting of quality assurance systems in the different countries including their success and fail factors (see the findings of chapter 6 but also the recommendations on country level in Section 8.2).

A key challenge that addresses all countries is that there is **very limited (monitoring) information available on system level** on the provision, learning outcomes and quality standards in place, specifically for the non-formal part of adult learning. Due to the lack of this (comparable) information there is limited insight in the results of adult learning in social and economic terms, based on cost -benefit analysis. This also counts for the cost and benefits of quality assurance instruments, if they are in place.

(2) The need for European quality reference framework in adult learning

The conclusions above provide an **argument for the development of a reference framework for quality in adult learning** at the European level to serve as reference that Member States could use to develop standards for the whole sector (in case systems are lacking or highly fragmented). This reference framework could be used by national, regional, sectoral and institutional organisations in developing quality policies. It is important to differentiate in the framework between the different adult learning domains (e.g. higher education, vocational education, second chance and liberal education) and types of provision (formal and non-formal).

(3) Interlinking with other European Quality Frameworks

There is a **plea for an integrated approach for quality linking up with other European quality frameworks already developed in the last decade.** There are some strong arguments to link up with the quality framework already developed for the VET sector (EQAVET) and make this framework adult learning proof, instead of developing a separate framework. The following arguments can be summed up:

- Chapter 7 provides strong evidence that EQAVET (such as the quality model, building blocks and indicative descriptors set) is also applicable to adult learning provision. EQAVET needs slight modification to adopt it to the adult learning sector;

- Having different quality frameworks in place could lead to confusion amongst stakeholders ("again another framework"), especially in case a provider provides services in the vocational as well the non vocational domain (theoretically falling under two quality frameworks).

- Aligning with EQAVET leads to economies of scale making use of the existing platforms of national reference points, EQAVET network, the products and tools that has

been developed, and the experience of the European Commission guiding this process.

The findings of the study provide an argumentation **to enlarge the EQAVET quality model by including adult learning stakeholders**. Further elaborating on the first argument above, the cases studied in the framework of this study show that quality systems for adult learning, despite of the different regimes, all share some basic principles very much aligned with what has been developed in the context of EQAVET. This counts as well for the building blocks and indicative descriptors as defined by EQAVET that can be adapted to adult learning.

- First of all **similar quality philosophies** can be found in the adult learning sector, very much aligned with what has been developed in the context of EQAVET, such as the use of the concept of quality circle (plan, do, check, and act) commonly used in different fields of education.

- Secondly, quality systems also adapt **similar procedures**, such that a quality system is required on providers' level, the application of self-evaluation and requirements regarding transparency and openness of the systems, and some form of external evaluation (see chapter 4). Providers in most cases have the freedom to decide and construct this quality system (by using different labels such as ISO, EQM, EFQM, etc.), although examples can be found of special developed quality seals / labels for adult learning (such as eduQua (CH) and Greta plus (FR)).

- Thirdly, **similar descriptors and indicators** have been identified in the case studies as has been developed by EQAVET (as well as for the ESG in HE, and the indicators for general education), mainly on providers level. Most of the time they address organisational issues; quality of the didactics and the learning process; quality of staff; and quality of measuring results (see chapter 5). The main exception it that the VET (and more specifically the HE and the general education sector) is more uniform, so the indicators are more linked to the specificness of each subsector. The indicators on system level show more variety. In case EQAVET will be broadened to the field of adult learning, these indicators should be further broadened to the specific characters of the adult learning sector (in terms of goals, governance models, finance, stakeholders involved, types of provision, learners, and learning outcomes).

Due to these similarities we propose therefore to **take the quality model of EQAVET as reference point for adult learning** and add adult learning specific characteristics to it. The question how to do this will be further discussed in Section 8.3.

Broadening the scope of EQAVET to adult learning could at the same time be a first step finally leading to a **future quality assurance framework for lifelong learning**, being an inspirational model for all educational sectors (also including HE and general education).

The following sections will further discuss what can be recommended based on these conclusions, on national as well as on European level.

8.2   Specific recommendations for European countries improving their quality systems

Based on the conclusions above, the following recommendations can be made that will help to improve the quality in adult learning in European countries. These recommendations are related to the system challenges which are identified in chapter 6 and interlinked with concrete cases studied that serve as inspiration for countries to further develop their systems (see also chapter 3, 4 and 5 for a systematic analysis of cases studied, and the independent case studies as provided in the Annex).

For countries facing a lack of an overarching quality framework for adult learning, it is recommended **to develop an overarching system which sets minimum requirements for providers to get validated** (applies mostly to NL, BG, CZ, CY, HR, PL, BE (Flanders), BE (Walloon), LU, MT, TK). As inspiration, the following systems can be further examined: meta-frameworks such as in Ö-Cert (AT) or overarching frameworks such as EduQua (CH), and the FETAC framework (IE).

For countries facing a lack of a system / framework / regulation for assuring quality in the non-formal part of adult learning, there are **three potential responses**, dependent on what countries feel best suitable for them (applies mostly to DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, IS, BG, CZ, CY, BE (Walloon), FR, IT, MT):

■ **Develop a quality assurance system for non-formal adult learning**, **with setting minimum quality requirements**. Inspirational models for this concern firstly, systems organised by public bodies, such as EduQua (CH) Greta-plus (FR); Quality label (LU); and secondly, they concern systems organised by private bodies, such as the Hamburg model (DE); the quality seal for folk universities (NL) and the code of conduct for Dutch private providers (NL).

■ **Stimulating quality developments without setting minimum quality requirements**. As inspiration one could have a look at existing quality prizes in Germany, Sweden and Finland.

■ **Providing additional support structures**. The Quality guidelines/manual developed in Sweden (BRUK); the staff development programmes developed in Norway and Malta; the Slovenian initiative 'Offering Quality Education to Adults' and the Czech 'Concept' project, could serve as inspiration.

For countries facing a lack of attention for adult learning specific elements in their quality systems / regulation for formal education, it is recommended **to increase attention to adult learning elements in formal education** (applies mostly to NL, BG, CZ, CY, HR, HU, PL, RO, LU). This includes changing policy and legal frameworks related to the educational sectors in question and engaging the stakeholders to change the regulations as they are, in order to increase the attention to adult learning specific elements in the quality assurance systems. Inspiring examples related to VET can be found in UK (Wales), namely the ESTYN inspectorate, in Ireland, the FETAC framework; and in France, the Greta-plus quality label. Related to general education, the system which is

particularly interesting to look at is the quality assurance structures in basic skills in Malta.

For countries facing a lack of (specific) legal requirements for adult learning staff/ Lacking initial training and continuing professional development, it is recommended **to set staff requirements at national level and develop opportunities for initial and further training of teachers in adult learning** (applies to most countries). Actions in this field should take into account the recommendations related to the study on key competences of adult learning professionals. Inspiring examples of frameworks where explicit attention is given to requirements set for adult learning staff can be found in Malta, namely in the quality assurance structures in basic skills.

For countries facing a lack of system / regulation for assuring quality of APL provision and guidance, there are two potential responses, dependent on what countries would like to focus on (in relation to APL, this applies mostly to DK, EE, UK, ES, BG, CY, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, LU, MT, TK; in relation to guidance, this applies mostly to EE, UK, ES, DE, PL, BE (Walloon), EL, MT). Firstly, **set minimum quality requirements for APL providers**. Inspiring examples can be found in the Netherlands, Quality Code APL; and Portugal, quality charter New Opportunity Centres; and secondly, **set minimum quality requirements for guidance providers**. An inspiring example can be found in Denmark: quality in guidance.

For countries facing a lack of monitoring data in the AL sector (provision of AL and effects), it is recommended **to establish sector-level indicators for monitoring the sector** (applies mostly to DK, EE, NL, NO, ES, IS, BG, CY, DE, HR, HU, LT, LV, RO, EL, IE, MT, PT, TK). These indicators should be tailored to the specific objectives of the adult learning system in the country. Although not yet implemented, the Greek "Quality - Always - Everywhere framework" provides an inspiring example to develop indicator sets to monitor the sector.

8.3 Recommendations on the development of a European level quality framework

On the basis of the key findings presented in the chapters, and the conclusions drawn from them, the following is recommended in relation to the development of a European level quality framework.

This study recommends **elaborating the EQAVET framework** to the field of adult learning. This broadening of the framework could also mean making a first step to the development of a future European Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning (also embracing HE and general education). Such a framework could improve the availability of comparable information on lifelong learning and adult learning in particular, as countries are asked to take the framework as reference for setting up or further develop their quality systems.

It is recommended that an elaborated **EQAVET framework is flexible and respect principles of adult learning.** A cross-national quality framework should be flexible, open and transparent to all stakeholders in the adult learning sector; it should comprise both a

technical and political approach while developing it; and it should take into account the particularities of the adult learning sector (serving different goals, provided by a wide diversity of providers, taking place in different learning environments, and the involvement of wide variety of social and economic actors); and endorse the basic principles related to quality adult learning (that adult learning provision should be tailor-made, learner-centred and attuned to the specific learning needs of the adult learner, and should be offered in a flexible manner in terms of duration, time, and place). Most importantly, however, for working towards a European level framework, it is essential that it is developed on the basis of, or in accordance with national quality frameworks for adult learning and existing practices in place. Finally, the development of a European level framework should respect the principle of subsidiarity.

With regard the adjustment of the EQAVET recommendation, it is recommended that **the list of indicators is extended with more adult learning relevant indicators**, i.e.: the Adult Education Survey, the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), and the Eurostat social inclusion statistics (Living conditions and social protection). In addition, newly compiled indicators could be used at country level such as developed in the Greek π^3 framework. Furthermore, with regard system level indicative descriptors, the more procedural system level indicative descriptors can be applied in adult learning as well. Finally, the quality assurance systems studied to a large extent fit the indicative descriptors at providers level; however, there could be more focus on the learning environment of adults (according to the principles mentioned here before such as the offer of flexible learning trajectories).

This calls for an implementation strategy along the steps as discussed below:

■ **Step 1) The transition should be conducted preferably on a legal basis:** In order to expand the scope of the EQAVET recommendation of 2009, a legal document should be drawn up to base the work on renewing this recommendation (this would create the foundation to jointly work on renewing the recommendation). The results of this report, the current evaluation of EQAVET, and the result of the work done by the Thematic Working Group on Quality in adult learning, provides the opportunity to create momentum for agreeing on a legal document to broaden the EQAVET framework and make some first steps to a lifelong learning framework. This legal document should not immediately propose what the renewed framework will look like, but will set the agenda and a time-plan for arriving at a renewed framework to be accepted by the European Council and the European Parliament.

■ **Step 2) The transition should involve a broad group of EU and national stakeholders**: When a legal basis is created, all relevant stakeholders can start working on shaping the framework on the basis of EQAVET. However, this has to be coordinated by the European Commission. It is therefore recommended to extend the EQAVET working group and the national reference points for VET to include adult learning stakeholders as well, mainly representing the provision of basic skills and liberal adult learning. The current Thematic Working Group on Quality in adult learning – or its follow up - could either be a sub-group of the EQAVET working group, or could be organ-

ised in parallel, but in close cooperation with the EQAVET group, to promote quality in adult learning. Furthermore, at EU level, but more importantly at national level, consultations should start to get stakeholders involved in the process of renewing the EQAVET framework. Questions that should receive attention in the consultation should be: 1) To what type of provision should the framework of quality apply? How can different objectives of adult learning be included in one single framework? Is there need to establish a quality label related to the framework? The consultation should involve VET providers, HE providers, Non-formal adult learning providers, Secondary education schools involved in basic skills and second-chance education, social partners, private training providers, public employment services, local, regional and national governments, associations of providers, quality assurance agencies in all sectors.

■ **Step 3) The transition should be both a social-political and a technical-scientific process:** The consultation provides insight in what is socially and politically feasible at country level to include in a quality framework for lifelong learning. This should however, be technically backed up with pilot studies, cross-country comparisons, sectoral studies on whether the framework leads to results. For this purpose the renewed lifelong learning programme (Erasmus for All) could play an important role. The results of these technical projects should again feed the consultation and provide an evidence base and additional learning material to further develop the framework.

■ **Step 4) The transition should stem from the interchange of EU and MS-level developments:** In addition to the balance between the social-political and the technical process, there should as well be a balance between the national and European developments. There should be a constructive interchange of experiences between the national and the European level. This can be fostered by linking the framework to other, more advanced European/national developments such as the European Qualifications Framework/ National Qualifications Framework.

■ **Step 5) The transition should have clear objectives, both related to the transition itself and the objectives of the final product:** As mentioned, the legal document on which the whole process should be build, should include an agenda and a time plan for the process. Hence, the common objectives on which the adult learning community is working should be clear. The final product should have a clear profile as well. It should be clear for all stakeholders: What is the aim of the framework? Why is it needed? How should it be used? To whom does it apply? Who is responsible?

The time plan to unroll the strategy to develop and implement a renewed EQAVET framework, broadened to the field of adult learning, should take into account the fact that the subject currently has momentum (as explained earlier, given for instance the EQAVET evaluation). Therefore, first (preparatory) actions should be taken, to set the first steps and maintain this momentum. It is expected that when there is a legal document to work on the revision (step 1), implementing the subsequent steps (2-5), will

take approximately 2 years. For the further development and implementation at provider level, given experiences with other frameworks, another 5-7 years might be required.

The broadening of the EQAVET framework also calls for the need to change the name of the framework. This name should be better adapted to the new users and audience, without losing the brand that has been carefully developed over the last years. This name should preferable refer to the concepts of lifelong learning, quality assurance, framework, and that it is European.

Annex 1: Long list of 43 case studies

#	C	Name and short description
1	AT	**Ö-CERT (AT-CERT) (an overall framework of quality for adult education in Austria).** For transparency, simplified administration and to promote an overall strategy of quality, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture developed the Ö-CERT (AT-Cert) - in cooperation with leading Austrian experts, representatives of the nine Austrian provinces and providers of Adult education. Ö-CERT is implemented at macro-level (policy) and the target is to assure the quality of providers all over Austria. Ö-CERT is focussed by the Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to assure and to improve the quality of structures of Adult Learning (Adult Education). The aim of Ö-CERT is: ■ Transparency for customers/learners and for public authorities: At first glance the customers and public authority see, who's a quality provider - because of the rating Ö-Cert (AT-Cert). ■ Simplified administration (one certificate will be enough. It's not necessary anymore to pass and pay for the admission to nine Austrian provinces Quality Assurance Procedures. Ö-Cert (AT-Cert) is accepted all over Austria. ■ Quality improvement for adult education: Providers without any quality efforts till now should be motivated to acquire one quality certificate.
2	BG	**Applying quality assurance in a Bulgarian teacher training context.** The scope is local in terms of its focus (Foreign Language Teachers – FLTs) and as it introduces a quality assurance tool called **'Pedagogical Portfolio for Foreign Language Teacher Trainees'**, but it is addressed nationally. The Pedagogical Portfolio for Foreign Language Teacher Trainees was designed and developed by a team of FLT experts at the Department of Applied Linguistics (now Department of Foreign Languages and Literature) of the New Bulgarian University (NBU), Sofia, Bulgaria, to facilitate the education of pre-service FL teacher trainees enrolled in the BA and MA teacher training programmes. It was officially published in 2004 but the material in the portfolio had been previously piloted and refined over a period of more than eight years. Its main purpose is to assure and improve the quality of the training offered. The tool can be implemented at micro level only.
3	CH	**EduQua: The eduQua certification process certifies adult continuing education institutions**. EduQua defines six criteria, which are key to the quality of an institution: (1) the course offer, (2) communication with clients, (3) value performance, (4) staff - the educators, (5) learning success, and (6) quality assurance and development. eduQua stimulates quality development; through the preparation for a certification, the on-site audit, certification report, yearly intermediate audits, and with the renewal of the certification every three years. (Compare the descriptions above e.g. Certificates SVEB 1, 2, 3 = criteria 4 (staff/ educators). eduQua is the first Swiss quality label for adult continuing education. The quality label provides certified institutions with a considerable advantage in the eyes of their clients. The quality management also supports an improvement through the certification process. The certification proves to be an advantage when dealing with the authorities: in increasingly more cantons, the certification is a requirement for public funding. The Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Educating Directors recommends that the cantons check "the quality of the providers in the education sector in all of Switzerland based on the same criteria and make national subsidies dependent on a proof of quality (eduQua)"..eduQua is made up of over 1000 schools, institution and academies of the non-formal sector of AL
4	CH	**Train the Trainer (AdA) as a 3-level core concept of staff quality.** ■ Level 1: The SVEB-Certificate was introduced in 1995 (AdA-module level 1) ■ Level 2: The Federal Certificate of Competence for adult education instructors was introduced in 2000 (AdA-module level 2) ■ Quality label for providers: In 2000, the quality label for training providers "eduQua" was introduced (detail information can be found here at http://www.eduqua.ch) ■ Level 3: The federal diploma "Advanced Federal Diploma in Training Management and Human Resources Management" was introduced in 2006 (AdA-module level 3)
5	CY	**Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Cyprus** The role of the Council of Educational Evaluation-Accreditation (C.E.E.A) of Private Institutions of Higher Education. The first attempt to regulate the evaluation process of Private Tertiary Education in Cyprus was initiated in 1987 with the establishment of the law for tertiary education institutions (N1/87). The Department of Higher and Tertiary Education, which is part of the Ministry of Education and Culture, undertook the task of creating an institutional framework for the educational evaluation - accreditation of programmes of study. The process of programmatic evaluation began

#	C	Name and short description
		in 1992, when the Ministry of Education and Culture accepted the first applications from Private Institutions of Tertiary Education (PITE) for the evaluation of their programs. The competent authority in the Republic of Cyprus for carrying out programmatic evaluation and accreditation of the Private Institutions of Higher Education is the Council of Educational Evaluation–Accreditation (C.E.E.A).
6	CZ	**Continuing Education Concept (Koncepce Dalšího *Vzdělávání*) project** To implement the general directives given in the 2007 Lifelong Learning Strategy for the Czech Republic, the Continuing Education Concept has been initiated in 2009. The concept focuses at (1) the recognition of further education, (2) stimulation of the demand for further education for individuals and businesses; (3) alignment of educational provisions with labour market needs; and (4) promotion of continuing education, the quality of continuing education, and information and advisory systems. The quality section of Concept focuses on the creation of tools for quality self-assessment and quality evaluation for educational institutions; the creation of tools for the qualification of adult education teachers; and the analysis of activities necessary to ensure the quality of verification and recognition of continuing education. In addition Concept aims to develop a monitoring system for further education (part of "Support of further education"). Concept exists out of two phases: (1) analysis and the development of a further education system; (2) a pilot verification and subsequently implementation.
7	DE	**Quality association CET Hamburg (Qualitätsverbund Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V.)** The Hamburg model (see KRÜGER 1999) belongs to the quality associations that were founded in a relatively early phase of the discussion on quality. Due to this pioneering role it has attracted a relatively high share of attention. On national level, it arouses a high level of interest and is rudimentarily replicated in some regions [most recently in Hessen in form of the CET association Hessen (Weiterbildung Hessen e.V.) and in North Rhine Westphalia in form of the association for seals of approval]. The model is practiced as a voluntary self-controlling device to promote quality assurance and the protection of participants. The provider Quality Association CET Hamburg sets obligatory quality standards. Training providers are obligated to develop these quality standards and receive a quality or approval seal after the inspection. This inspection of member organisations concerning their adherence to quality standards is repeated every three years. In this network of associations, about 200 Hamburg CET providers are represented. Their aim is to create consumer-oriented market transparency based on a CET information system [Weiterbildungsinformationssystem (WISY)] with currently more than 10,000 events of approximately 500 providers in the region and a quality seal which underlies the implementation of quality concepts since 1993. Currently, this quality seal exists for approximately 18 % of all public available CET offers in Hamburg. Quality standards are set by a pluralistically composed Advisory Board, the quality seal can only be granted via membership in the association. The applicant providers obligate themselves to obey the set quality standards; the association is responsible for auditing the quality standards and undertakes consultation and qualification offers. Quality standards are monitored by review committees via check lists. The association also functions as a consumer protection body with intense work in public relations. Follow-up assessments occur every three years, in the meantime appeals boards exist (see the Quality Association CET Hamburg's website).
8	DK	**The Danish Evaluation Institute** EVA is an independent state institution established under the Ministry of Education in 1999. The institute succeeded the Evaluation Centre which existed from 1992-1999. The focus of their activities is on all levels of education including all types of adult education that get public funding. They have carried out evaluations of e.g. preparatory adult education, adult vocational training programmes, and the diploma degree system which is continuing professional education at bachelor level. Research and evaluations are carried out on their own initiative as well as on request from ministries, local authorities and educational institutions among others. Their tasks within the area divide into two main tracks. EVA carry out initial accreditation assessments of short-cycle and medium-cycle further continuing professional education. In the assessment EVA focus on quality and relevance in relation to demands of the labour market. EVA also carry out evaluations and surveys of how the different aspects of the area function, e.g. preparatory adult education and basic adult education – a parallel to respectively lower and upper secondary education in the mainstream education system. Within further adult education where accreditation is a main task, our focus is on assuring quality, relevance, transparency and flexibility between the different levels, e.g. diploma and master levels.
9	DK	**Adult and continuing educational centres** In 2011, cooperation in the 13 ACE centres, which were established in 2010 with the purpose of strengthening motivation and enabling ACE, especially for people with or without vocational training, is being consolidated and developed. The ACE centres offer a flexible, well-organised and efficient education, which benefits both workplaces and workers. The centres work to develop the cooperation between education institutions, users and organisations, as well as stra-

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		tegic cooperation with regional growth forums, job centres and employment agencies. By contacting an ACE centre, companies and citizens can get all the advice they need from one single source. The tasks of the ACE centres include carrying out comprehensive and goal-oriented outreach guidance and counselling activities covering all the education options offered at ACEs, clarifying competence development needs for companies and employees, and coordinating general education and vocational training efforts. The work carried out by the ACE centres builds on the experiences from 22 advice centres, which were discontinued and evaluated in 2009. Source: Adult Education in Denmark (2011)
10	EE	**Quality in Estonian non-formal education (The Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA).** The ENAEA started a project to determine what should be the basis for evaluating the quality of an education centre? Their starting point is the level of satisfaction of the learner, educator, financial supporter, employer, the local community as well of the whole society. ENAEA have investigated whether the education offered by their education centre reaches the expectations of these interest groups. ENAEA did not try to find out which education centres teach more comprehensively and which ones superficially – ENAEA based their research completely on the content levels of the different interest groups. Besides evaluating the quality of the teaching of single disciplines it is important not to forget to question whether non-formal education as a whole is meeting the needs and expectations of the Estonian society. At first a pilot project was launched for four educational centres, after that all the remaining centres got evaluated. The adequacy of self-evaluation was then evaluated by outside experts. The outside evaluation by experts started in 2006. An expert (usually a director or a teacher of a non-formal education centre or someone actively participating in the field) was also creating the evaluation model. Conclusions to these evaluations were published in December 2006. As to the results we can say that learners, educators, employers, local self-governments as well as other collaboration partners are in general satisfied with our education centres.
11	EL	**Quality assurance and quality management in Greek Higher education:** the case of HQAA and MODIP. The relevant Law (3374/2005) demanded from each tertiary education institution in Greece to set up a "Quality Assurance Unit", with the responsibility to coordinate internal evaluations implemented by each one of the educational units of an institution every two years. Additionally, this Law demanded from the institutions to implement external evaluation conducted by a "Committee of External Evaluation", with experts drawn from a special register developed by HQAA.
12	EL	**'Π^3 framework' (National Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning). '** Π^3 framework' is a new initiative that is still under consideration by the Ministry of National Education. 'Π^3 framework' recommends the incorporation of quality systems in the LLL and accreditation service providers as an indicator whereas it sets a ratio of LLL and accreditation service providers with a quality system against the total number of certified service providers. 'Π^3 framework' foresees the degree to which LLL institutions incorporate the aforementioned principles in their systems and operational procedures is evaluated, at a top level via a set of fifteen (15) measurable qualitative and quantitative indicators.
13	ES	**Quality assurance in distance education: Aula Mentor** Aula Mentor" (Classroom Mentor) is a open and free training system via the Internet promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Spain through the General Office of Lifelong Learning. Target group is the Spanish speaking adult population (over 16 years). "Aula Mentor" is actively involved through agreements of cooperation with a large set of autonomous communities, local and regional authorities and public entities dependent on territorial local authorities. Upon entering into such an agreement with the Ministry, the sponsoring institution agrees to provide and maintain the necessary hardware, including Internet connections, and the selection and payment of technical staff to maintain the machinery and address any technical problems encountered while the machines are in use. The National Centre for Education Information and Communication, for its part, agrees to train this technical administrator; select, train and monitor the performance of the "mentors" (discussed ahead); create and update course materials; organize and evaluate all courses; and maintain the program's server. In terms of costs and financing, the program more than pays for itself. Sponsoring organizations provide the space, and enrolment fees cover the cost of maintenance, including of technical support staff. Every student has his or her own online "mentor". He/she is responsible for keeping him or her on track and monitoring and evaluating progress made on all course work. Recruited, trained and selected by the (Spanish) Ministry of Education, the mentors are the key component of the program. They are responsible for ensuring that learning objectives are met online.
14	FI	**Quality prices within adult learning** In Finland there are national quality prices since 2001 over the following sectors: (1) adult education centres (Med-

#	C	Name and short description
		borgarinstitut) (ex from 2007); (2) VET (Yrkesutbildning) (ex from 2006, 2007); and (3) Läroavtalsutbildare (ex from 2007, 2008). The prices are given on provider level and have each year separate themes. The special theme for the year 2007 quality price was the language education at the (medborgarinstitutens) together with a strengthening of the teachers competences. The purpose of the Quality price within VET is to support and to motivate the providers of education and educational organisations to a continuous assessment and development of the quality together with their fundamental tasks. The purpose of the Quality price is to support and inspire the "medborgarinstitut" to further development of their activities and their quality. The Quality price supports and inspires the "medborgarinstitut" local and regional tasks and their influence on the society and their general context. The purpose includes the development of good practice for the fundamental for learning Internally in the organizations and the quality price shall make VET more known and attractive. The purpose of the quality price for "läroavtalsutbildare" are to encourage employers to use and develop the "läroavtalsutbildningen" and to find the best methods and spread these to other employer-organisations as examples of best practice for "ordnat läroavtalsverksamhet". The enterprises will be analysed according to The assessment criteria used in the European model for quality: (EFQM). It is also the purpose of the price to give more focus to the "läroavtal"
15	FI	**Quality projects in VET** The state funding reserved for the internationalisation of vocational education and training in 2011 is 1.000.000 euro which is 200.000 more than in the previous year. When the funds are granted, priority is given to projects the following development areas: ■ Developing key skills and competences for the changing labour market ■ Developing international cooperation in quality assurance ■ Strengthening the international dimension as part of the organisation's strategy and developing the institutions' international activities ■ Developing mobility activities and quality of these ■ Piloting ECVET (FINECVET)
16	FI	**OSAAVA programme** A new fixed-term national OSAAVA programme has been operational since 2010. The programme supports the obligation of education providers to ensure the continuing education of their education personnel and to ensure staff opportunities to improve their professional competence. The Ministry of Education and Culture has allocated extra funding to ensure the continuing professional development for education personnel. The programme is foreseen to continue until 2016.
17	FI	**Adult Learners Week** Since 1998, Finland has organised an Adult Learners´ Week every autumn. This event aims to motivate adults to learn by raising the public profile of teachers, organisations and students in adult education.
18	FR	**Label Greta-Plus** Before 2001 a number of different quality standards were used by the *Greta*. This made it difficult to compare the quality of services provided by different *Greta*. Since 2001 these different labels have been replaced by a single reference label, which covers the same demands as made by the previously existing labels. This Greta-Plus label is related to a common reference framework which contains identical demands for all *Gretas*. In 2009 a new reference norm was developed in cooperation with the French Association for Standardization (*Association française de normalisation: AFNOR*) and linked to the Greta-Plus label. This reference on good practice (*Référentiel de bonnes practiques*) is referred to as BP X50-762 and is intended to strengthen the legitimacy of the *Greta* system. The new reference norm contains twenty-six commitments which are categorised under seven key demands: (1) responsibilities and organisation, (2) definition of strategies and putting in place a policy on further development, (3) development of products, (4) the realisation of tailor-made service, (5) mobilisation of the necessary means, (6) quality evaluation, (7) management of documentation and information.
19	HR	**Croatia Adult Learning - CARDS 2004 (2007-2009) Croatia – Technical assistance under the EU-funded CARDS programme**. Croatia received support and technical assistance to improve the quality of adult education. The project started in September 2007 and finished in April 2009. The scope is national. This project connects policy-led implementation through the involvement of providers towards the quality development of local learning environment and the provision of adult education services.
20	HU	**New Hungary Development Plan – Social Renewal Operative Programme (ÚMFT TÁMOP) 2.2.1-08/1-2008-0002 macro-project.**

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		The scope of the initiative is to help the development and progress of a quality-centred VET and adult education by modernising quality assurance, monitoring of career, development of professional examination, and, on the other hand, emphasizing the development of contents of education/training (assessment and measuring, curriculum development); the project has got a significant HR-component (in-service training of and language teaching for VET teachers) and the preparations for SMEs willing to provide apprenticeship for VET students. The project has covered a reasonable development of certain tools to help raising attention to VET and other adult education programmes. The co-ordinator of the Programme is the National Institute for Vocational and Adult Education
21	IE	**Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) Quality Assurance System.** FETAC is the awarding body for non-tertiary further education and training (FET) certified at Levels 1 – 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). FETAC has an integrated Quality Assurance system that covers all levels of the FET learning process at micro, meso and macro levels. **FETAC** makes awards to learners completing a broad range of programmes offered by a variety of VET providers, and has developed a comprehensive strategy to quality assure the programmes leading to its awards. This strategy involves a number of co-ordinated separate functions, including agreeing quality assurance; formal accreditation of the provider; programme validation; assessment verification; and continuous monitoring of quality standards. In **March 2006**, FETAC adopted and published its policies on 'Quality Assuring, Assessment, Validation and Monitoring of Programmes' for providers who wish to become recognised by them.
22	IS	**European Quality Mark (EQM).** The EQM is a transparent assessment process where the learning provider gets the opportunity to review own processes by using a set of indicators that are based on commonly agreed standards. It helps organizations to identify, what they do well and what is missing from their quality system. The transparency of the self-assessment form gives the provider the opportunity to make an action plan for improvement and actually implement good quality practice before asking for the external evaluation of the practice. The EQM is the product of the Recall project. It is now being implemented here in Iceland by the Education and Training Service Centre (Fraedslumidstod atvinnulifsins).
23	IT	**Quality Charter for education services of the Folk university of Rome (Università Popolare di Roma: UPTER)** This concerns a meso level approach to ensure the quality and transparency of the provision offered at the popular folk university. The principle underlying the quality of the provision are the following: ■ The customer orientation; ■ The mutually beneficial relationships with suppliers; ■ The involvement of human resources; ■ The process approach; ■ The system approach; ■ Continuous improvement; ■ The approach to decisions based on facts.
24	LT	**MATHEMATICS IN ACTION/MIA** The aim of the practice is to support teachers in adult education in order to improve the quality of learning and teaching of mathematics in adult education. The needs of adult learners without a secondary education are also addressed by widening learning opportunities for them. The project Mathematics in Action (MiA), has succeeded in overcoming problems faced by adults in acquiring mathematical skills in out-of-school situations. Ways of teaching and coaching adults in real-life learning situations and providing evidence of the effectiveness of the teaching and coaching methods were developed. A handbook developed through the MiA investigations was published, presenting examples of good practice and theoretical ideas about doing and learning mathematics in actual real life situations,.
25	LU	**Label de Qualité (established by a regulation of March 2000)** The quality label was initiated to ensure a minimum set of quality standards being guaranteed in the difficult-to-regulate non-formal continuing education sector. It also allows the government to gather data and publish statistics on non-formal continuing education. The label can be obtained voluntarily but is coupled to state subsidies, which makes it attractive for municipalities and associations to obtain the label; hence it has a high degree of coverage. The label can also be used to attract new participants. The label exists of five sets of criteria. The exact criteria have been modified a couple of times since
26	MT	**Quality Assurance Structures in the provision of basic literacy, numeracy and computer awareness in the evening courses offered by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLL).** The Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLL) within the Ministry of Education and Employment is currently working to develop its Quality Assurance processes for the evening courses which it offers to adult learners. Courses are provided

#	C	Name and short description
		in a wide range of subject areas (see www.eveningcourses.gov.mt) and the DLL wishes to provide successful learners with an accredited qualification at Level 1 on the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF).
27	NL	**Quality code APL (Kwaliteitscode EVC).** The quality code concerns the quality of providers offering APL trajectories. The Quality code API is a framework for accreditation and standardisation for APL-procedures in the Netherlands. The code particularly focuses on the quality of APL procedures. It states that for instance responsibilities should be clearly identified, information should be transparent, the APL certificates need to include certain information and quality assurance procedures should be in place to be able to improve the procedures on an ongoing basis.
28	NL	**Code of Conduct private providers** The NRTO developed a Code of Conduct for the members (i.e. the providers). Which includes rules concerning: Information; Guidance for teaching staff; Work processes; Learning material; Guidance and counselling; Education and exams; Facilities; Recruitment; Complaints procedures; Registration; Transparency. In order to be eligible for VAT reduction in providing education to adults, the private providers need to be registered in the CRKBO-register. The principles and requirements are in line with the code of conduct developed by NRTO.
29	NL	**Quality seal Folk universities** A code of conduct/quality seal for folk universities has recently (2007) been developed and some providers have been awarded the quality seal. This bottom-up framework focuses on: Quality of education offer; Quality of care for teachers, staff and volunteers; Quality of care for participants; Quality of resources (learning material, other facilities).
30	NO	**Model for teacher training – continuing education** There are approx. 3000 teachers in the field of teaching Norwegian as a Second Language to adult immigrants. Vox, as a national agency responsible for curriculum, language tests and a variety of continuing education provides nationwide courses. This include a 2-day courses in all the counties and a 1-day courses on different topics, of which the counties may choose according to local needs and priorities. Approx. 2000 – 2500 teachers and leaders participate annually in 2- day courses. The courses are based on the national curriculum and a plan for Quality (a national scheme).
31	PT	**System of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences –RVCC- (2001)** The RVCC system is an initiative launched in 2001 at national level. It is organized to cover two dimensions of Adult Learning: the academic dimension and the VET dimension. It is integrated in the National Qualifications System. The RVCC was first launched in 2001 within PRODEP (a EU funded programme on Education). The initiative is implemented at two levels: ■ Macro level- the policy was conceptualized as a way to reduce the deficit of academic and professional qualifications of the Portuguese population by reinforcing the lifelong learning principle. It is currently implemented at policy level by the National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training. ■ Meso level- implementation at this level is operated by the New Opportunities Centres (around 400) that cover the whole country. The NOCs implement the system following a 6 -step procedure.
32	RO	**CALISIS: QMS System specially designed for the Romanian CVT providers** The CALISIS model maintains the existing levels (NQA, LACs, providers), but requires the implementation of internal quality management/assessment systems at all levels. The CALISIS ESF HRD project developed a QAS which will be implemented within all 3 specific CVT levels: ■ level 1:CVT providers ■ level 2:Counties' authorization commissions ■ level 3:National Qualifications authority It is related to EQARF.
33	SE	**Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education** It show how the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has managed to work with quality both internal and at provider level. It shows how a broad group of stakeholders can be involved and together create results. It shows how adult students (average age around 30?) can get specific educations without national curricula. How it is possible to keep a high level of quality at provider level, when the providers only might have the education for a shorter period
34	SE	**BRUK, a system for support on the quality work for all types of adult education** Support tools of many kinds are available on the homepage of the Agency, including BRUKFPT (an instrument with assessment, reflection, development and quality) for assessing quality in a local organization. It was produced by the school authorities in 2001 with an enlarged and improved version in 2008. This tool for assessing quality is an aid to all

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		school organisers in their own processes of describing objectives and assignments, of follow-ups and evaluations of activities, of making analyses and judging the development and results of efforts. BRUK is based on the national steering documents – the Education Act, regulations and curricula. The BRUK-model work with the following dimensions in order to structure the thinking: Process: ■ what are we working with? ■ how do we organize the work? Full-filling objectives ■ what will our work result in? Background factors ■ what are the preconditions? The BRUK-tool works with indicators, criteria and assessments and judgments.
35	SE	**Swedish National Council of Adult Associations (Folkbildningsrådet).** There exist a Quality Prize targeted all kinds of Swedish schools including the municipal adult education. The Prize are grounded in the School Act from 2010, where a requirement are that all schools shall work systematically with quality and that the work shall be documented. The Prize can function as a motivation and inspiration in the work on quality in all schools including adult education.
36	SI	**Model for self evaluation offering quality education for adults – OQEAS** The model for self-evaluation was developed by Slovenian Institute for Adult Education within the project offering quality education to adults. The initiative has been set at country level, but it has so far targeted the quality development of adult education centres, secondary schools and private educational institutions. This interesting practice is related to a new policy-orientation, however, it has been focusing mainly on providers and professionals at meso level so as to raise the quality of the learning environment with effective quality management procedures.
37	TK	**Quality Indicators in Life Long Learning Activities: METU Continuous Education Center (CEC)** The Continuous Education Centre (CEC) at METU offers education to public and private institutions as well as individuals who are looking to improve themselves in their professions and make a career change. The CEC reports indicate that there is an increase in specialized seminars and as well as public conferences last year. Specifically the growing demand for public conferences (61%) might be an indication of the increasing need by the public to learn from the university's knowledge and experience. At the same time this might be an indication of the university's changing mission to share the knowledge and expertise produced with larger community. Some of the seminars included recruitment of new personnel; climate change and adaptation; health-based knowledge systems; training the trainer, effective teaching, human resources management and measurement and evaluation. Public conferences focused on more general issues like family and marriage therapy, communication skills and computer education. Continuing education centers of the universities in Turkey assume an important responsibility for lifelong education of adults in various sectors of the society. The CEC at METU was the first center established for this purpose, and over the years it has assumed a leading role in providing specialized knowledge and skills to industrial sectors as well as more general education for larger public audience.
38	TK	**Project for Modernization of Vocational Education and Training in Turkey (MVET)** The aim of the project, which started in July 2003 for a period of 42 months, is to support endeavours for promoting the quality of vocational course teachers training and to sustain harmony to the developments in European Union. Within this framework, the following objectives are determined; (a) determine competency of teachers for vocational courses, (b) develop five sets of pre-service and three sets of in-service modular training curriculums based on such competencies, (c) develop a collective quality assurance framework conforming to the conditions set forth by ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), (d) determine policies and strategies for development of institutional capacity and human resources. Some of the project activities and outcomes are as follow: Field competencies of teachers for vocational courses in nine priority given fields (computer, electricity and electronics, automotive, clothing, accommodation management, construction, installation-natural gas, child development and pedagogy) were determined.

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		Modular curricula based on the determined competencies were developed.
		   Studies on Quality Assurance System for vocational-technical faculties based on European Network System related to Higher Education Quality Assurance were completed.
		   Seminars named Basic Skills and Student Centered Education were delivered to the teaching staff of vocational-technical faculties taking place in the project in Konya, Sakarya, Elazıg, İstanbul and Ankara in order to have the previously developed curricula implemented in the direction of student centered education.
		   A "White Paper" including vocational and technical education related policy recommendations was prepared.
		   In-service trainings were provided to 93 vocational course teachers, 715 teaching staff of different faculties, 90 representatives of social partners.

39	TK	**Total Quality Management Project (TQM)** Within the Ministry of National Education (MONE) (Central and Provincial Organization), Total Quality Management Implementing Regulations that was issued in the 1999 dated and 2506 numbered journal called "Tebliğler Dergisi" started the studies on "quality in education" This study is followed by studies on MONE Provincial Organization TQM Implementation Project, Award Guidelines in MONE TQM Practices and "Quality in Education" Award Manual. TQM practices in MONE proceed with the Xself evaluation studies based on "Excellence Model" which was developed by Turkish Society for Quality (KalDer) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).
40	TK	**Project for Developing Human Resources via Vocational Education (İKMEP)** This project aims at strengthening of human resource development by modernizing and enhancing the quality of vocational education by means of a lifelong learning approach with provision of employment oriented association among vocational higher and secondary education institutions and labour market; has a duration 2-years; and has a budget of € 15.4 million.
41	TK	**Mesleki ve Teknik Eğitim Merkezleri (METEM)** These are the Training Centers that are opened in line with principle of plural programs and single management for decreasing cost of education, preventing waste of resources and improving quality of education and implement programs that result in secondary education diploma, certificate and proficiency paper in areas of vocational and technical training.

42	TK	**Project for Follow-up Study of Graduates of Vocational and Technical Secondary Education Institutions**
		
		This project which started in 63 pilot schools in 24 provinces in 2007 aimed at following up graduates of vocational and technical secondary schools by using current information technologies, determining the level of realization of the objectives of the education provided in those schools, evaluating the updated version of their curricula. The project will cover all over the country in 2008. The project aims to achieve the followings:
		   Employment status of the graduates of vocational-technical secondary education schools starting from 2001-2003 will be determined.
		   Graduates will be followed-up systematically and the system will be institutionalized.
		   The data gathered will be weak aspects of vocational education system will be revealed.
		   Links between education and employment will be strengthened by determining appropriateness of the vocational-technical education to the demands of workforce market.
		   Curricula of the vocational-technical education will be improved.
		   Performance -based evaluation will be able to be carried out in vocational-technical education.

43	UK	**ESTYN (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales) Inspection of Adult Community Learning (ACL) in WALES.** Inspection of education and training at all levels has a long history in the UK. The Learning and Skills Act (2000) requires ESTYN to carry out inspections of publicly-funded providers of ACL. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that education and training providers can improve the quality of education they offer and raise the standards achieved by their learners Guidance for inspectors and colleges on the evaluation requirements has been recently updated as 'Guidance for the inspection of further education institutions from September 2010' (ESTYN 2011). The 'Common Inspection Framework from 2010' (Estyn, 2011) (CIF) is used for all inspections. A key change under CIF 2010 is a greater emphasis on how well providers are delivering skills-based learning and self-evaluation. **NOTE:** There are currently 16 adult and community learning partnerships in Wales providing learning opportunities for the 16+ population on Wales. These partnerships involve a range of providers within local authority areas that include

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		further education colleges, the local authority, Welsh language centres, the Workers' Educational Association, the County Voluntary Council and local voluntary organisations. The range of courses available to adults differs between providers but includes courses in information and communication technology, art and design, adult basic education, Welsh for adults and personal development courses.

Annex 2: Overview quality policies, legislation, systems

Higher Education		
1	AT	A new Federal Act for Quality Assurance in Higher Education sets a common frame for quality assurance in all sectors of higher education in Austria (public universities, universities of applied sciences, private universities). Part of the new law is the establishment of the trans-sectorial "Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria" by the 1st of March 2012. The new agency will unify the functions of AQA, FH Council and Accreditation Council for the private universities. AQA will operate until 2013 and progressively integrate its activities into the new agency.
2	BE	Flanders Higher Education has a clear legal framework (visitations may lead to accreditation of programs by NVAO). The courses are accredited by the NVAO kept in Higher Education Register (NL: Hogeronderwijsregister (2)). The Flemish administration must ensure that the provision is in accordance with this register. In Flanders only (ex officio) recorded institutions must and can offer accredited courses leading to awarded diplomas - as Bachelor, Master and Doctor. And since 2009 the NVAO concerns also HBO5, higher vocational education. Wallonia The agency for accreditation of HE in French Belgium is AEQES, which is part of the EU agency (ENQA). The Agency is responsible for assessing the quality of higher education and working for its continuous improvement. The agency receives money from the EU (European social funds). The recognition of competences is based on a dossier, with is examined by a jury. The first evaluation of the HE system is recently made, there are plans for a transformation. HE is thinking about introducing a test instead of only an administrational procedure.
3	BG	At a national level the two most important laws that have a relevance to quality are those on the Bulgarian higher education; the Higher Education Act (1995) and the Amendment to the Higher Education Act (1999). These two sets of legislation legalized previous reform efforts initiated by higher education institutions since 1990. At national level – the external quality evaluation and control is performed by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA), which is an independent body of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. The NEAA's criteria and recommendations are to a great extend in compliance with the Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, elaborated by ENQA.
4	CH	The Swiss Centre of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in HE (OAQ) develops guidelines and quality standards, conducts accreditation and evaluation procedures and has an international commitment. It acknowledges the autonomy of the universities, perceives its role as an external partner for quality assurance and development and provides a range of supporting services.
5	CY	In Cyprus, the Council of Ministers, has initiated legislation for the establishment of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education (CAQAA) as the competent authority to assure the quality of higher education offered in the Republic of Cyprus in any form. This is currently the only legislative act on quality approaches.

6	CZ	the Act on Higher Education Institutions (111/2006). These acts set out a qualification system for formal education (which is open to adults) and stipulate the role of the Czech School Inspectorate. In addition, The quality of higher education is evaluated by the Accreditation Commission of the Czech Republic, which belongs to the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports"
7	DE	The Law establishing the foundation "*Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany*" from 15 February 2005 serves as the legal basis for the activity of the Accreditation Council. The law sets up a legal framework for the binding definition of tasks, responsibilities and authorities of the central players in the accreditation system, i.e. the Accreditation Council and the currently six licensed accreditation agencies
8	DK	With the 2007 Accreditation Act, accreditation became the key method for external quality assurance in Denmark within higher education. ACE Denmark is the accreditation operator for bachelor, master's and professional master's programmes.
9	EE	Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency - EKKA continues the work of the Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre and the Estonian Higher Education Quality Assessment Council that operated from 1997 to 2008. EKKA was established on January 1, 2009. In Estonia, pursuant to the Universities Act, the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, and the Private Schools Act, a new national system of quality assurance of higher education will be implemented as of 1 January 2010.
10	EL	The Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQAA) prescribes the establishment of Quality Management Units (MODIP) in each higher education institution, setting a framework for quality assurance in higher education. Among HQAA's main responsibilities are the formulation of quality standards, quality control methodologies and criteria, and promotion and coordination of external and internal quality control mechanisms in tertiary education institutions. The basic criteria for quality evaluation defined by Law (3374/2005) are centered on four basic quality themes: a) curricula, b) teaching, c) research and d) other services. Additionally, this Law demands for each institute an external evaluation conducted by a "Committee of External Evaluation", with experts drawn from a special register developed by HQAA".
11	ES	Quality assurance systems applies in Spain to the HE and professional education system: The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain, ANECA, is a Foundation whose aim is to provide external quality assurance for the Spanish Higher Education System. ANECA has developed several evaluation Programmes in order to perform its activities (evaluation, certification and accreditation), with the purpose of integrating the Spanish system into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Royal Decree 1892/2008 which focuses on access to higher education for people aged 25 years or more as well as those aged 40 years or more, including the recognition of professional or working experience;
12	FI	Universities are governed by the Universities Act (558/2009) and the Universities Decree (115/1998) while Polytechnics are governed by the Polytechnics Act (351/2003) and the Polytechnics Decree (352/2003). Universities, polytechnics and institutions providing liberal adult education have the freedom, within the framework of the legislation, to autonomously decide the manner of organising adult education. The performance of universities and polytechnics is regularly evaluated by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). Institutions providing liberal adult education are evaluated by the Education Evaluation Council.
13	FR	Quality in adult learning is partially covered by the legal framework regulating the quality of initial (primary, secondary, tertiary, higher) education. The quality of VET

		and higher education is to a large degree guaranteed by the state since it either directly manages the relevant institutions or exercises oversight on these institutions. At the national level France has two inspection authorities who fall directly under the minister of National Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Research. The General Inspection for National Education *(Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale*: IGEN*)* and the the General Inspection for the Administration of National Education and Research (*Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche*: IGAENR) monitors, studies, and evaluates the functioning and efficiency of the educational system. The jurisdiction of IGEN and IGAENR is limited to institutions for national and higher education under the responsibility of the two ministries (colleges, lycées, institutes of higher education). In addition to these authorities, an autonomous administrative authority for the evaluation of research and higher education has been created in 2007. This Agency for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (*Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur:* AERES) evaluates institutes for higher education and their educational programmes and diplomas, and validates these institutions' procedures for the evaluation of staff.
14	HR	Quality assurance in higher education and in science is regulated by the 2009 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science. Internal quality assurance is provided by the institutions' internal QA systems in the form of internal checks. Study programmes delivered at public universities are self-accredited by university senates, while programmes delivered by private higher education institutions, polytechnics or schools of professional higher education are accredited by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE). ASHE is an independent public body responsible for external quality assurance in Croatia and implements regular audits, evaluations, accreditation of some professional, study programmes and re-accreditations of all higher education institutions.
15	HU	Higher education itself is not regulated by the Act on Adult Education. On the other hand, higher education is the field where accreditation was set up very early at the beginning of 1993 when the Hungarian Accreditation Commission was established. According to the 69/2006. Government Statutory Rule on Higher Education accreditation, this organisation regulates institutional and programme accreditations in higher education in Hungary.
16	IE	For training at Levels 7 – 10 the QA system for the IoTs (HETAC, system; HEA system) or the universities' QA systems (internal; IUQB; HEA system) apply. The principal legislation underpinning quality assurance (QA) in Irish further education and training and in higher education and training outside of the universities where adult engage in learning is the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 and the Universities Act 1997. The Universities Act, 1997, specifically requires each university "to establish procedures for quality assurance and to carry out evaluations, and review the effectiveness of its QA procedures". In 2002, the seven Irish universities established the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), which has delegated authority to organise periodic reviews of the effectiveness of the QA procedures in place in universities. The Higher Education Authority (HEA), which has a statutory role under the Act to assist the universities achieve their objectives, also has an overarching role with regard to reviewing quality assurance procedures within the third-level sector. The Irish Higher Education Quality Network, which comprises the main organisations with a role or interest in quality assurance in higher and education and training in Ireland, was established in October 2003. The National Qualifications Authority Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were established in 2001 under the 1999 legislation. FETAC's and HETAC's main functions are to make awards, to determine and monitor standards for awards and to recognise awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ); to agree and review providers' quality assurance arrangements delivering programmes leading to these awards; to validate programmes of education and training leading to these awards; to ensure fair and consistent assessment of learners by providers. HETAC must agree their QA procedures with the NQAI, and are subject to quality assurance arrange-

		ments, which include regular evaluation by national and international experts and evaluation by learners of their VET programmes and ancillary services. The effectiveness of the NQAI itself was reviewed in 2007.
17	IS	The legal framework covering higher education in Iceland is the Higher Education Institution Act no. 63/2006. This act applies to educational institutions providing higher education leading to a degree and which have been accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.
18	IT	Within general education, VET and the university sectors there are accreditation systems in place. In fact, with the national plan, there is a general accreditation system for all education provision. This system is built upon the EQAVET system and takes into account the facilities, skills of the trainers, financial aspects, placement rate, etc. within institutes. Each education sector has its own agency for quality assurance, guidance and support. For the Universities it is ANVUR. The VET sector has ISFOL and in the Adult Education sector (CTP and evening schools) INDIRE/ANSAS provides quality support. INVALSI monitors the primary and secondary education sector. The non-formal sector does not have a quality assurance institute.
19	LT	The Law on Science and Study (Mokslo ir studijų įstatymas, 2009) establishes science and study quality assurance principles, the award and recognition of higher education qualification and science degrees, science and study institutional management, activity organisation and monitoring, science and study financing. According to the law, there are two types of tertiary education institutions: universities (universitetas) and colleges (kolegija).
20	LU	Quality in higher education is guaranteed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (*Ministère de l'Enseigement Supérieure de la Recherce*), which ensures through internal and external evaluations the quality of (both initial and continued) higher education.
21	LV	In adult formal education – basic (general/VET), secondary (general/VET) and tertiary education (general/VET) – operating the same quality approaches and standards as common education. The general principals of quality standards and control for providers (including teaching staff) and provision are set in the Education law and field laws.
22	MT	The legislation establishing the Malta Qualifications Council covers QA in the context of the NQF awards and the courses leading to such awards. b) To further develop the Government's strategic objectives for higher and tertiary education the 2006? Education Act established the National Commission for Higher Education (NHCE) which is responsible among other responsibilities for preparing key performance indicators and benchmarking the sector against international developments. In 2009, the "*Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020*" outlined 12 priority areas of action and identified 3 areas of policy development as an immediate priority. The priority directly related to quality was: 'The development of a new Licensing, Quality Assurance and Accreditation framework (for further and higher education including the establishment of a competent authority (Quality Assurance Agency) to carry out such functions and resource allocation for improvement of current internal quality assurance systems in place across various state institutions. Quality organisations are the national Commission on Higher Education, academic Programmes Quality & Resources Unit of UofM, and MCAST - foreign awarding bodies - BTEC (EDEXCEL) and City & Guilds & Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft
23	NL	Quality in higher education is subject to the responsibility of the institutions and the programmes are accredited according to the accreditation framework governed by the NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders).There is however no explicitly mentioning of adult learning in the Assessment frameworks for

		the higher education accreditation system.
24	NO	The Act relating to Universities and University Colleges (hereafter the Higher Education Act) applies to all higher education, both state and private. The work done by NOKUT on inspection of the educational quality in Higher Education are grounded in the regulation "Forskrift om tilsyn med utdanningskvaliteten i høyere utdanning (tilsynsforskriften)" from January 27. 2011.
25	PL	The Minister of Science and Higher Education grants accreditation to private HEIs. For HE the central institution is PKA (Pañstwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna). The primary responsibilities of PKA are among else quality assessment of education in a given field of study, including teacher training
26	PT	A3es - Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education, is responsible for evaluation and accreditation of courses of study in Portugal.
27	RO	The Law on Quality Assurance, passed in 2005 regulates quality assurance at all levels and sub-systems and the quality assurance institutions (National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, National Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education). Nevertheless, it has only been applied for initial education and training and for higher education, the adult training part being covered separately by distinct methodologies and provisions on the authorisation/accreditation of training providers. The MoERYS-Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport is responsible for VET system, initial and continuing (excepting the apprenticeship on the job). The MoERYS has 3 subordinated institutions dealing with quality assurance aspects: (1) ARACIP (Pre-university Education); (2)ARACIS (University Education); and (3) NQA (CVT).
28	SE	The Higher Education Act contains provisions about the higher education institutions that are accountable to the government, local authorities or county councils. These provisions are often supplemented by the regulations in the Higher Education Ordinance. Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) to review the quality of higher education. This work includes evaluating subject areas (main fields of study) and study programmes; and Granting degree awarding powers
29	SI	The Higher Education Act (Articles: 51e): In line with the article 51e of Higher Education Act, the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (NAKVIS) was established by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. The Agency commenced its operations on 1 March 2010 after, on 28 February 2010 when the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia had ceased to work. On the other hand, there are no specific quality approaches for higher adult education, hence quality assurance of adult education is included within the quality frameworks used by the faculties.
30	SK	In higher education a government related body, an Accreditation commission (AK), is responsible for accrediting of all three cycles of higher education. AK cooperates with international institutions such as The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) or The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).
31	TK	Regulation for Academic Evaluation and Quality Improvement in Higher Education Institutions regulates activities regarding evaluation of education, instruction and research activities as well as administrative services of higher education institutions, improving quality of them, verifying and recognizing quality level of them by means of independent "external auditing " process. The Turkish National Agency for Higher Education will be responsible for implementing these evaluations and reviews, and these should take place every fourth year, instead of every six years as has been the case earlier. In accordance with the regulations Higher Education Academic Evalua-

		tion and Quality Improvement Committee (YODEK) entered upon its duty Guide for Academic Evaluation and Quality Improvement in Higher Education Institutions that was accomplished by YODEK in May 2006
32	UK	Separate legislation for each of the 4 nations, Northern Ireland; England; Wales; Scotland: a) Legislation for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) with UK-wide remit; b) Legislation in all 4 countries on HEIs in relation to their autonomous status and their responsibility for self-evaluation.

VET		
1	AT	The Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ARQA-VET), was established October 1st, 2007. It serves to cross-link stakeholders of Vocational Education and Training in Austria and to play an active role to promote European networking.
2	BE	**Flanders** VET has a legal framework HBO5 and education inspectorate in formal adult education. The AKOV, Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training is responsible for the quality of pathways to evidence of professional qualifications in education, training, education and APL programs. The Inspectorate is an independent service with a view to carrying out its tasks by the Flemish Government is made available to the agency AKOV. In the future, some tasks are performed for other policy than the Education and Training policy - particularly for training - by a single cell within the agency independently and with knowledge of the policy area organizes its work VDAB and Syntra (non-formal VET) have their own quality systems, growth towards integrated quality framework for courses leading to recognized qualifications. Quality control within VDAB vocational education is organised by VDAB itself. VDAB can offer their own courses according to their own criteria, with their own quality systems. VDAB has a solid quality EFQM model and ISO-certified. If an accreditation is approved, there follows a second set of criteria. This is less strictly to the education itself, there is only looked at the professional components of the program. SYNTRA Flanders also looks after the quality of apprenticeships and entrepreneurial training itself. Apprenticeship counsellors and apprenticeship advisors will be called on to check the quality of apprenticeships. Aside from that, a self-evaluation tool will be used. The self-evaluations are assessed by a quality-assessment agency. (1). Also client questionnaire are set in to evaluate the offered quality of the program. To the extent that in the policy fields of sport and culture non-formal VET is offered leading to recognized professional qualifications, this will be integrated quality framework also apply to the policy fields of sport and culture. **Wallonia** There exists no specific accreditation system for VET. Although VET is not part the AEQES, when checking the quality of a curricula they try to include all comparable education, under which VET. Progressively, the AEQES have to take VET into account and come to more cooperation. On the short term is no prospect of developing a separate or broader quality system for VET.

3	BG	In terms of VET there are two authorities that apply their own approaches to quality assurance. In December 2009, the Minister of labour and social policy approved by an order a mechanism for quality assurance and control of adult education organized by the National Employment Agency. Since the beginning of 2010 a Quality Assurance Mechanism and Control for initial VET has been applied by the National Employment Agency (NAE). NAE in order to provide high quality and efficiency of the proposed training of adults in centres of its own authority applies a Method for Assessment of the Proposals for Vocational Guidance and Training of Adults when choosing the training institution. Similarly vocational training in Continuing Vocational Training Centres (CVTs) is monitored by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET). NAVET is the institution, which licenses all CVTs, keeps a register of CVTs and exercises consistent control.
		NAVET also applies certain tools and mechanisms for monitoring & evaluating learning programmes and learners' achievements.
4	CH	Special interest for the AL sector was the Vocational Education Law/ Vocational Education Degree): Q-Actors in VET: The Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET).
5	CY	The main policies in the field of VET, as outlined in the NRP, include the Upgrading vocational education and training, by improving the quality and attractiveness of the education and training systems, establishing mechanisms of lifelong guidance and validation of acquired skills, providing alternative pathways to young persons and upgrading the Apprenticeship System and facilitating the transfer of students between general education and VET. Other current national policy debates and/or issues, which have direct or indirect effects on VET, include the establishment of a System for the Assessment and Certification of training providers, which is considered of vital importance for the adaptation of the training system to the current needs of the labour and training markets and it is expected to contribute to the improvement of quality and effectiveness of the training provision in Cyprus.
		The introduction of a System for Assessment and Certification of Training Providers will be soon launched by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA)
		At the non-university level of education public educational institutions are accountable to the respective Ministries which are responsible for ensuring that quality standards are retained. Private non-university level institutions are inspected by the officers of the Department of Tertiary Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition, their programmes of study are liable to accreditation by the *Council for Assessment and Accreditation* (SEKAP), an independent body entitled with the accreditation of the programmes of study of the private non-university level institutions of higher education.
6	CZ	*Education Act (561/2004) the Education Act stipulates that all schools providing vocational education and training (both IVET and CVET) have to engage in regular self-evaluation.* On basis of the Act on verification and recognition of further education results (179/2006) a National Register of Vocational Qualifications has been established. Finally, the Employment Act (435/2004) regulates the state's employment policy, which includes the funding of accredited educational institutions through the labour offices.
		The Ministry of Education Youth and Sports is responsible for the accreditation of professional retraining courses who are eligible for funding from the national government. To be accredited an institution has to provide a course or courses that are deemed of importance by the ministry, and has to conform to the criteria set by the ministry. The accredited institutions and courses are collected in a national database which can be visited at www.dak.msmt.cz

		Examinations for retraining courses are undertaken by 518 "authorized persons" who are authorized to examine for 2260 qualifications; an average of about four qualifications per individual. Examination is obligatory in formal education and for retraining courses that have been financed by the state through the labour offices. Between January 2008 and April 2012 38.280 examinations have taken place.
7	DE	The Law establishing the foundation "*Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany*" from 15 February 2005 serves as the legal basis for the activity of the Accreditation
8	DK	The Act on Adult Vocational Training Programmes (AMU) is stated that the continuing training and education committees have to continuously analyse the need for new competencies on the labour market and for developing relevant new joint competence descriptions and adult vocational training programmes. The Act on Adult Vocational Training was revised in 2009 and the new centres of adult vocational training were introduced. Some of the key tasks of the centres are adult guidance, counselling of companies, and coordinating and developing the provision of adult education and training offers. The Act (Chapter 8) focus on registers and quality assurance.
9	EE	The non-formal CVET is under the responsibility of training institutions and providers. Private training providers must be licensed by the Ministry of Education and Research according to the Private School Act (only training at licensed providers is tax deductible). A training licence is valid for three to five years. New principles and criteria for issuing training licences are being prepared. The licences will be replaced by the right to register the curriculum at the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), an online database of the whole educational system in Estonia. Quality issues are gaining more attention as the provision of adult training increases. Raising awareness of participants and employers has had a positive impact on training quality.
10	EL	Law 3191/2003 stipulates the establishment of the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training with Employment (ESSEEKA). OEEK the Organization for Vocational Education and Training under which operates all IVET in the country through IEKs (Institutes for Vocational Training) is responsible for applying the policies, however the quality parameter is not very visible at a national level but only during the periods of National Examinations for IVET Accreditation where an external examination board if responsible for the whole accreditation process.
		At <u>sectoral level</u> policies largely refer to quality approaches in CVET as these are implemented by the National Accreditation Centre (EKEPIS) [that is very recently in 21 November 2011, merged with two other organizations into a single entity, and created EOPPEP, the National Organisation for Accreditation of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance, under the supervision of the Minister of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs. EKEPIS operates varied quality measurement instruments such as the Trainers Registry. EKEPIS operates its own framework for accrediting both CVET structures but also CVET trainers and supporting staff. This framework prescribes the development of a registry for trainers as well as a set of infrastructural guidelines for CVET centres that could be accredited by EKEPIS.
11	ES	Royal Decree 1538/2008 which is devoted to the general organisation of vocational training, indicating that vocational training for adults must have the same characteristics and follow similar guidelines as mainstream vocational training.
12	FI	The Vocational Education and Training Act (630/1998), effective as from the beginning of 1999, governs the organisation of curriculum-based upper secondary vocational education and training for both young and adult students. (Eurypedia). Quality is mentioned directly in the Act (Lagen (630/1998) and in the regulations

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förordningen (811/1998). The Vocational Adult Education Act (631/1998) stipulates about the upper secondary vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications taken as competence tests irrespective of the method of acquiring the vocational skills, as well as for the preparatory training for these tests. In 2006, changes were made to this Act in regard to preparatory training for competence-based qualification, individual plans of students, completing qualifications and contracts for arranging competence tests. (Eurypedia) Quality is mentioned directly in the Act (Lagen (631/1998) and in the regulations förordningen (812/1998)).

Legislation on vocational education and training and vocational adult education and training gives the education providers extensive discretion on matters pertaining to the organisation of education and use of financing allocated to education as well as quality assurance. The aim of national steering on vocational education and training is to set objectives on vocational education and training and on its quality as well as to ensure that they are attained. The key steering mechanisms in quality assurance include legislation governing the activities and funding, the authorisation of providers of vocational education and training, the degree structure and core curricula, the principles for financing the activities, performance-based funding and the qualifications requirements of teaching personnel. Additional steering mechanisms include the education and research development plan confirmed by the Government, the Budget and development and information steering by the educational authorities.

The provision of vocational education and training requires authorisation by the Ministry of Education to provide vocational upper secondary education and training or vocational continuing education. The authorisation is granted on application by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education may grant the authorisation to provide education to a municipality, federation of municipalities, a registered organisation or foundation or an unincorporated state enterprise. Education can also be provided in a state educational institution. The authorisation requires that the education is necessary and that the applicant possesses the professional and economic prerequisites to provide the education in an appropriate manner. The authorisation permit to provide vocational upper secondary education and training lays down provisions on the level of education, fields of education, qualifications, teaching language, municipalities in which the education can be provided, the number of students, special educational tasks, form of provision of the education and other matters pertaining to the provision of education. The authorisation permit to provide vocational continuing education lays down provisions on the educational tasks, including provisions on the teaching language, fields of education, the number of student years of education leading to competence-based qualifications and other vocational continuing education and the number of apprenticeship agreements, as well as on special educational tasks and working life development and service tasks and other matters pertaining to the provision of educations and qualifications. The Ministry of Education may change the authorisation, even without an application, if the education offered significantly differs from the educational needs. The Ministry of Education can also revoke the authorisation if the education does not fulfil the requirements set for the granting of the authorisation or the education is otherwise provided contrary to the law or the provisions pursuant to it.

The Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training was adopted in 2008 by the Ministry of Education to support and encourage VET providers to pursue excellence when improving the quality of their operations. The recommendation is based on the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) in vocational education and training.

An electronic student feedback system was introduced in 2008 in order to monitor and evaluate the system of competence based qualifications.

13	FR	Quality in adult learning is partially covered by the legal framework regulating the quality of initial (primary, secondary, tertiary, higher) education. A National Commission on Professional Certification establishes certification requirements and evaluation methods for each certificate that has been registered in the National Inventory of Professional Certifications. Regular degrees are issued and controlled by the state. The General Inspection for National Education (IGEN) and The General Inspection for the Administration of National Education and Research (IGAENR) evaluate the national educational system, institutions, and personnel. External evaluation in the institutes for initial (primary, secondary, tertiary, higher) education is performed by IGEN, IGAENR, and AERES. SAIA evaluates the quality of alternating training in each *académie*. The *Offices Pôle Emploi* evaluate the training programmes that they finance and, in particular, AFPA training. Sectoral agencies such as the National Observatory on Farming Education monitor the quality of (continuing) vocational education and training in their respective sector.
		Formal education and training for adults is provided in the *Gretas*, the vocational secondary schools, the institutes of higher education, the AFPA centres, the CFAs and the CFPPAs. All these organizations fall under the direct responsibility or oversight of either the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Agriculture, or the Ministry of Employment They have to track and evaluate their programmes and are submitted to evaluations by the Ministry. The *Greta,* vocational secondary schools, and CFAs fall directly under their respective ministries and are inspected by agencies operated jointly by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (IGEN and IGAENR).
		The label Lycée des Metiers ("Vocational Secondary School") has been created in 2001 by the Ministry of National Education and is offered to vocational and polyvalent schools for secondary education who combine the vocational and technological tracks. Its creation was driven by four objectives: (1) to promote the attractiveness of the vocational route, (2) to push the regional networks of VET providers towards quality, (3) to reinforce synergies between the vocational and technological routes of training, and (4) to restructure regional training provisions to make them more consistent. The label is seen as an important approach to create a dynamic towards quality and excellence in VET and to promote accountability against common criteria for quality..
		The label can not be obtained by regular or technical schools for secondary education (Lycées d'enseignement général et technologique), unless they sign a partnership with a vocational high school. The initial number of criteria for accreditation was four and has been increased to nine in 2005. The key demands of the label are that the Lycée has to offer a coherent range of vocational training around a consistent group of jobs and to develop narrow relationships with local and regional employers. While the Lycées des Metiers have a lot to do with initial vocational education and training, they are also relevant from the perspective of continuing VET, since one of the demands is that the school provides vocational education to a variety of target groups including adults. The label Lycée des Metiers is attributed by the rector of an académie (region) by means of a regional committee in charge of labelling. The label is valid for a period of five years. At this moment about 800 Lycées have been awarded the label.
14	HR	Formal adult education enables adults to gather a school certificate in case they had had now chance to do so in school-age period of their lives. This second chance is a way that can only be attained in formal system of adult education through elementary and secondary schools for adults. This formal adult education is the part of the system of public education, which is currently regulated by the CXC/2011. - Act on Public Education.
15	HU	Vocational education and training has got two levels, one is the VET in formal education, which is organised in vocational schools and vocational secondary-schools (and at universities in the case of post-secondary VET). That form of VET is allowed to issue a Vocational Certificate for pupils referring to vocations registered into the

		National Vocational Registry/OKJ. In formal education, the accomplishment of such studies is free and has got no cost. VET in formal education is regulated by the CLXXXVII Act on Vocational Education and Training. Whilst VET in schools are part of the formal education system, quality assurance is achieved through accreditation procedures and regulations.
		VET outside the school system/formal education is organised as a part of adult education and training, which may lead to a VET certificate, listed in the National Vocational Registry/OKJ, or to a non state-recognised CVET training.
		In the case of vocational certificates, which are recognised by the state, quality assurance is provided by the official Vocational and Examination Requirements and are issued by the Minister, being responsible for VET, in a statutory rule. The Vocational and Examination Requirements are set and publicly issued in a legal document that clearly defines the tasks of the vocation in use, the conditions of enrolment into the VET programme, the contents of modules of the concrete programme (with task and competence profiles), the requirements of examination and the minimal tools as conditions of the VET process. Since this regulation is set in law, it is compulsory for each and every VET institutions and organisations to fulfil its points and regulations. namely, this prove that wherever a student participate a concrete registered vocational training programme, he/she will obtain the same competences, therefore, certificates issued in that vocation all around the country will have equal value and recognition.
16	IE	Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), set up under the Qualifications Act, requires that all awards included in the National Framework of Qualifications are quality assured, and a key objective of the NFQ is to promote and maintain standards. Therefore, where NVAE providers offer courses leading to awards on the NQF they are obliged to meet all the quality requirements set down by FETAC (non-tertiary FET and VT providers). Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) was established in 2001 under the 1999 legislation. FETAC's main function is to make awards, to determine and monitor standards for awards and to recognise awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ); to agree and review providers' quality assurance arrangements delivering programmes leading to these awards; to validate programmes of education and training leading to these awards; to ensure fair and consistent assessment of learners by providers. FETAC must agree their QA procedures with the National Qualifications Authority Ireland (NQAI), and are subject to quality assurance arrangements, which include regular evaluation by national and international experts and evaluation by learners of their VET programmes and ancillary services. The effectiveness of the NQAI itself was reviewed in 2007.
17	IS	As all education and training in Iceland, continuous vocational education is open to all and therefore special provisions for people over a certain age are not necessary. The Adult Education Act was passed by parliament in the spring of 2010. According to the second article of the Act, among its main objectives are to create the necessary scope and solutions to meet the demands of industry for increased knowledge and competences of employees. In Iceland the accreditation of education and training providers does not make a difference between public and private institutions: both are subject to the Adult Education Act of March 2010. The Adult Education Act states that education and training providers should make an effort to ensure that courses are compatible with other studies, and that studies can be evaluated and validated in order to receive credits within the formal education system. Curricula or course descriptions must be certified by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture or by a body assigned the task by the Minister. This certification confirms that the course fulfils the format and quality requirements set by the Ministry. Financial accounts must be signed by a chartered accountant and be made accessible to the National Audit Office. Accreditations may be revoked if an education or training

		provider no longer fulfils the conditions of the Adult Education Act. Accreditation of education and training providers The Minister of Education, Science and Culture, or a body assigned the task by the Minister, provides accreditation to adult education and training providers.
18	IT	It should be noted that parts of the education sector (predominantly the VET sector) are the responsibility of the Regions, not of the National Ministries. Recent developments in the field of VET is the National Plan for Quality Assurance of VET. This Plan, complying with the request of the EQAVET Recommendation, should undergo a further consultation with social partners as well as representatives of providers. Also second chance education, provided by the CTP (Permanent Territorial Centers), is included in this national plan. The plan follows the general Plan, do, check, act cycle and is built upon existing practices. Already before the National Plan on Quality Assurance, there were a number of policies in place concerning quality assurance, both at national and regional level. Also a number of institutes have been established to monitor and improve the quality of VET in Italy. Institutes that focus on education governed by the Ministry of education, university and research (Ministero dell'Istruzione, Università e Ricerca). In general, the initiatives on quality assurance and reforms within the education sectors are related to European developments and initiatives (for instance, Bologna process, EQF and EQAVET/EQARF). In addition, the European Social Fund plays an important role in financing vocational education. Also, at regional level there are policies in place. Within the VET sector, the regions have their own evaluation system (finance; impact; intercultural activities; social integration; etc.) such as; Emilia Romagna, Piemonte; Toscana, Veneto; Lombardia; Umbria; Marche; such practices are less diffused in the South. Due to the Reform of the Title V of the Constitution (transfer of the central responsibility in the training system to the Regions and Provinces), the state cannot interfere with the local authorities). Within general education, VET and the university sectors there are accreditation systems in place. In fact, with the national plan, there is a general accreditation system for all education provision. This system is built upon the EQAVET system and takes into account the facilities, skills of the trainers, financial aspects, placement rate, etc. within institutes. Each education sector has its own agency for quality assurance, guidance and support. For the Universities it is ANVUR. The VET sector has ISFOL and in the Adult Education sector (CTP and evening schools) INDIRE/ANSAS provides quality support. INVALSI monitors the primary and secondary education sector. The non-formal sector does not have a quality assurance institute.
19	LT	The Law on Vocational Education and Training (1997, new edition 2007) sets out the structure and management of the VET system, design, management and award of qualifications, organisation and management of VET as well as VET funding. Based on this Law, the VET system in Lithuania covers initial VET, continuing VET, and vocational guidance. VET may be provided in parallel with general lower or upper secondary education. The Law shapes provisions for quality assurance by setting the principles for VET quality assurance. New impulse for the development of VET system was given after adopting the new edition of Law on VET in 2007. It sets principles for the VET system management and quality assurance, defines national qualifications framework, introduces apprenticeship and creates legal preconditions to bridge IVET and CVET.

		On 24 November 2008, the Minister of Education and Science approved the Concept for Quality Assurance in Formal Education. The purpose of the Concept is to provide a conceptual framework for political and social arrangements regarding the understanding of education quality and methods for quality assurance in formal education, as well as to create preconditions for harmonisation of the quality assurance policy in education. The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras, QVETDC (until January 2010 - Methodological Centre for VET) under the MES perform functions of Qualifications Management Institution as established in new edition of Law on VET (2007) including organisation of VET and qualifications standards development, research of qualifications demand and qualifications formation. It also develops VET quality and performs functions of Quality Assurance National Reference Point for VET and EQF National Coordination Point.
20	LU	The *Loi portant réforme de la formation professionelle* of December 19th 2008 (art. 43) describes which institutions can provide vocational training. It also stipulates that private institutions who wish to perform activities in the field of vocational training have to receive authorisation and have to conform to artile L. 542.8 of the Labour Code as modified in March 2012. The 2008 law (art. 44) also establishes a quality label for organisations or individuals who are engaged in continued vocational education and training. The law was partially modified by the law of March 28th 2012. The government has implemented the quality label for non-formal education since 2000 and is currently in the process of establishing a quality label for CVET in consultation with the social partners (and based on the 2008 law). The Department for Vocational Training (*Service de formation professionelle*) is responsible for the quality of CVET. The quality of formal continuing education (excluding higher education) is guaranteed by MEN. Secondary and technical secondary schools, the schools of second chance, the labour college, CNFPC, and INL fall under the direct responsibility of the ministry. These institutions have obtained prior approval from MEN to engage in adult education, in line with the laws of December 2008 and March 2012. The SFP is responsible for the quality of CVET. People who teach classes for adults in these institutions have to conform to nearly the same standards as their counterparts in initial education (law of July 1991). Since the law of November 2011 new teaching staff has to follow a traineeship followed by a final exam and are given the title "adult trainer" (*formateur d'adultes*).
21	LV	In recent years vocational education prestige, quality and social dialogue have become a great policy priority, therefore, in 2009 the concept "Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance" (*Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā*) developed by the MoES was approved. The Concept aims at outlining solutions for key challenges in vocational education policy and reaching agreement between state and social partners regarding most appropriate solutions for the problems. Precondition of the entering vocational further education programmes are resaved vocational education or professional activity. Providers must be accredited education institution who implements licensed education programme. Programmes must be developed according to the Standards of the Professions. The Education Law determines that all educational institutions, except those which implement only interest-related education programmes (realisation of the individual educational needs and desires of a person regardless of age and previously acquired education), have to be accredited. Accreditation is carried out within five years starting with the first day of activity by the education institution. Besides, each education or study programme (a school or a higher education institution develops one or more education programmes) have to be accredited as well. It must be done within two years from the day of the programme's start, and not less than once in six years. . In September 2010, new CoM Regulations "Procedure of accrediting general and vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination

		centres" (were adopted, uniting the accreditation of both general and vocational education accreditation systems. These Regulations stipulate a uniform accreditation procedure, clearly define quality requirements in general and vocational education (the EQF levels 1-4). State agency "State Service of Education Quality" (under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science) is responsible for the quality control of formal education provision and provider as well as for vocational development education programmes and further vocational development education programmes and providers, also agency have a mandate to react on complains irrespectively of education programmes types.
22	MT	All adult education courses leading to a qualification on the NQF awarded by the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) come under the QA arrangements of that body. The MQC which has a role in quality assurance of courses/qualifications. MQC established the criteria for NQF levels (including HE). Once the provider, including private institutions, has accreditation a double protocol is applied, namely, validate the course AND level rate it. Then a provider is recognised as a provider of that course which is approved. An EQA-VET project is under development but in general, QA in VET is not yet part of a coherent framework. VET courses which are part of DLL-funded provision are also covered by DLL's QA system. The system covers hiring staff and the provision of ongoing CPD, monitoring and evaluation; learner assessment; curriculum and materials development. Courses provided by non-governmental providers subsidised by DLL also come under these arrangements.
23	NL	Quality in adult and vocational education is subject to the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB: Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs). The institutions offering adult and vocational education under this act are supervised by the Inspectorate (Inspectie van het Onderwijs; Ministry of Education, Culture and Science). The Accreditation framework for adult and vocational education (Toetsingskader bve) includes two levels of inspection: Level 1: Institute analysis every three years (based on desk research (yearly reports, results other signals); site visits (study a sample of educational programmes offered, study on quality assurance systems). The results of the analysis will be discussed with the Board. Every year a quick scan takes place on the basis of desk research. Level 2: In case the discussion with the Board given an indication of serious risks, inspection at level 2 will take place. This involves a study on the quality and a study on quality improvement. The accreditation frameworks identified seven quality areas, each having their own specific indicators (Educational process, examination and certification, results, quality assurance, compliance with legal requirements, quality of teachers/staff, and financial continuity The quality in this area is the responsibility of the providers themselves. There are no strict legal requirements towards programmes *not* leading to an accredited degree. In case the private providers offer accredited degrees (e.g. Bachelor, master, VET diplomas), the programmes and the provider is subject to supervision and accreditation. The Dutch referencing report states that "Private education providers accredited by the Education Minister comply with the quality rules and requirements of funded institutions. In addition, professional and industry sectoral associations have formulated their own quality codes. NRTO members, the representative organisations of private training institutes, sign the Code of Conduct for Training and Education and are also obliged to use the Terms and Conditions as drawn up by the NRTO and the consumer organisation, "Consumentenbond".
24	NO	The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for the development of subject curricula and development, supervision and quality control of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary general and vocational education and training. Norway enjoys a high degree of decentralisation, and in Knowledge Promotion reform of 2006, the central government delegated more responsibility to the local level. The 429 municipalities own and run the public primary and lower secondary schools, while the 19 counties are responsible for all aspects of public upper secondary general education and VET, including apprenticeship training. Municipali-

		ties and counties receive financial support from the central government. Adult Education Act (Lov om voksenopplæring) regulates different types of adult training not covered by the Education Act. Education and training for adults is provided by a variety of public and private institutions.
		Among the most important are private adult learning study associations (studieforbund) that offer primary and secondary education, but also IVET and CVET. Labour market training, work-based training and distance education. Quality is not mentioned directly in the law and in the regulations, but the many topics presented can be seen as a kind of quality standards and criteria for good quality.
		The Act relating to Post-secondary Vocational Education and Training (Lov om fagskoler 2003, latest amendment 2010) regulates public and private post-secondary vocational education and training at ISCED 4 level, with courses and programmes of 6 months' to 2 years' duration. Education and training under this law is not part of higher education. The main purposes of the Act relating to post-secondary vocational education and training is to ensure and promote quality provision, and to ensure student rights. The amendments to the law in December 2010 relate to the introduction of a national qualifications framework, to the recognition of prior learning and to the use of credits. The Act (LOV 2003-06-20 nr 56: Lov om fagskoleutdanning (fagskoleloven) mention directly the roles of NOKUT in relation to securing the quality of these educations and their institutions. NOKUT was established in 2003 as part of the Quality Reform legislation on higher education. NOKUT's areas of responsibility and operational mechanisms are regulated by the Act Relating to Universities and Colleges, the Act Relating to Tertiary Vocational Education and the associated Regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Research. NOKUT's professional independence means that its accreditation and recognition decisions cannot be overruled by the Ministry.
		The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen — NOKUT) is responsible for the accreditation of both higher education and post-secondary vocational education and training
25	PL	For VET no central institution for accreditation exists, this might come in the future, but is not decided yet. For VET a proposal is under construction, with 10 quality standards.
		The regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7th October 2009 on pedagogical supervision, which is presently in force sets requirements for primary schools, lower and upper-secondary schools, art schools, continuing and practical education establishments and professional development centres in the following areas: (1) The effectiveness of school in students' performance and in providing care; (2) The processes taking place in a school; (3) Functioning of a school/ centre in the local community; and (4) Managing a school/ centre. External evaluation of the above mentioned areas is regularly conducted. It is the basis for assigning scores on the scale where the best performance in fulfilling requirements is marked A and the lowest E. That methodology influences the quality assurance in the Polish education system. The same regulation obliges the head of school/ centre to conduct internal evaluation and using its results to improve school functioning. The internal evaluation is a tool to gather information on the quality of a school work, the assessment of effectiveness and helps in planning future actions. The in-ternal evaluation allows the headmaster of school to find out what are the school deficits and to plan how to develop the school.
		Institutions and centres of continuing education which provide non-formal education can obtain accreditation which confirms that they meet specific requirements and assure quality of education. However, the accreditation introduced in 2003 is voluntary; therefore the out-of-school establishments providing education in compli-

		ance with the principles of free business activity are able to avoid any quality related supervision. Most institutions dealing with non-formal education have quality assurance by means of a ISO-certificate.
26	PT	With regard to quality assurance, the National Qualification and Vocational Education Agency (NQVEA) plays an important role for the non-higher education qualifications (VET). It is the responsibility of the National Qualification and Vocational Education Agency (NQVEA) to manage the network of New Opportunities centres, the design and updating of the National Qualifications Catalogue (NQC), the organisation and rationalisation of training provision available in dual certification courses, as well as the supervision and support of information activities and guidance for qualification and employment.
27	RO	The orientation of the Romanian system of adult learning and education, towards quality is strongly related to vocational education and training, and to labour market training programmes. The MoERYS-Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport is responsible for VET system, initial and continuing (excepting the apprenticeship on the job).The MoERYS has 3 subordinated institutions dealing with quality assurance aspects: ARACIP (Pre-university Education); ARACIS (University Education); NQA (CVT).

For the authorisation of the formal CVT providers, there are county's authorisation commissions (LACs) at county level consisting of 5 members, local representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection; Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport; National Agency for Employment; Trade Union and Employers' Organisations. The authorisation is granted by the LAC based on the evaluation reports prepared by two specialists/evaluators in the field of the training programme.

The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport through the National Authority for Qualifications is responsible for quality assurance within the nationally regulated CVT system (formal, non-formal and informal). The mutual recognition of the certificates is a reality only between the formal and the non-formal/informal branches of the nationally regulated CVT system. The main principles implemented are: Quality assurance, Access, Decentralization, and Social partnership. |
| 28 | SE | In order to secure quality in post-secondary education and training the Government has introduced a common framework of Higher Vocational Education as of 1 July 2009, the National Coordination Point for EQF. Quality and national equivalence will be guaranteed through uniform quality criteria and quality indicators for different forms of post secondary vocational education and training outside higher education.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate's (Skolinspektionen) follow-up of the quality of work-based learning in upper secondary school the Government is discussing a series of measures aiming at further improving the quality of work-based learning as well as apprenticeship training.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate has supervisory responsibility for pre-schooling, school-age child care, schooling and adult education. This means that the Agency checks that the municipalities or the independent schools comply with the legislation and other provisions applicable to their activities.

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education makes tenders for new advanced VET educations lasting in average around 2 years. |

| 29 | SI | The Vocational Educational Act[1] (Articles: 15, 16, 17.). The provider of secondary vocational education and training (young and adults), has to implement the internal quality system. It has to have a quality commission, and carried out self-evaluation in accordance with the quality circle (plan, do, check, act.). The School council following the proposal of the principal or headmistress (hereinafter referred to as principal), appoint a committee for quality, white a main task to monitor and assure the quality of the educational process. The quality commission is composed of the President and members: school representatives and representatives of employers, representatives of parents of students. The Commission consists of Chairman and at least five members. The School publishes an annual report of the work of the quality commission on its website.

The post-secondary Vocational Educational Act (Articles 15) indicate that the post-secondary school has to have the quality commission. The task of the commission is to carry out self-evaluation and to cooperate in the external evaluation and accreditation procedures.

In the field of post-secondary education the external evaluation and accreditation procedures are carried out by the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for higher education (NAKVIS). |
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| 30 | SK | The secondary IVET system is dominantly based on a traditional quality assurance mechanism – responsibility for quality assigned by law to respective players (e.g. director of school, establisher, Ministry of Education) and the supervision by the State School Inspection.

It must be stressed that no national quality assurance programmes have been elaborated yet and no quality assurance mechanisms based on specific European tools (CQAF, EQARF) were made obligatory.

Nevertheless, the non-existence of national quality management system was expressed a weak point and the introduction of such systems in all segments of VET, regional schooling, higher education and CVET/LLL was indicated an explicit goal to be achieved within the activities of the 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Education. |
| 31 | TK | Quality standards for VET providers in Turkey do exist. VET policy is conducted at a national level; however, a national approach for quality assurance is yet to be developed. No national Reference Point is identified or established in Turkey as yet. However, EQAVET liaises with MONE on the quality assurance issues in VET.

According to Besim Durgun (a visiting scholar in BIBB) great progress has been made during the last two decades in the Turkish VET system in terms of outcome-based education and training. Qualifications development has a built-in quality assurance mechanism: from skills needs analysis, occupational standards, training standards/qualifications, to assessment and certification based on unitized/modularized qualifications. Bearing in mind that international and bilateral projects play a key role in order to promoting quality assurance in VET, the Turkish government has launched international project together with, for example, France, Germany, and Japan in different vocational schools. In general, these international and bilateral projects aim at developing curricula, training technical and vocational teachers home and abroad, renewing machines and equipment, and finding |

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[1] Vocational Education Act: http://zakonodaja.gov.si/rpsi/r02/predpis_ZAKO982.html

		out additional resources outside the regular budget.
32	UK	Separate legislation for each of the 4 nations, Northern Ireland; England; Wales; Scotland. Legislation covers: a) Credit and Qualifications frameworks in each country
		b) Inspectorates in each country, e.g. The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.
		In the UK VET quality assurance systems are in place and compatible with the EQAVET Recommendation. The UK is implementing this through the EQAVET network and working groups. Vocational Higher Education, whether undertaken in universities, other HE or FE institutions, is generally the responsibility of the HE funding and quality agencies.
		Where VET courses lead to qualifications on the national credit and qualifications framework (one in each of the 4 nations) the QA requirements related to those qualifications apply.
		When VET is delivered by Further Education Colleges they are autonomous, independent bodies with responsibility for QA of their provision. They are required to engage in self-evaluation and it is carried out within a context of quality frameworks and self-evaluation tools supplied by external QA bodies. The resulting self-evaluation reports contribute to and form a basis for external evaluation carried out by: National inspectorates (in each nation); Funding bodies; The relevant Departments of Education.
		Publicly funded VET learning providers are required to keep records of all learners, including demographic data, the course(s) which each learner is taking and data on completion (whether the learner completes the course) and achievement (whether the learner gains the target qualification). Some of this data is collected primarily as the basis for the calculation of funding, but it is also used to monitor the quality of provision and to form the basis of "league tables" in which the success rates of individual providers can be compared. There is also a small proportion of the funding which is dependent on the learner having completed the course and achieved the target qualification.
		The Inspectorate (in each of the four nations) is responsible for inspecting and reporting periodically on the quality of teaching, learning and management of individual colleges, private training providers and other learning providers. The reports of the Inspectorate are used to monitor the quality of provision, to provide 'benchmarks' against which providers can judge their own performance (by enabling comparisons with other providers of similar size and student characteristics), to ensure that action is taken where providers are failing and to provide examples of good practice. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) was formed to accelerate quality improvement, increase participation and raise standards and achievement in the learning and skills sector in England.
		'Skills that Work for Wales' (2008) signaled the introduction of a new Quality and Effectiveness Framework (QEF) for the skills sector in 2009 to enable the Welsh Government to monitor learning providers' performance, ensure that public funding is used effectively and that there are possibilities to intervene if necessary. The framework places increased emphasis on providers themselves taking responsibility to work together to drive up quality and share good practice, through initiatives such as benchmarking and peer review. The Welsh Government carries out regular reviews of providers' performance and monitors their progress, but against a more streamlined set of performance indicators with the main focus being on learner outcomes and provider responsiveness. Providers with a good track record of delivering high quality learning undergo 'lighter touch' assessments.

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Non formal adult learning		
1	AT	(1) Ö-Cert provides registration as one of the Quality Providers of Adult Education in Austria. For transparency, simplified administration and to promote an overall strategy of quality, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture developed the Ö-CERT (AT-Cert) - in cooperation with leading Austrian experts, representatives of the nine Austrian provinces and providers of Adult education. Ö-CERT is implemented at macro-level (policy) and the target is to assure the quality of providers all over Austria. Ö-CERT is focussed by the Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to assure and to improve the quality of structures of Adult Learning (Adult Education). (2) Academy of Continuing Education (wba) is a system for the qualification and recognition/accreditation of adult educators. www.wba.or.at/. Founded in 2007 the Academy of Continuing Education has a new approach to recognising acquired competences of adult educators in that it acknowledges previously acquired qualifications and offers guidance as far as the acquisition of missing skills is regarded. (3) Another interesting case is Austria, where institutions that want to take part in the "Initative Erwachsenenbildung 2012 – 2014", providing basic skills, have to apply for an accreditation which consists of several rounds of quality procedures including continuous external evaluation and monitoring.
2	BE	Flanders: (1)The Support Centre for Non-formal Adult Education (SoCius) also supports quality assurance within the sector. Organisations which are subsidised under the decree concerning socio-cultural adult work are expected to take the principles of integrated quality assurance into consideration. Walloon: (1) The Higher Council for social advancement education developed a guide to quality management (Guide Qualité pour l'Enseignement de Promotion sociale) to promote the integration of a quality in all educational institutions for social promotion.
3	BG	Not available
4	CH	(1) eduQua label constitutes the framework in which quality of adult learning in Switzerland is assured; eduQua is the first Swiss quality label for adult continuing education. The quality label provides certified institutions with a considerable advantage in the eyes of their clients. The quality management also supports an improvement through the certification process. (2) Train the Trainer (AdA) as a 3-level core concept of staff quality. ■ Level 1: The SVEB-Certificate was introduced in 1995 (AdA-module level 1)

		■ Level 2: The Federal Certificate of Competence for adult education instructors was introduced in 2000 (AdA-module level 2) ■ Level 3: The federal diploma "Advanced Federal Diploma in Training Management and Human Resources Management" was introduced in 2006 (AdA-module level 3)
5	CY	(1) There is no quality framework (legislation / accreditation for formal adult education / second chance, and for the non formal part of AL except that of VET).
6	CZ	(1) Under the "Concept" programme the government is developing a five-star rating system for educational institutions that provide professional retraining courses.
7	DE	(1) Non available at federal level. The responsibility for non-vocational CET does lies with the states. These regulate the quality requirements in the CET and training leave laws. In almost all states CET and adult education laws exist in with the support requirements such as public offer, profes-sional leadership, economic efficiency etc. are defined. There are special quality-related regulations exist in the following states: Bremen, Mecklenburg West Pomerania, Lower Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia.
8	DK	(1) The Act on The Danish Evaluation Institute evaluate all levels of education including all types of adult education that get public funding. (2) The Act for general adult education concludes that the institution establish a system for quality development and assessment of the results in relation to the education and teaching. (§ 21.) and in § 22 that the minister of Education can by the suppliers of education in relation to this Act require all necessary information to use for inspection and the preparation of statistics, including individual competence assessment as mentioned in §13 Stk. 2. The minister of Education can define regulations about electronic communication between the institution and The Ministry, including form and format and about the use of digital signature when the in-formations are delivered. The Minister can further make demands to control and security measures.
9	EE	(1) Private training providers must be licensed according to the Private School Act
10	EL	(1) a new initiative called '∏3 framework' (National Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning) is proposed. De ∏3 framework recommends the incorporation of quality system in the LLL, including quality indicators and quality principles
11	ES	(1) Not available. A proposal of experts exists to coordinate and assure quality of delivery but it was still not put into consideration.
12	FI	(1) the Liberal Adult Education Act (632/1998) mention the possibility to get support to quality development. (2) The Decree on the Finnish National Board of Education (805/2008) stipulates that the FNBE is responsible for the evaluation of educational outcomes in education from pre-primary to adult education.

13	FR	No formal policy concerning the quality of non-formal education and training exists, except for a label regarding the quality of language education. Several labels have been developed by non governmental organisations and are used in the private sector as well as the public sector.
		(1)Quality label as Greta Plus (public adult learning including second chance and VET) and
		(2) Lycee der Metiers (vocational secondary school) serves as measure to boost quality. (3)The label Lycée des Metiers ("Vocational Secondary School") For the non formal learning, only label regarding the quality of language education
14	HR	(1) Adult Education Act in 2007 set standards for professional monitoring and setting standards for adult education institutions regarding the form, content and implementation of formal adult education programmes, necessary qualifications for teaching staff in formal adult education, necessary conditions regarding premises and other material conditions.
15	HU	(1) Act on Adult Education (CI/2001), modified in 2004, which regulates non-formal adult education and training. According to the law, there is a national system of accreditation of adult education and training, currently under legal re-construction as part of the act on adult education and training.
16	IE	(1) The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) & the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were established in 2001 under the 1999 legislation. FETAC, HETAC & IUQB & their quality assurances roles have been subsumed into the recently (2012) established Quality and Qualifcations Ireland (QQI). (2)The voluntary NALA Evolving Quality Framework (2005) for improving and monitoring the quality of adult basic education (ABE)
17	IS	(1) the Adult Education Act (2010) includes articles on accreditation and certification, evaluation and quality control, funding, information provision and the recognition of prior learning. This Act does not apply to non formal learning and education that is based on legislation for upper secondary or higher education.
18	IT	(1)Various providers of non-formal adult learning, such as UPTER (Folk university Rome), have developed an own self-evaluation system.
		(2)The most important recent development in this regard is the National Plan for Quality Assurance of VET (Piano nazionale per la garanzia di qualità dei sistema di istruzione e formazione professionale)[1]. In March 2012 the National Plan for Quality Assurance of VET was endorsed at institutional level (Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education and Regions). This Plan, complying with the request of the EQAVET Recommendation, should undergo a fur-

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[1] Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Ministero dell'instruzione dell'università e della ricerca, Regioni e Province autonome, Coordinamento Regionale, (2012), Piano nazionale per la garanzia di qualità dei sistema di istruzione e formazione professionale.

		ther consultation with social partners as well as representatives of providers. Also second chance education, provided by the CTP (Permanent Territorial Centers), is included in this national plan.
19	LT	Not available
20	LU	(1) The regulation of March 2000 establishes a quality framework and a quality label (label de qualité) for non formal education provided by the municipalities and non-profit associations. Quality in the non-vocational education and training sector is assured to a limited degree by the quality label of March 2000, which is used by nearly all municipalities and institutions because it is coupled to government financial support. This quality label is detailed below.
21	LV	(1) Education Law determines that all educational institutions, except those which implement only interest related education programmes have to be accredited. Private enterprises who are not in the State Education Register and individuals must receive the local municipalities' licence for implementing the adult non-formal education programmes
22	MT	A small number of non-governmental AL providers are subsidised by DLL and, therefore, come under DLL QA measures.
		In the DLL, the Education Officers (inspectorate) for Lifelong Learning & a number of co-ordinators are responsible for QA in publicly-funded adult learning (16+ second- chance schools.) in lifelong learning centres; day classes for adults; outreach programmes of municipalities/local government schools; centres for performing arts; basic skills; ICT courses.
		Second-chance schools for adults come under the MQC regulations. However, the process is not standardized – each institution has its own take on the issue in agreement with the MQC. The emer-gence of convergence is in the process.
23	NL	(1) code of conduct private training institutes; (2) quality seal for folk universities; (3) Quality code for APL centres including accreditation
24	NO	(1) VOX accredits adult education associations and online schools under the new Act for adult education, introduced in 2010
25	PL	(1) Institutions and centres of continuing education which provide non-formal education can obtain accreditation. However, the accreditation introduced in 2003 is voluntary; therefore the out-of-school establishments providing education in compliance with the principles of free business activity are able to avoid any quality related supervision.
26	PT	(1) Quality Charter of the New Opportunities Centres (NCOs), ANQ (2007) - designed to frame the quality approaches of E&T providers within the New Oppor-tunities Initiative, including a set of reference indi-cators and benchmarks. (2) and Ministerial order 851/2010 (6 September) on certification of

		VET providers
27	RO	Not available
28	SE	(1) The Swedish National Council for Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet) is responsible for the distribution of the state grants and for developing and monitoring the activities within the popular and liberal adult education; (2) BRUK, a system for support on the quality work for all types of adult education
29	SI	(1) The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training has developed a quality label for non-formal continuing education (since 2000)
30	SK	Not available.
31	TK	Not available
32	UK	Each country has own specific systems, an example is: ESTYN Inspection of Adult Community Learning (ACL) in Wales.

Annex 3: Further details methodology

Work plan

Short introduction work plan
The following table provides a summary of the work plan of the entire study, divided in three different phases. Each phase builds on the previous one.

Table 0.1 Methodology overview

Phase / time plan	Activities	Results
Inception phase: desk research and fine-tuning methodology *(within 1 month)*	■ Kick-off meeting ■ Drawing up inception report ■ Inception report meeting (combined with briefing meeting experts interim phase)	■ Mutual understanding of the assignment ■ Inception report
Interim phase: stocktaking on country level *(within 6 month)*	**Preparation**	
	■ Developing data collection formats ■ Briefing meeting research team to discuss the findings of the inception phase, instruct the experts in their data collection task	■ Data collection formats ■ Common understanding amongst experts
	Country fact sheets	
	■ Completing country fact sheets (desk research + interviews)	■ First country fact sheets
	Preliminary analysis and interim report	
	■ Preliminary analysis ■ List of case studies ■ Interim report ■ Meeting Commission	■ Country fact sheets ■ List of case studies ■ Interim report ■ Minutes Commission meeting
3 Final phase: **Assessment**: case studies, seminar, analysis and reporting *(within 12 months)*	**Case studies**	
	■ Conducting 15 studies of selected cases	■ 15 in-depth case study reports
	Internal meeting research team	
	■ Discussing 15 case studies ■ Cross country analysis ■ Cross case analysis ■ Quality determinants AI / ingredients	■ Briefing document workshop / seminar

	reference framework ■ Preparation seminar / workshop	
	Analysis and draft final report	
	■ Integrated analysis ■ Reporting ■ Meeting Commission	■ Draft final reporting ■ Final agenda / briefing document workshop / seminar in Brussels ■ Minutes Commission meeting
	Seminar / workshop in Brussels	
	■ Seminar/workshop 30 participants: Testing the draft reference framework, discussing findings to arrive at conclusions and recommendations	■ Testing overall outcomes, trends and recommendations with experts and stakeholders ■ Minutes with outcomes seminar / workshop
	■ Final analysis and final report	
	■ Final analysis and reporting	■ Final report

Country studies

The ToR indicates that this study should cover a representative range of EU MS, EFTA countries and accession candidate countries. On request of the Commission, we decided to include information of all countries falling within the scope of the study, resulting in 32 country fact sheets:

■ the 27 European Union Member States

■ 3 EFTA countries (Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland)

■ 2 accession candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey).

The aim of the country fact sheet was to gather information on country level concerning key data to provide a general picture of quality measures in adult learning in the countries studied. Taking into account the resources and the goals of this study, this country fact sheet did not include a full assessment of quality in adult learning in the countries. The aim of this fact sheet was therefore to identify the most important and relevant quality measures, and as result the researchers where obliged to make choices concerning what types of measures taken in the diverse field of adult learning. During the research process, however, there are a number of checks and balances to ensure that indeed the most important and relevant quality measures are described (e.g. interviews, consultation of key stakeholders). With this approach we assure that we include maximum variety of practice around Europe in the study.

The country fact sheets addressed the following questions:

1) What are the national / regional policies, frameworks / legislation, etc. with regard to quality approaches, standards and other relevant developments in the field of Adult Learning?

2) What are the issues and challenges which are specific to the adult learning sector in relation to assuring quality of its providers and provision?

3) What are differences and common characteristics in the non-vocational adult learning sector compared with the development of quality assurance systems in VET and Higher Education?

4) Are there processes and mechanisms for quality assurance? If yes, what is their scope and what is their approach?

5) Who are the bodies responsible for supervising, managing, implementing and supporting these processes and mechanisms at national / regional level (including systems and bodies responsible for the accreditation of providers) in order to support quality measures at provider level?

6) Are there interesting practices with regard to quality in the adult learning sector? If yes, please describe.

The fact sheets were drawn up by the core research team studying literature and policy documents and having an interview with at least one key stakeholder (identified in consultation with the Commission). The fact sheets were sent by the research team to responsible policy makers in the MS for commenting. Also, during the interviews as conducted by the research team, the fact sheets were discussed. Afterwards, the summarised versions of the country fact sheets are included in the annex of the final report.

Case studies on interesting practices
Key to finding ingredients for the development of a draft quality reference framework is analysing what quality assurance practices already exist in the Member States. In order to conduct these in-depth case studies, three research steps were foreseen:

- **Step 1: Selecting the cases for in-depth study**, ensuring a balanced selection with a maximal learning effect.
- **Step 2: Conducting the in-depth case studies**, obtaining new in-sights and in-depth understanding of the functioning of quality assurance measures in Europe.
- **Step 3: Analysing the case studies**, comparing the case studies and identify key trends

In the remaining of this section these research steps are discussed in more detail.

Step 1: Selecting the cases for in-depth study

The country factsheets contain examples of interesting practices (adding up to long list of 43 potential cases for in-depth study). Each interesting practice is linked to a particular quality level and a particular quality area. For each combination of quality level and quality area an interesting practice is selected for in-depth analysis. In addition, some a-typical interesting practices which could be difficult to place in the framework due to their potential innovative character are selected as well. In making the selection of cases, the following criteria are taken into consideration:

- Whether it addresses a certain learning need as identified in the preliminary analysis;
- Whether it is balanced geographically
- Whether it is balanced amongst sub sectors of AL (basic skills, VET, HE, and liberal AL)
- Whether it is balanced amongst formal and non-formal learning
- Whether it is balanced amongst private or public provision of AL
- Whether it is balanced amongst QA instruments (macro, meso and mico level).

Moreover, some criteria can be mentioned related to the practice as such:

- Whether the conditions under which the interesting practice operates are specified;
- Whether the processes and procedures that are followed are careful registered;
- Whether the success is proven;
- Whether evaluation reports/studies exist, and finally;
- The cases should respect a geographical spread across Europe

The experts drawing up the country fact sheets identified practices which to a large extend fulfil these conditions. The long list of cases was discussed during the TWG on quality, resulting in an overview of their preferences of cases. These preferences were subsequently assessed by the core research team whether they satisfy the above mentioned criteria.

Seminar
The seminar took place Wednesday 10th October in Brussels. Here below the agenda is provided.

Agenda testing seminar study quality in AL, Wednesday 10th October, Brussels			
	Chairman: Barry Hake **Participants:** EC officials (AL, VET and HE units) (6), Members TWG (25), Research team (7); selection of case study representatives / experts (5). **Location:** Place de Madou, Brussels **Date**: Wednesday 10th October		
8.45 – 9.15	Registration and coffee		

9.15 – 9.30	Opening of the expert meeting (Barry Hake)
	   ▪ The aims and goals of the seminar
	
	   ▪ Presenting the agenda of the seminar
	
	   ▪ Sharing experiences and expectations		

9.30 – 10.00	Presentation by Panteia (Simon Broek & Bert-Jan Buiskool)
	   ▪ Update of research activities
	
	   ▪ Presentation of the cross country analysis
	
	   ▪ Presentation of cross case analysis		

10.00 – 11.15	**Workshop 1 A** Presenting 2 interesting quality approaches and discussion in subgroups on lessons to learn	**Work shop 1B** Presenting 2 interesting quality approaches and discussion in subgroups on lessons to learn	**Work shop 1C** Presenting 2 interesting quality approaches and discussion in subgroups on lessons to learn

	Facilitator, presenters, reporter	Facilitator, presenters, reporter	Facilitator, presenters, reporter
11.15 - 11.30	Coffee break		
11.30 - 12.15	Reporting on outcomes of workshops and discussion		
12.15 – 13.00	Lunch		
13.00 - 13.30	Presentation on the building blocks of a quality reference framework (Simon Broek & Bert-Jan Buiskool) • What are determinants of (good) quality in AL (micro learning environment)? • What are the framework conditions to make this possible (on staff, providers and system level)? • What are indicators that measure these quality aspects? • What quality (Assurance) instruments are working for what learning context (formal / non-formal), provision (public and private) and level (macro, meso, micro)? • What are the main challenges and issues? • How to link up with established frameworks (such as EQAVET and ESG HE)?		
13.30 - 14.30	**Workshop 2A** Reflection and discussion in subgroups Facilitator and reporter	**Work shop 2B** Reflection and discussion in subgroups Facilitator and reporter	**Work shop 2C** Reflection and discussion in subgroups Facilitator and reporter
14.30 - 14.45	Coffee break		
14.45 – 15.15	Reporting on outcomes of workshops and discussion		
15.15- 15.30	Presentation on how to implement a quality reference framework: policy options (Simon Broek & Bert-Jan Buiskool)		
15.30 - 16.00	Plenary discussion on policy options: ▪ Objectives ▪ OMC Instruments ▪ Monitoring ▪ Role of stakeholders		
16.00 – 16.10	Concluding remarks and closing (Barry Hake)		

The following outcomes/feedback was reported on the seminar:

The case studies raised interesting issues for the work of the TWG including the fact that, ideally, quality assurance should be less about jumping over hurdles and more about a provider's mission and values and the actual quality of teaching and learning. Workshop participants believed that there is a need to achieve a balance in quality assurance approaches between a bottom-up and a top-down system and between national, regional and local levels. The role of enabling framework conditions such as legis-

lation, national policies, national institutions and approaches at macro, meso and micro levels in quality assurance approaches was emphasised. The role of legislation that enforces a need was recognised as a very strong motivator and as giving legitimacy to quality assurance approaches.

The potential of well-structured, unifying, multi-level and multi-functional approaches to quality assurance was underlined and the importance of appropriate indicators, including output indicators for the education and training sector in question was highlighted. The role of governments as owners / partners in developmental models of quality assurance was emphasised. The importance of providing guidelines and tools for providers was discussed as was the role of provider self-evaluation as a core element of quality assurance. The need to create a quality culture as part of the leadership of adult learning organisations was underscored. Without such a culture, quality assurance approaches may simply mean that only minimum requirements are met. The extent to which quality assurance can be a continuous improvement model in an organisation was raised.

Quality assurance needs to go beyond the classroom door to assure the quality of teaching and learning. Adult learning staff, including mangers, administrators, counsellors, validation personnel as well as teachers / tutors, needs to be up-skilled. Such staff should form part of a cascade model for the development of good teaching and learning practice. The valuable role of inspection in quality assurance / control was raised.

The critical importance of placing the learner at the centre of quality approaches was underlined and it was considered that quality approaches that are not learner-centred are not always positive.

The role of qualitative as well as quantitative evidence and the research methods employed was highlighted and it was agreed that both are required to influence the whole range of stakeholders. Finally, there was a concern that because quality assurance systems cannot capture everything what is omitted may be considered less important and therefore get little attention.

In the afternoon session potential building blocks for a quality framework arising from the research were presented to the plenary group (See Annex 11) and discussed in small groups.

Feedback on the building blocks for a quality framework

The feedback from the workshops on the building blocks for a quality framework raised the issue of how far a quality framework should go. Should a framework be specific or work at a higher level of abstraction? The question of whether it was possible to develop a framework for all of adult learning was raised. It was agreed that the context section of a framework should contextualise the model proposed and spell out the diversity of the sector and the learners. It was emphasised that the goals and objectives of the adult learning in question are be-hind a quality framework and should be made explicit in a framework which essentially projects an ideal scenario.

Relevance is frequently a debated issue and conflicts of interest arise. This would need to be clearly expressed in any preamble.

The use of levels in the framework was discussed. It was stated that there is much good quality at micro level in spite of rather than with the support of, me-so and macro levels. The gaps in support pinpoint responsibilities at these levels. It was concluded that using levels is a helpful approach.

Ideally, quality assurance should start at the micro level and the logic of a framework is that the levels are interlinked. The micro level states what is required for quality, the meso level ensures quality at the micro level and the macro level ensures quality at the meso level – a bottom-up approach. However, quality assurance can also be looked at from the opposite direction, namely, the outcomes required at macro level could be identified and then what needs to be done at meso and micro levels to ensure those outcomes are achieved could be identified – a top-down approach.

In general the learner appears to be missing from the proposed building blocks. In addition, learner selection and assignment to courses are missing at meso level.

Overall, it was concluded that the proposed building blocks were very useful for the TWG's work.

Implementing a quality reference framework: policy options

The final session of the day focussed on implementing a quality reference framework (See Annex 12). The discussion that followed the presentation point-ed to challenges in implementing a quality reference framework.

The issue of whether the implementation of the quality framework was a technical process only or a more political process was raised. It was pointed out that while the OMC is a starting point for the development of the quality framework, the implementation of the framework will take place outside the OMC and the TWG itself. The question of how stakeholders who are not included in the development of the framework could be encouraged to get involved in its implementation was raised.

It was concluded that the next steps in bringing about the implementation of whatever is developed by the TWG will need to be addressed.

Participants in addition to the members of the Thematic Working group on Quality.

Name	Country	Organisation	Responsible for a case study
Kim Faurschou	DK	indep. Consultant	Yes
Helen Keogh	IE	indep. Consultant	Yes
Dieter Dohmen	DE	FiBS	Yes
George Zarifis	EL	Aristoteles University Thessaloniki	Yes
Christian Kloyber	AT	bifeb	Yes
Balazs Nemeth	HU	University of Pécs	Yes
Barry Hake	NL	Eurolearn	

Bert-Jan Buiskool	NL	Panteia	Yes
Simon Broek	NL	Panteia	Yes
Ms. Ruth Jermann	CH	SVEB	
Ms. Tanja Mozina	SI	ACS	
Ms Finola Butler	IE	Further Education Support Service	
Mr Ion Hohan	RO	indep. Consultant	
Ms Susanne Lattke	DE	DIE	
Ms Rachael Bubalo	UK (Wales)	ESTYN	
Mr Jan Sild	CZ	HOPE E.S.	Yes

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Margarete Wallmann / Federal Institute for Adult Education	Austria
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Theo Mensen / Director HRDS; Secretaris Stichting ePortfolio Support	The Netherlands
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Annex 5: Case study reports (separate document)

Annex 6: Country factsheets (separate document)