



Extending and developing
adult educators' competences

REPORT ON THE FUNCTIONING OF ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: UNITED KINGDOM, ITALY AND POLAND

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"Report on the Functioning of Adult Education Systems in the Partnering Countries"

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adult education is a key concern for the European Union and all of its constituent members. 16.4% of EU adults aged 16-65 years have literacy difficulties; this varies from 10.6% in Finland to 27.9% in Italy. Both Poland and the UK have above average levels of literacy difficulties with 18.8% and 16.6% respectively.

Literacy levels are essential for employment. There are clear linkages between the impact of education, literacy and the use of reading on employment and wages.

This linkage has clear policy implications for the EU. The European Commission's "The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe" details⁷ relevant findings:

- approximately 20% of adults in the EU has low information-processing skills (literacy and numeracy);
- there is a positive correlation between skills and employability, and low-skilled unemployed people have difficulties entering the job market;
- adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills are also the ones who are less likely to engage in learning activities (this is referred to as "*low skills trap*");
- individual performances across the EU show significant differences in skills proficiency among people with the same educational qualifications;
- 25% of adults lack sufficient ICT skills;
- a person's skills significantly deteriorate during their lifetime;
- improving the population's literacy and numeracy skills brings about positive economic and social outcomes.

This formed the direction of the Europe 2020 goals of increasing the number of Europe's higher education graduates, innovation, skills and industrial competitiveness as well as reducing early school leaving, unemployment and poverty and the inequalities they entail.

The Europe 2020 agenda sets a long vision for adult learning. These can be summarised as:

- **Promoting lifelong learning and mobility opportunity**

With the objective of achieving the EU target of 15% of adults participating to lifelong learning activities and of 40% of young adults obtaining tertiary or equivalent education qualifications, the European Agenda for Adult Learning encouraged Member States (MSs) to reach out to low-skilled and low-qualified adults, both NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and in their workplaces in order to raise awareness and promote learning opportunities as well as promoting flexible learning pathways and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

- **Improving education and training systems in terms of quality and efficiency**

With a view to strengthen the adult education sector, MSs should improve: quality monitoring of their adult education systems, training of adult educators, transparency of funding, alignment between labour market needs and the educational offer and cooperation among stakeholders.

- **Countering inequalities and social exclusion through the promotion of active citizenship in adult education**

The objective of this priority was to promote the ability of adult-learning to enhance social cohesion and provide disadvantaged adults with “second-chance” opportunities and reducing early school leaving through the improvement and enhancement of adult learning opportunities and addressing specific needs.

- **Promoting creative and innovative adult learning environments**

Developing new pedagogies and innovative learning environments aimed at the acquisition of transversal key competences in adult learning, enhancing the participation of cultural organisations and promoting the employment of ICT.

- **Enhancing research and development in the field of adult learning**

With the objective of improving the knowledge base, quality and monitoring of adult education systems by taking stock of international studies’ results (such as, among others, the PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills).

While the EU has set a target for 15% of adults to be participating in adult education, according to the European Commission’s 2018 Education and Training Monitor only 10.9% of adults participated in adult learning in Europe in 2017. However, more worryingly, out of these, only 4.3% of low qualified adults participated in adult education with a considerable 18.6% of highly qualified adults participating in adult education. This highlights a major discrepancy in the European adult education system between those who are in most need of engaging in adult education (low skilled adults) and those who actively participate (highly skilled adults).

Italy, Poland and the UK all have formal national adult education systems. However, in all countries, these systems are not overcoming the disparities of people and regions. The lowest skilled and least productive areas in each of these countries fall significantly behind other areas.

While each country has shortcomings in their adult education system, there are also strengths that can be learnt from each one. These can be described as:

- Balanced Approach between Employer-led and State-imposed
- Legally Enshrined Entitlement
- Personalised
- Strong Tutor Subject Knowledge

- Utilising Skills Brokers
- Regular Training & Professional Development
- Localised Information, Advice and Guidance

By developing a system which brings together these systemic and skills and competences, adult education can be made more effective at reducing the low skills gap.

1. INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

1.1 About the project

The implementation of the project “ Extending and developing adult educators’ competences” is a natural continuation of many years of work in the field of adult education, training, lifelong learning of the involved partners in the project.

The project is Co-funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union under Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. Strategic partnerships in the field of education, training and youth - Adult education.

The implementation period for the project is 31.12.2018 to 31.08.2020 and during this time the project team is working on the following outputs:

1. Report on the functioning on adult education systems in the partnering states (O1)
2. The training package (O2)
3. A conference summing up stage I of the projects (E1)
4. A summary report from the project containing also consultations from the pilot training (O3)
5. A conference summing up stage II of the project (E2)

The main objective of the project is to broaden both access to and the available educational offer for people with lower qualifications or low-skilled through the development of competences among adult education specialists (such as employment counsellors, adult educators, career advisors, coaches, etc.).

The project aims to develop new competences among the vocational and educational advisors who work with adults, in particular adults with lower qualifications or low-skilled. The project will contribute to the development of state-of-the-art comprehensive methods of working with clients which will translate directly into the quality of support they receive, and ultimately into upskilling of these clients through their participation in formal and informal education.

1.2 Project partners

The partnership consists of four members from three different locations (Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom) within the European Union.

The partnership has been organised to embrace and compare the role of employment counsellors and their engagement in building adult competences in Southern Europe (Italy), Eastern Europe (Poland) and Western Europe (UK) and, therefore, widen the breadth of the investigation into best practices throughout the EU by taking into account different historical and cultural traits.

The partnership consists of Centro Per Lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci Onlus Associazione (Italy), Kuratorium Oświaty w Warszawie – The Education Office in Warsaw (Poland), Sysco Business Skills Academy (United Kingdom) and Fundacja Innowacja i Wiedza – Foundation for Innovation and Knowledge (Poland)

1.2.1 Centro Per Lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci Onlus Associazione (Italy)

Centro Per Lo Sviluppo Creativo “Danilo Dolci” is a non-profit organisation located in Palermo, Sicily. Formed in 1958 from the experience and work of Danilo Dolci, a social activist, sociologist, pacifist and educator. It is a non-profit organisation that involves young people and adults and has successfully operated for more than ten years mainly in the educational sector in collaboration with schools, universities, institutions, associations and social groups both at local and at international level.

CSC “Danilo Dolci” works at local and European levels, focusing on two main pillars:

- Local Development, starting from the needs of the community and paying special attention to the most disadvantaged target groups;
- Creativity, promoting innovation in education and using new methodologies to empower young, adults and professionals.

In particular, the work of the Centre is based on the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach, a methodology of research and self-analysis useful to develop creativity, communication, cooperation and active participation.

1.2.2 Kuratorium Oświaty w Warszawie – The Education Office in Warsaw (Poland)

The Masovia Province Education Superintendent performs tasks within the Polish education system on behalf of the head of the Masovia province. The Education Office, based in Warsaw, has branch offices in five major cities in the Masovia Province (Plock, Radom, Ciechanów, Siedlce and Ostrołęka) and employs 286 people.

The Education Superintendent is responsible for implementing the Polish Government's educational policy, which is established by the Minister of National Education, through the cooperation of Local Government education authorities.

1.2.3 Sysco Business Skills Academy (United Kingdom)

Sysco Business Skills Academy is based in Liverpool in the North West of England and is part of the Sysco Group which also includes Brighter Futures Merseyside (a company that provides Further Education to 16-18 year olds through Education & Skills Funding Agency monies).

The Sysco Group employs approximately 50 people and has extensive experience of supporting and training individuals aged 16+ through a wide variety of funded programmes.

Sysco Business Skills Academy has a long history of successfully delivering large-scale training programmes in partnership with key public institutions. Currently Sysco Business Skills Academy delivers Apprenticeships to employed individuals, Adult Education Budget employability training to adults aged 19+ and Traineeships through the Education & Skills Funding Agency and the European Social Fund and Advanced Learner Loans through the Student Loans Company.

1.2.4 Fundacja Innowacja i Wiedza – Foundation for Innovation and Knowledge (Poland)

The Foundation for Innovation and Knowledge(FIIW) was established in 2012 in Warsaw, Poland to encourage entrepreneurship development, adult education and support those who wanted to change reality and have an impact on the economic and social development of Poland and united Europe. FIIW activities are centered around supporting and expanding the idea of democracy, access to education and knowledge, support for entrepreneurs and spreading financial education.

FIIW provides support in the area of entrepreneurship and financial education through projects that include training, seminars, conferences, workshops, mentoring sessions and other educational events. Since the activities are mainly directed at both the young people, and the marginalised and often neglected members of our society, the Foundation provides all of its services free of charge for all participants.

1.3 Objectives of the research

There are three objectives to our research in this report:

1. A detailed analysis on current models of adult education in each country involved in the partnership.

2. An analysis of the roles identified in each country in supporting adults, especially those who are low-skilled, in professional development.
3. A comparison of models of adult educational support offered in each country.

2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this project is to develop new competences among the vocational and educational advisors who work with adults, in particular adults with lower qualifications or low-skills. In order to develop this report, the following methodology was adopted:

- an analysis of the current systems for meeting the educational needs of adults in Italy, Poland and the UK
- the development of a model/system for supporting adult education that considers the role and tasks of educational brokers as well as the scope of training provided to them

The following research methods were used:

- Desk Research
- Interviews
- Statistical Analysis
- Literature Review

Each partner was responsible for researching their own national systems and this was then compared and contrasted to identify competences for adult educators. The partners in this project met regularly through cross-national meetings, in each partner country, to discuss findings and agree conclusions for the results that had been identified.

2.1 Constraints

There were a number of constraints to the report which may have affected the accuracies of the results. It is, however, the opinion of the report authors that these constraints have had a minimal impact on the findings.

2.1.1 Timeliness of Data

As with all research and analysis, timeliness and comparability of information can be constraints to the accuracy of conclusions. Information is time-sensitive and delays between collection, collation and publication, inevitably affect result validity. Furthermore, this is complicated where

cross-country comparisons rely upon differing periods. However, it is unlikely that small disparities in time (ie. a few months) will have a major impact on the general characteristics of the adult education system.

2.1.2 Access to Data

The availability of the information which is collated to produce this report is key to determining the accuracy and validity of any conclusions. In most cases, the information that has been researched within this report is based on publicly available information and, therefore, we have been unable to access and test timely results using any unavailable information. However, the publicly available information has been provided from respected sources using generally accepted international standards. As such it has to be assumed that the information we have accessed is accurate based on the published methodology.

3. ADULT SKILLS IN EUROPE

3.1 Situation of adult skills in Europe

Many studies have highlighted a critical deficiency in key competences (as defined by Council recommendation 962 of 2006¹) and basic skills among adults in Europe. The most prominent of these is the OECD's PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills, which tested roughly 250,000 adults aged 16-65 around the world (in OECD countries), providing a detailed picture of skills levels of adults around the world.

The Survey of Adult Skills was an international survey conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development² with the support of the European Commission in more than 40 countries as part of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). The survey is designed to measure “key cognitive and workplace skills needed for individuals to participate in society and for economies to prosper”³ and it has been carefully crafted in order to ensure the comparability of results across countries, cultures, languages and timeframes, with a view to provide policy makers across the world with an overview of skills levels in their countries and with reliable data for

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=IT>

² OECD (2016), Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris

³ <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/about/>

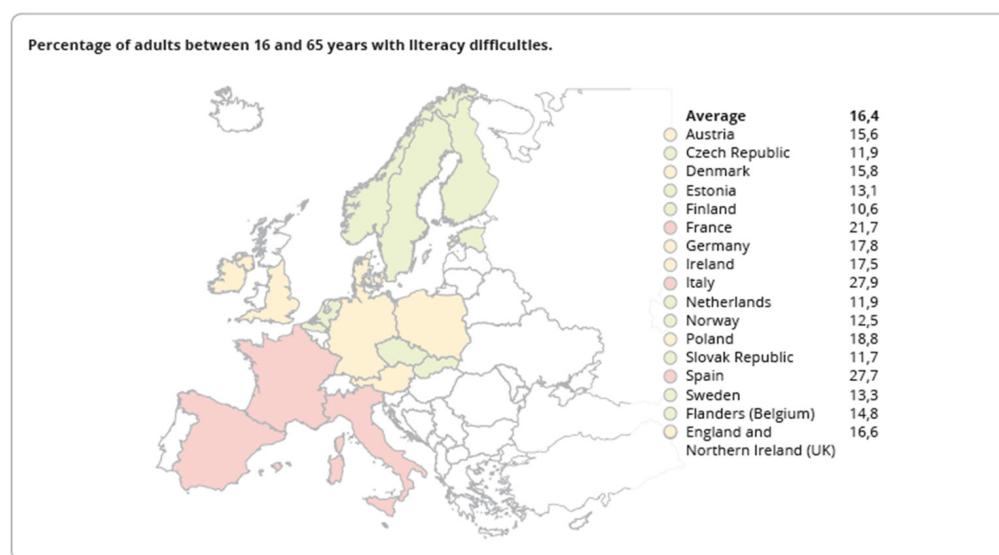
a better understanding of how education and training systems can be reformed in order to improve adults' skills.

The survey was implemented via interviews, online and on paper, and it assessed literacy and numeracy skills and problem-solving abilities in technology-rich environments. It gathered a wide set of information, encompassing the ability to mobilise competences and skills in different contexts, such as at work, at home, in one's community. The performance of the respondents is classified in a 1 to 5 scale, with one being the lowest level of proficiency and 5 the highest⁴.

The first cycle of the survey was carried out between 2011 and 2018, in 3 rounds. The first round involved 24 countries and around 166,000 adults between August 2011 and March 2012. The second round, between April 2014 and March 2015 was carried out in 9 countries and with 50,250 adult respondents. Round 3 has been implemented in 6 countries in 2017. The second cycle began in 2018 and its results will be published in 2023.

The Survey of Adult Skills highlighted worrying results. According to the data gathered in 17 EU member states (corresponding to 83% of the European population, European Commission), approximately 16.4% of Europeans aged 16-65 experience literacy difficulties⁵. In some countries, like Italy and Spain, this percentage reaches 28% of the population. This means that approximately 55 million adults in Europe have literacy difficulties.

Figure 1: Literacy Skills in Europe: Facts and Figures, ELINET, 2015



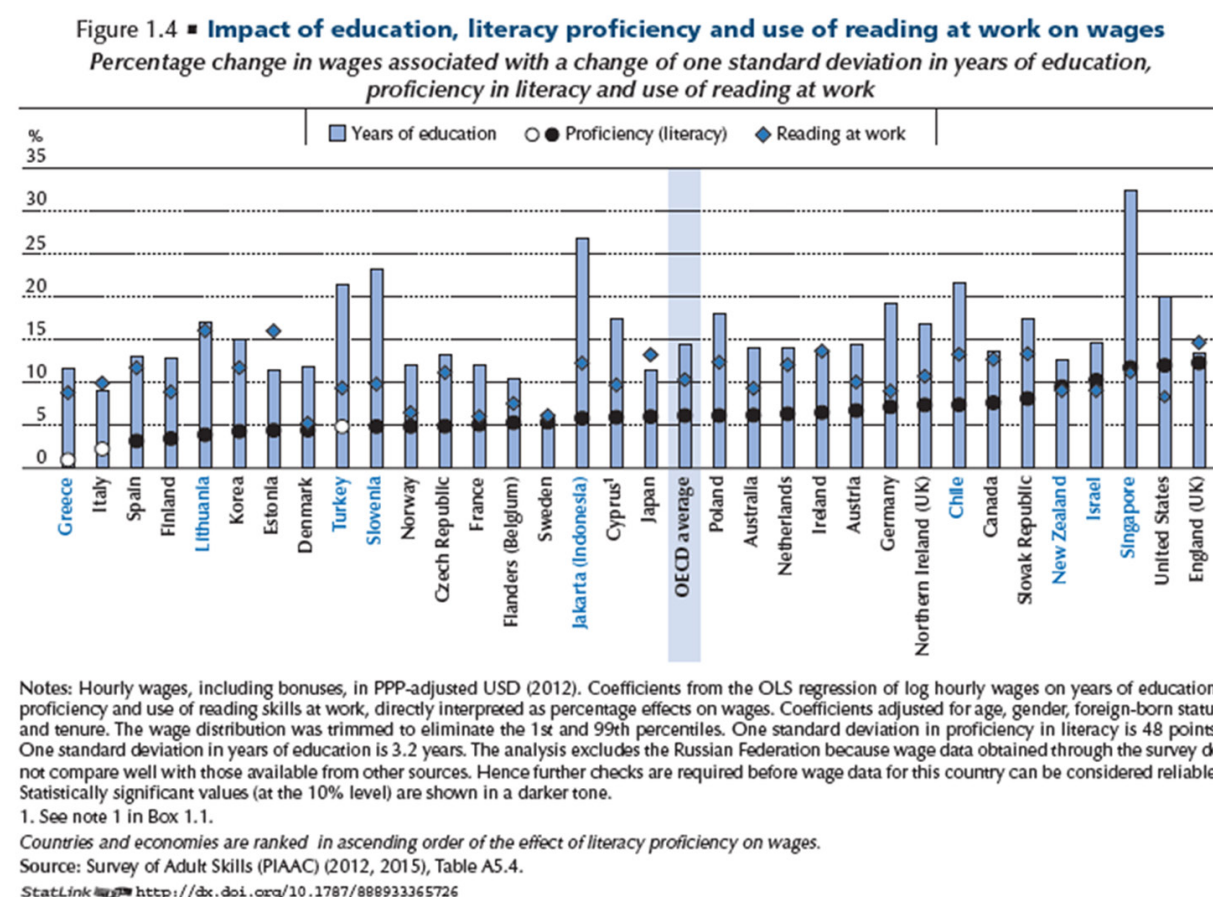
Source: PIAAC, OECD

⁴ OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris

⁵ ELINET (2015), *Literacy in Europe: Facts and Figures*, European Literacy Policy Network

Moreover, the survey results indicated clearly the correlation between skills levels and employment and, among employed people, proficiency in information processing skills – i.e. literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments – has a strong influence (in some countries nearly as strong as the amount of years of study) on wages: proficiency in information processing skills can lead to a 12-13% increase in wages, with an average of approx. 6%.⁶

Figure 2: Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills



Source: OECD Skills Studies, 2016

Further data emerging from the Survey showed that there are also big disparities in Europe for what causes the correlation between levels of proficiency of adults and their education level: some countries' secondary school graduates outperformed or performed equally as tertiary education graduates from others⁷. In fact, the survey did not only measure skills levels, but also

⁶ OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris

⁷ European Commission (2013), *The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe*, Directorate-General for Education and Culture

put them in relation with levels of education and training, use of such skills in the workplace, employment, and compare them across countries⁸.

3.2 Policy implications

The data that emerged from such a comprehensive survey holds some very concrete policy implications. In fact, it is in the Survey's rationale itself that its results are used by policy makers around the world as a source of reliable information in order to reform education systems and undertake effective measures to ensure lifelong learning for all their citizens.

In 2013, the European Commission issued a policy paper by the title "*The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe*". In this document, the Commission outlined 7 relevant key findings from the survey:

- approximately 20% of adults in the EU has low information-processing skills (literacy and numeracy);
- there is a positive correlation between skills and employability, and low-skilled unemployed people have difficulties entering the job market;
- adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills are also the ones who are less likely to engage in learning activities (this is referred to as "*low skills trap*");
- individual performances across the EU show significant differences in skills proficiency among people with the same educational qualifications;
- 25% of adults lack sufficient ICT skills;
- a person's skills significantly deteriorate during their lifetime;
- improving the population's literacy and numeracy skills brings about positive economic and social outcomes.

These key findings confirmed the direction undertaken by the Europe 2020 goals in the field of learning ("increasing the number of Europe's higher education graduates, innovation, skills and industrial competitiveness as well as reducing early school leaving, unemployment and poverty and the inequalities they entail"⁹), and highlight the key policy challenges for the EU in the field of adult learning.

The policy implications stemming from this picture put Member States' education and training policies in the spotlight and the need for each to look into the issues of education inequalities, school dropout, low skills and adult education, address the "low skills trap" by exploring innovative methods to encourage and facilitate adults to engage in learning activities and support

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

them in continuing them (such as the employment of ICT among others), enhance EU-level higher education cooperation in order to catch up the performance gap among graduates and encourage lifelong learning opportunities¹⁰.

3.3 European strategies for adult education

The European strategy in the field of adult education is mainly contained in the 2011 “*Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning*”¹¹. This document outlines the importance of enhancing lifelong learning opportunities (especially in the context of the labour market instability sparked by the 2008 economic crisis) in order to minimise social exclusion and inequalities. It reiterates that adult learning is an essential component of the lifelong learning cycle, which should encompass any type of learning from pre-school age to post-retirement¹².

The Agenda sets a long vision for adult learning, setting goals for 2020 in the framework of the wider Education and Training 2020 strategy (ET2020). The Agenda’s priority areas can be summarised as such:

- **Promoting lifelong learning and mobility opportunity**

With the objective of achieving the EU target of 15% of adults participating to lifelong learning activities and of 40% of young adults obtaining tertiary or equivalent education qualifications, the European Agenda for Adult Learning encouraged Member States (MSs) to reach out to low-skilled and low-qualified adults, both NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and in their workplaces in order to raise awareness and promote learning opportunities as well as promoting flexible learning pathways and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

- **Improving education and training systems in terms of quality and efficiency**

With a view to strengthen the adult education sector, MSs should improve: quality monitoring of their adult education systems, training of adult educators, transparency of funding, alignment between labour market needs and the educational offer and cooperation among stakeholders.

- **Countering inequalities and social exclusion through the promotion of active citizenship in adult education**

The objective of this priority was to promote the ability of adult-learning to enhance social cohesion and provide disadvantaged adults with “second-chance” opportunities and reducing

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Council of the European Union (2011), *Council Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning*, Official Journal of the European Union

¹² *Ibid*

early school leaving through the improvement and enhancement of adult learning opportunities and addressing specific needs.

- **Promoting creative and innovative adult learning environments**

Developing new pedagogies and innovative learning environments aimed at the acquisition of transversal key competences in adult learning, enhancing the participation of cultural organisations and promoting the employment of ICT.

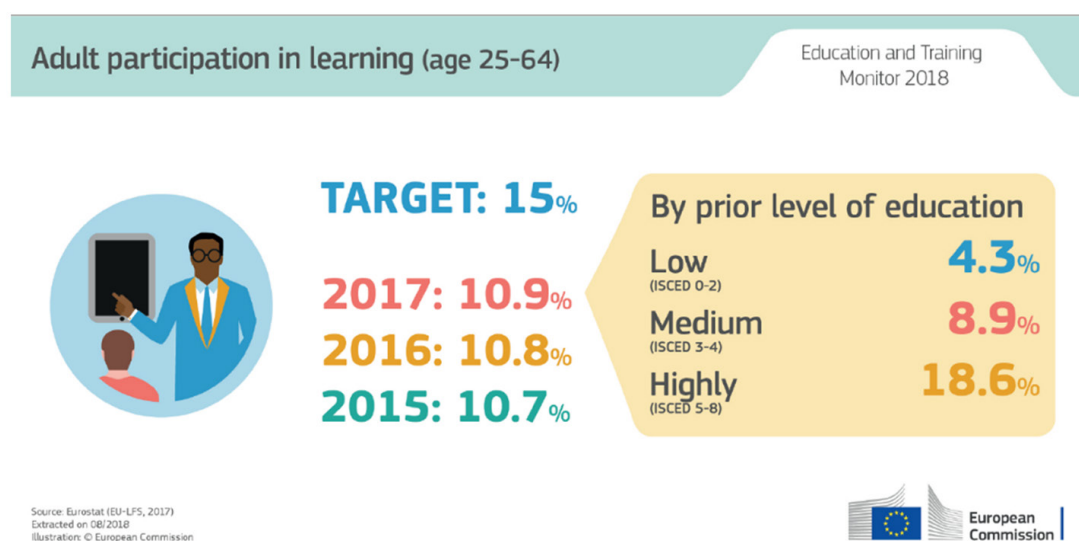
- **Enhancing research and development in the field of adult learning**

With the objective of improving the knowledge base, quality and monitoring of adult education systems by taking stock of international studies' results (such as, among others, the PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills).

3.3.1 Adult Learning in Europe

Given the rather negative picture drawn so far for adult skills in Europe, it is interesting to look at adult learning before we look deeper into adult education systems in partner countries.

Figure 3: Adult Participation in Learning (age 25-64), Education and Training Monitor 2018



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2017)

According to the European Commission's 2018 Education and Training Monitor, 10.9% of adults participated in adult learning in 2017 in Europe, out of which only 4.3% were low qualified adults. This figure highlights a discrepancy in European adult education systems, between the target who would need to engage in adult learning the most (low qualified adults) and those actively participating (the highest qualified adults).

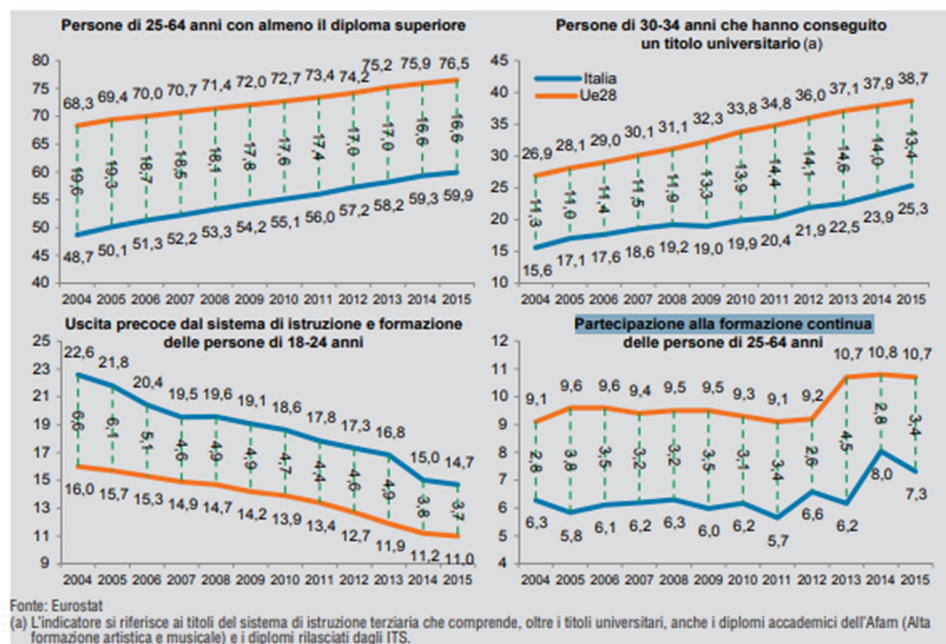
4. ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE

4.1 National Systems

4.1.1 Italy

The system of adult education in Italy has undergone a major reform relatively recently, following Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica (Presidential Decree) n. 263 issued on October 29th, 2012¹³. This reform – which was intended to better encompass the European Agenda for Adult Learning issued by the Council in 2011 – targeted both structural/institutional changes and in the didactics of adult learning. Although the reform has been formally applied, there are still some criticalities, among others related to the decentralisation of the new adult education system. In 2015, the Italian MIUR (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca*, Ministry of Education, University and Research) issued a decree describing the guidelines for the application of the reform and for the passage to the new system (Decreto Interministeriale n. 26 issued on March 12th, 2015). Mandatory schooling in Italy is between the ages of 6 and 16. According to a survey conducted by INDIRE, approximately 108,539 adults were inscribed in the Italian national education system in 2016/2017 (+18.4% compared to 2015/2016)¹⁴.

Figure 4: (bottom right) Adult Participation in Lifelong Learning (age 25-64), ISTAT 2016¹⁵



Source: Eurostat

¹³ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/02/25/13G00055/sg>

¹⁴ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-39_en

¹⁵ BES – Il Benessere Equo e Sostenibile in Italia 2016, Istituto Nazionale di Statistica ISTAT, 2016.

4.1.1.1 Organisational structure and educational offer

The structure of the educational offer for adults in Italy relies on two pillars: CPIAs and secondary schools who offer classes for adults (formerly known as “evening schools”, *scuole serali*). The system depends on the MIUR – the Ministry for Education, University and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca*).

Secondary schools who offer classes for adults are affiliated to CPIAs and offer classes aimed at obtaining a secondary level or professional qualification.

CPIAs (*Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti* or Provincial Centres for Adult Education) are organised on a local level and are funded at central level from the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). The 2012 reform increased the decentralisation of the system, which is now organised on a provincial level. Provinces in Italy are comparatively small territorial entities with local administration. This system thus ensures centres a certain autonomy in their organisation and a presence on the entirety of the national territory. CPIAs offer first and second level learning curricula and literacy improvement and Italian classes. These curricula and courses can also be accessed in distance learning form. CPIAs also carry out research, educational experimentation and development¹⁶.

First level curricula are structured in two “didactic periods”. The first didactic period is composed of 400 hours (which can be incremented up to 200 extra hours in case the learner lacks the lowest schooling qualification – primary school) and are targeted to achieve first cycle education qualifications. These correspond in Italy to the qualifications completing the mandatory school period, therefore including general curricula up to a level corresponding to middle school roughly. The second didactic period aims at providing learners with a basic transversal curriculum common to secondary technical, professional and artistic schools. It has a duration of 825 hours¹⁷.

The literacy improvement and learning of the Italian language learning offer is mainly tailored towards migrant adult learners and it aims to achieve at least an A2 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR) in Italian and basic elements of citizenship education. These are spread over a 200 hours period¹⁸.

Second level curricula targets the achievement of secondary school level professional, technical and artistic qualifications. These are Italian qualification categories, which include accounting,

¹⁶ INDIRE (2018), *Viaggio nell'Istruzione degli Adulti in Italia: alla scoperta di esigenze, problemi e soluzioni*, Istituto Nazionale Documentazione Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa

¹⁷ CPIA Metropolitan di Bologna (2015), *Piano P.A.I.D.E.I.A. Opuscolo 1*, Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca

¹⁸ *Ibid*

geometry, hospitality, arts and crafts, naval and industrial knowledge, etc. Second level curricula are paced over 3 didactic periods and are carried out by secondary schools offering the above-described learning paths and specifically indicated by regional authorities to offer second level classes for adults. CPIAs rely on these schools to carry out this type of courses¹⁹.

These three types of learning offers are based on the achievement of specific competences and learning objectives and can be widened according to the CPIAs territorial autonomy. Moreover, following the 2012 reform, adult learners who need it can follow up to 20% of their learning path online.

On a regional level, low-qualified adults can also have access to professional training offered by regional administrative bodies free of charge. These training courses are usually aimed at obtaining skills and competences in specific low-skilled jobs and are accessible to anyone.

4.1.1.2 Didactics

Among the innovations introduced by the reform of adult learning is the revolution of the didactics. Public institutions have moved from didactics based on the focus on qualifications to a didactic structure based on the individual and the development of individual competences and skills. The description of all learning paths offered, from first level to literacy to second level courses are expressed in terms of learning outcomes and/or learning objectives based on the competences to be acquired²⁰.

The new didactics start from the question “*who is the lifelong learner*”? The assumption is that the need or request of an adult to engage in a public education path that can provide them with a basic level education or professional/technical qualification stems from a situation of fragility or need which can be the result of a migrant or disadvantaged background, a difficulty in finding employment or in completing a course of study, a period spent in jail or out of the job market, etc²¹. Adult learners have diverse backgrounds, different starting levels and different previous knowledge or know-how. Therefore, the new didactics of adult learning are based on the idea that the learner’s needs and ambitions must be put at the centre of their learning experience: on the one hand their cultural and personal heritage (soft skills, language skills, competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning) must be taken into account along with educational qualifications when assessing their individual starting levels; while the learning offer must be flexible in order to adapt itself to the learner’s individual needs.

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ INDIRE (2018), *Viaggio nell’Istruzione degli Adulti in Italia: alla scoperta di esigenze, problemi e soluzioni*, Istituto Nazionale Documentazione Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa

²¹ *Ibid*

• **The *Patto Formativo Individuale***

The *Patto Formativo Individuale*, the Individual Learning Agreement, is a contract concluded between the learner who prepares to enter a learning path, the Commission of adult educators who assesses his/her profile and the CPIA's principle, which defines a personalised learning offer and objectives. The new adult education system allows in fact for the introduction of individual personalised features²².

Each learning agreement is developed by a Commission following an interview with the learner. The interviews are carried out by an adult educator and are structured on the basis of templates which aim at evaluating and recording:

- competences acquired in a formal education setting (independent of the achievement of a qualification);
- competences acquired through non-formal learning (*i.e.* competences and skills acquired through sports, arts, non-formal training, etc.);
- competences acquired through informal learning (*e.g.* a craft or profession learned in the family);
- the learner's motivation and needs.

This information is then processed by the Commission of Adult Educators named according to the existing legislation of the subject – chaired by the CPIA's principle and, in case of need with migrant adult learners, a cultural mediator or psychologist, or can rely on opinions from professionals from different fields, who identifies and assesses the above-mentioned elements and outlines the individual learner's level, il piano di unità di apprendimento (units of learning plan) and learning objectives articulated in terms of competences to be acquired²³.

• ***Unità di Apprendimento* and learning objectives**

The organisation of learning paths on the basis of units of learning combined in a way that is autonomously significant for each individual learner (also in distance learning cases) is the element that ensures the personalisation of the latter's learning experience, which is a fundamental expression of the shift in didactics, from a didactics of models (similar to the one that is most common for the education of youngsters) to one of styles, more concentrated on the methodologies to ensure the best possible experience for the learner²⁴.

The units of learning are sets of knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired in relation to levels and learning periods. In particular, in order to establish the relation between knowledge

²² MIUR (2015), *Linee guida per il passaggio al nuovo ordinamento a sostegno dell'autonomia organizzativa e didattica dei Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*, Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ INDIRE (2018), *Viaggio nell'Istruzione degli Adulti in Italia: alla scoperta di esigenze, problemi e soluzioni*, Istituto Nazionale Documentazione Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa

and skills for each competence, it is fundamental to identify all competences that need to be acquired, which ones can be developed through distance learning, and which courses and what schedule is needed²⁵.

4.1.1.3 Shortcomings and problem areas

In the framework of the 2018 report “*Viaggio nell'Istruzione degli Adulti in Italia*” (Journey in Adult Education in Italy) published by INDIRE (*Istituto Nazionale Documentazione Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa*, National Educational Documentation, Innovation and Research Institute), a focus group conducted with adult educators from 3 different CPIAs in central and northern Italy highlighted a series of shortcomings and problem areas of the adult education system in Italy, mainly related to the organisation and didactics on one hand and personnel on the other. The focus groups were conducted and moderated by INDIRE researchers.

- **Organisation**

The organisational problems identified are related mainly to the perceived “structural conflict” between a legislation that intends to create an extremely flexible system, and a system that is deeply rooted in a rigid structure imposed upon the general education system.

One symptom of this issue is the difficulties in properly implementing the concept of the units of learning. It emerges that adult educators from the focus groups have different understandings of what these are or entail, and more than one indicated the generic nature of the description of the units in the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education as a cause of this. Moreover, according to the guidelines of application, these should be elaborated and assigned to the single learner following the moment of reception and orientation in which he/she undergoes an interview and the Commission analyses his/her profile in order to elaborate an individual learning agreement containing the units of learning. However, it emerges from the focus groups that in the practice the units of learning are often assigned before the reception and orientation moment, thus distorting their function and reason of being and turning them into a rigid didactic structure that doesn't take into account the specific needs of the individual learner.

- **Personnel**

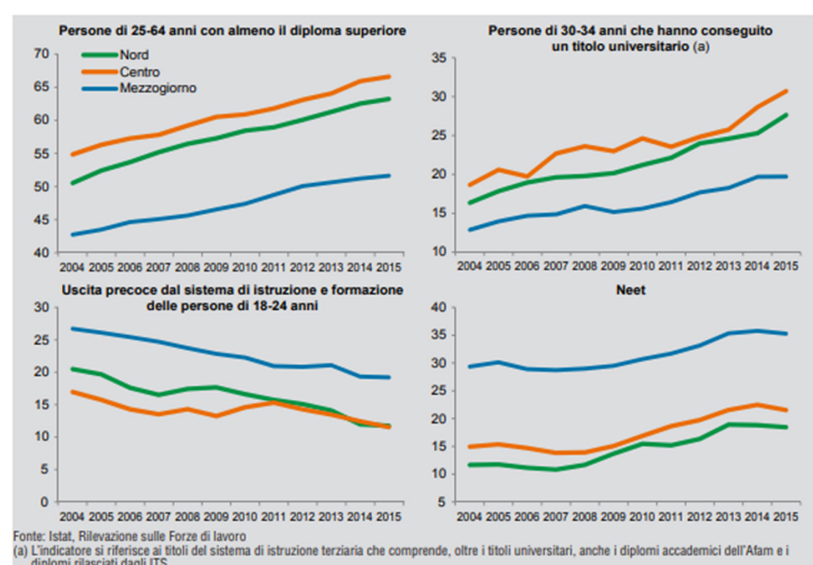
The problems and shortcomings linked to personnel brought up by educators during the focus groups carried out by INDIRE can be encapsulated in two main problem areas: educators' training and lack of personnel (and of structures n.b.).

²⁵ MIUR (2015), *Linee guida per il passaggio al nuovo ordinamento a sostegno dell'autonomia organizzativa e didattica dei Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*, Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana

Many educators lamented the lack of specific training for adult educators once they enter the CPIA system. On one hand, the teachers who arrive from other realms of education are used to the classic rigid structure that characterises the Italian education system and have difficulties in comprehending the nature of the adult education system. On the other, the specifics and uneven nature of the learners' needs and difficulties (both related to learning and to their personal situations) bring up the urgency for the teachers to receive specific training on how to relate themselves to their new target learner. Adult educators report that, in reality, new teachers that arrive in CPIA structures are “disoriented”, and are informally supported by other colleagues, who often need training themselves and which takes time from the orientation of students. The tendency of teachers to conform to the rigid education system contributes to the difficulty in applying the flexible scheme envisaged by the reform.

Secondly, many participants to the focus groups also cited a lack of personnel. This results in single teachers having to manage classes that are too numerous to be effective and composed of learners from very different backgrounds, age ranges, levels of education and specific learning needs. Numerous classes are especially problematic in very low level classes, such as literacy classes for students with a migrants background, some of whom are illiterate even in their mother tongue.

Figure 5: Regional disparities in Italy through education indicators, ISTAT 2016²⁶



Source: ISTAT

In addition, it is worth noting that the decentralisation for the system, although ensuring that the centres enjoy more autonomy and can better adapt to the specifics of the territory, it also means that all the above-mentioned problems are further exacerbated by the lack of local funds

²⁶ BES – Il Benessere Equo e Sostenibile in Italia 2016, Istituto Nazionale di Statistica ISTAT, 2016.

and infrastructure, as the Italian reality is characterised by a marked regional disparity between the north and the south.

However, on a local level, non-formal education institutions, non profit associations and other institutions such as charities and migrant reception centres take upon themselves the role of adult educators and offer free classes and lifelong learning opportunities, although they do not release certificates and qualifications (when they are not certified by the Ministry of Education, MIUR).

4.1.2 Poland

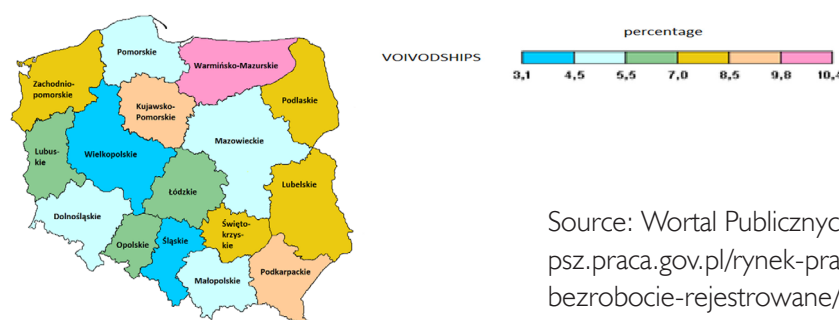
In Poland there are various solutions supporting the vocational activation of adults, including those with low qualifications.

The state's tasks in the area of employment promotion, mitigating the effects of unemployment and professional activation are specified in the Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions²⁷. Moreover, issues related to the acquisition, change or upgrading of professional qualifications and career counselling for children, youth and adults in the area of education are included in the Education Law²⁸.

The above regulations indicate that assistance in active job search, as well as acquiring qualifications and increasing professional competences, is one of the key objectives of social policy, including the state's educational policy. Measurable proof of the priority given to the success of adults in the labour market is the reform of vocational education, which from September 1, 2019 enters the Polish educational system.

Below the map shows data on registered unemployment in Poland at the end of 2018²⁹.

Figure 6: Registered unemployment rate in Poland at the end of 2018 in voivodships



Source: Wortal Publicznych Służb Zatrudnienia <http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/>

²⁷ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended)

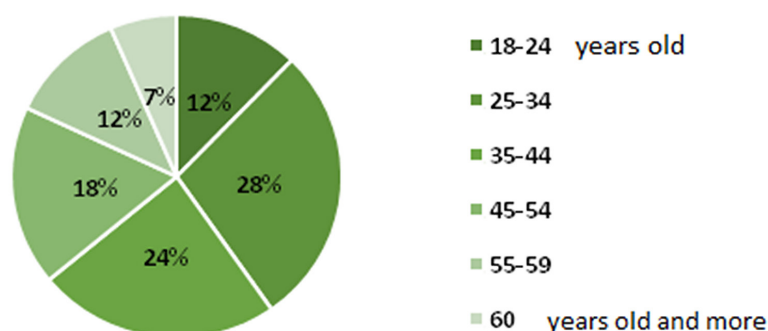
²⁸ The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended)

²⁹ <http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/>

The lowest unemployment is in voivodships in which an advanced and competitive economy creates many attractive, well-paid jobs. There is also a demand for services, generating the need to create new jobs for qualified staff.

The chart below indicates that the largest group of registered unemployed persons are young people aged between 25 to 34 years of age.

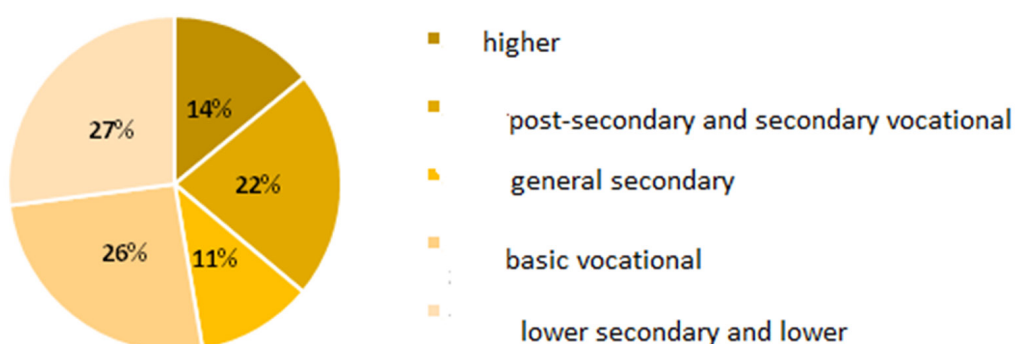
Figure 7: The structure of registered unemployed persons by age in 2018



Source: Wortal Publicznych Służb Zatrudnienia <http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/>

Figure 8 confirms that the largest group of registered unemployed are people with lower secondary education and lower as well as those with basic vocational education.

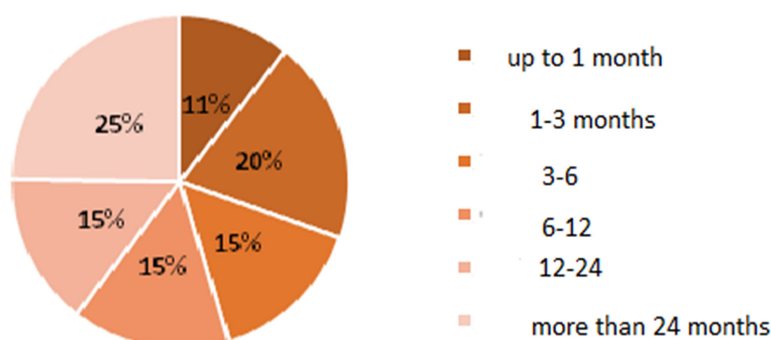
Figure 8: The structure of registered unemployed persons by education



Source: Wortal Publicznych Służb Zatrudnienia <http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/>

Of all registered unemployed, up to 25% remain unemployed for more than 24 months, therefore state actions concern a large social group.

Figure 9: The structure of registered unemployed persons by the period of unemployment



Source: Wortal Publicznych Służb Zatrudnienia <http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/>

As confirmed by the analyses of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy at the end of 2018, 968,900 people were registered in employment offices, including 383,300 people who were unemployed for more than 12 months after registering. These made 39.6% of the total number of the unemployed, which means that almost 4 out of 10 registered persons were unemployed for over a year. During the year, with the number of the unemployed dropping by 10.4%, the number of the unemployed for over 12 months decreased by 12.6%. Although the high number of the unemployed people registered in the labour offices for more than 24 months is still worrying, the systematic decrease in the number of unemployed people in this group is worth noting, starting from 2015. At the end of 2018, the group of people waiting the longest for employment was 239,800 persons, i.e. 24.8% of all registered persons. Compared to 2017, there was a decrease of 31,600 persons, i.e. 11.6%³⁰.

4.1.2.1. Educational and vocational counselling system

Educational and vocational counselling is organised and conducted as part of the activities of two ministries: the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of National Education.

An important supplement to the state system is the activity of non-governmental organisations and private initiatives implemented in the form of business activities.

The most important tasks of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy cover the creation of unemployment prevention programmes, including support for working people through the activities of the National Training Fund, and coordination of public employment services.

³⁰ The unemployed who were unemployed for more than 12 months since registering and the long-term unemployed in 2018, <http://psz.praca.gov.pl>

The state's tasks in the field of employment promotion, mitigating the effects of unemployment and professional activation are implemented by district and voivodship labour offices subordinate to district heads and voivodship heads, whose activities are coordinated by the minister³¹.

The Minister of National Education, within the scope of his/her competences, defines by means of law regulation the content of the curriculum in the field of career counselling, the way of providing career counselling, as well as the tasks of vocational counsellor, taking into account the role of vocational counselling in preparing students for the choice of profession and further education.³²

The Ministry of National Education is also obliged to determine the forecast concerning the demand for employees in professions of sectoral education on the national and voivodship labour market. The Minister of National Education, coordinating and implementing the state's educational policy and cooperating in this respect with heads of voivodships and other bodies and organisational units competent in the functioning of the educational system, has a real impact on the effectiveness of the career counselling system.

Figure 10: Educational and vocational counselling system in Poland, including entities (schools and other institutions) providing such services (own materials).



Source: Krystyna Mucha

³¹ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/rynek-pracy>

³² The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended) Art. 26a paragraph 3.

4.1.2.2 Tasks of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy

The Act on the Promotion of Employment ... defines the unemployed without professional qualifications as “an unemployed person who does not have qualifications to perform any profession certified by a diploma, certificate or other document entitling him/her to practice the profession”³³.

The National Action Plan for Employment sets out the state’s tasks in the area of employment promotion, mitigating the effects of unemployment and professional activation.

The Plan for 2018 defined the task to be implemented as improving job matching and career guidance provided by public employment services using profiling and individual action plans for the unemployed and jobseekers³⁴.

The objectives of the tasks have been determined, among others, as improving the quality of career guidance and individualisation of activities for clients through monitoring the implementation of individual services and creating conditions for their development³⁵.

The planned activities within the scope of the goal are e.g.:

- Monitoring the implementation of: job placement and professional counselling, and disseminating information on specific solutions in terms of their provision by labour offices.
- Providing explanations about profiling unemployment assistance, job placement, career guidance and individual action plans in accordance with the Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions and executive acts issued on its basis and other legal regulations.
- Improving the methods of work with the unemployed, jobseekers and employers, by e.g. developing and disseminating information, materials and specialist publications for employment agents, career advisors or employees acting as a client advisor; monitoring the use of the Professional Counsellor System, which includes the Professional Interest Questionnaire and the Competence Testing Tool, by labour offices, and exercising supervision over it.
- Organisation of information and training meetings, seminars and training concerning job matching and career guidance³⁶.

³³ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 2 paragraph 1 item 6.

³⁴ The National Action Plan for Employment for the year 2018, an annex to the Resolution No. 88/2018 of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2018 regarding the National Action Plan for Employment for 2018, p. 22.

³⁵ The National Action Plan for Employment for the year 2018, an annex to the Resolution No. 88/2018 of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2018 regarding the National Action Plan for Employment for 2018, p. 22.

³⁶ The National Action Plan for Employment for the year 2018, an annex to the Resolution No. 88/2018 of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2018 regarding the National Action Plan for Employment for 2018, p. 22.

As part of the next task resulting from the above Plan³⁷, namely creating a model of analysis of the demand for professions, one seeks to forecast trends in labour demand and directions of vocational education.

The anticipated effects of the task implementation are support for career counselling and guidance in terms of the choice of the career path desired by the market and substantive support for initiatives concerning better adjustment of competences and qualifications to the requirements of the labour market.³⁸

The next task comprising social and professional activation of people at risk of social exclusion is to increase the possibilities for people unemployed for a long period of time and benefiting from social assistance to return to professional and social activity³⁹.

The anticipated effects of the task implementation are:

- increasing the number of working people,
- reducing the number of beneficiaries of social assistance,
- increasing the number of partnerships concluded during the implementation of local labour market programmes⁴⁰.

4.1.2.3. Labour market institutions implementing tasks in the field of employment activation

According to the abovementioned Act on the promotion of employment, the labour market institutions implementing statutory tasks are:

1. public employment services;
2. Voluntary Labour Corps;
3. employment agencies;
4. training institutions;
5. social dialogue institutions;
6. local partnership institutions⁴¹.

³⁷ The National Action Plan for Employment for the year 2018, an annex to the Resolution No. 88/2018 of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2018 regarding the National Action Plan for Employment for 2018, p. 25

³⁸ The National Action Plan for Employment for the year 2018, an annex to the Resolution No. 88/2018 of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2018 regarding the National Action Plan for Employment for 2018.

³⁹ The National Action Plan for Employment for the year 2018, an appendix to the Resolution No. 88/2018 of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2018 regarding the National Action Plan for Employment for 2018, p. 48

⁴⁰ The National Action Plan for Employment for the year 2018, an appendix to the Resolution No. 88/2018 of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2018 regarding the National Action Plan for Employment for 2018, p. 48

⁴¹ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 6 paragraph 1.

Public employment services are employment agencies along with district and voivodship labour offices, the office of the minister competent for labour issues and voivodship offices carrying out tasks defined in the Act on employment promotion and labour market institutions.

The system of public employment services in Poland is decentralised, i.e. based on the structure of local governments. Offices implement the goals set by the government, but they have a lot of freedom to supplement the national strategy depending on the needs of their region.

Among the tasks of the Voivodship Labour Office, which function within the voivodship local government, concerning the provision of services for people with low qualifications, are:

- providing vocational guidance and its coordination in the public employment services in the voivodship;
- cooperation with district labour offices in the scope of organising vocational training for adults and internships within the voivodship⁴².

People with low qualifications may find support in District Labour Offices, operating within district local governments, whose task is to develop and implement a job promotion programme and activate the local labour market as part of the district strategy for solving social problems, including, for example:

- providing assistance to the unemployed and jobseekers in finding a job through job matching and career guidance;
- assisting employers in recruiting employees through job matching and career guidance;
- directing the unemployed to the entity implementing activation measures, which was commissioned by the head of the voivodship; registering the unemployed and jobseekers and determining profiles of assistance for the unemployed;
- initiating, organising and financing labour market services and instruments;
- initiating, organising and financing training and vocational preparation for adults;
- cooperation with communes in the area of dissemination of job offers and information about vocational guidance services, training, adult vocational preparation, internships, organisation of public works and socially useful works, implementation of the Activation and Integration Programme and social employment based on provisions about social employment;
- developing and implementing individual action plans;
- implementing projects in the field of employment promotion, including counteracting unemployment, mitigating the effects of unemployment and vocational activation of the unemployed, resulting from operational programmes co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Labour Fund;
- processing the information about the unemployed, jobseekers and foreigners intending to perform or performing work on the territory of the Republic of Poland⁴³.

⁴² <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/zadania-wojewodzkiego-urzedu-pracy-funkcjonujacego-w-ramach-samorzadu-wojewodztwa>

⁴³ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/zadania-powiatowego-urzedu-pracy-funkcjonujacego-w-ramach-samorzadu-powiatu>

Another institution of the labour market acting, as a rule, for low-skilled youth is the Voluntary Labour Corps.

The role of the Voluntary Labour Corps is to perform state tasks in the field of employment and counteracting marginalisation and social exclusion of young people, as well as tasks concerning their education and upbringing⁴⁴.

The tasks entrusted to Voluntary Labour Corps include, among others:

1. conducting job matching and organising employment for:
 - a) young people over 15 who have not completed primary education or who are not continuing education after finishing primary school,
 - b) unemployed up to 25 years old,
 - c) pupils and students;
2. providing career counselling for young people and keeping mobile job information centres;
3. initiating international cooperation and youth exchange.

Voluntary Labour Corps, as part of the tasks entrusted, cooperate with government administration units, public employment services and other labour market institutions as well as with local government units. An important addition to the offer supporting people with low qualifications are services of the employment agency. Running a business as an employment agency is an activity regulated by the Act of March 6, 2018 - Entrepreneurs' Law (Journal of Laws, item 646).⁴⁵ Employment agencies provide services in the field of job matching, personal counselling, career counselling and temporary work.

The statutory tasks in the field of vocational guidance have been defined, among others, as: providing help in choosing the right profession and place of employment, providing information necessary to make professional decisions, in particular about occupations, the labour market and the possibilities of training and education, initiating, organising and conducting professional group advice, activities in the field of assistance in active job search, giving employers assistance in selecting candidates for employment, in particular by providing information and advice in this area.⁴⁶

Other labour market institutions supporting low-skilled people are training institutions. Training institutions are public and non-public entities that conduct non-school education based on

⁴⁴ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 12 paragraph 1.

⁴⁵ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 18 paragraph 1.

⁴⁶ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 18 paragraph 1 item 3.

separate regulations. The subject of their activity is increasing professional competences and developing the ability to move into the labour market.

A training institution offering training for the unemployed and jobseekers can obtain an order, financed from public funds, to conduct this training after being registered as a training institutions by the voivodship labour office competent for the seat of the training institution⁴⁷.

As part of the social dialogue and local partnership, a Labour Market Council (consultative and advisory body of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy), voivodship councils (consultative and advisory body of the head of the voivodship) and district labour market councils (consultative and advisory body of the head of the district) indirectly provide services to persons with low qualifications.

The voivodship labour market council gives an opinion on the legitimacy of educating people in a given profession in accordance with the needs of the labour market. District labour market councils give an opinion on the advisability of implementing special programmes and the advisability of implementing the Activation and Integration Programme. The Activation and Integration Programme is addressed to the unemployed, for whom the help profile III is set. It is a profile for people who are far from the labour market, who require special support from the district and other labour market institutions.⁴⁸

Social dialogue institutions deal with the issues of the labour market. These are trade unions, organisations of employers and unemployed as well as non-governmental organisations cooperating with public employment services and Voluntary Labour Corps in the scope of the implementation of tasks specified in the Act of the promotion of employment and labour market institutions. On the other hand, local partnership institutions implement initiatives of the labour market partners, created for the implementation of specific tasks defined in the aforementioned Act and supported by local governments.

4.1.2.4. Tasks of the Minister of National Education in the field of supporting people with low qualifications

As part of the educational system, supporting people with low qualifications takes place in two ways. First of all, by creating education paths together with institutions offering lifelong learning and acquiring qualifications at all ages. Secondly, through the vocational counselling system at every stage of education.

⁴⁷ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 20 paragraph 1

⁴⁸ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 62a paragraph 2.

The educational system guarantees the minors and adults the choice of the appropriate path of education, further education as well as gaining and extending qualifications. The **schooling obligation** is met by attending eight-year primary schools.

The **obligation to study** (in Poland up to the age of 18) is fulfilled, for example, by attending secondary schools. In accordance with the Education Law,⁴⁹ there are the following types of **vocational secondary schools**: five-year technical secondary school, three-year sectoral vocational schools (I stage), three-year special schools preparing for employment, two-year sectoral vocational schools (II stage), post-secondary schools for people with secondary education or secondary vocational education with a teaching period of no more than 2.5 years. Underage and adult persons are both admitted to sectoral vocational schools of the II stage and to post-secondary schools⁵⁰.

The abovementioned schools allow people without qualifications and with low qualifications to obtain a professional diploma or a vocational qualification certificate, which are documents confirming their entitlement to perform a certain job (in accordance with the required qualifications).

In addition, the educational system enables lifelong learning in: schools for adults (primary and general secondary schools), sectoral vocational schools of the II stage and post-secondary schools, as well as obtaining and supplementing knowledge, skills and professional qualifications in out of school forms by people who have fulfilled the obligation to study⁵¹.

For people with low qualifications or people who want to acquire new qualifications, the Polish educational system offers education in a variety of out of school ways.

These are the ways of obtaining and supplementing knowledge, skills and professional qualifications, such as:

1. vocational qualification course;
2. vocational skills course;
3. general competence course;
4. theoretical training for young employees;
5. course, other than those mentioned in points 1-3, allowing to obtain and supplement knowledge, skills and professional qualifications⁵².

The abovementioned out-of-school forms can be offered by: public and non-public schools providing vocational education, public and non-public continuing education institutions and

⁴⁹ The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended)

⁵⁰ The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended) Article 18 paragraph 1.

⁵¹ The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended) Article 4 item 29

⁵² The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended) Article 117 paragraph 1a.

vocational education centres, labour market institutions conducting educational and training activities (in accordance with Article 6 of the Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions); entities conducting educational activities⁵³.

In the vocational education process, actions are taken to support the development of each learner, according to their needs and abilities, with particular emphasis on individual education and career paths, opportunities to raise the level of education and vocational qualifications and to prevent early school leaving⁵⁴.

The **vocational counselling system** introduced by the Minister of National Education assumes that “planned and systematic activities are carried out at every stage of education in the field of vocational counselling, in order to support children and students in the process of identifying their professional interests and predispositions and making informed educational and vocational decisions, including preparing them to choose the next stage of education and profession”⁵⁵.

In schools, career counselling is carried out during compulsory classes of general education or vocational training, vocational counselling classes for which a core curriculum has been established, classes related to the choice of education and profession conducted as part of psychological and pedagogical assistance and classes with the form teacher⁵⁶.

Bearing in mind the importance of career counselling, in 2018 for the first time the Ministry of Education issued an executive act regulating the content of the curriculum in the field of vocational counselling, the conditions and methods of implementation and organisation of career counselling in schools and institutions, as well as the professional requirements for the people providing career counselling in schools and institutions.⁵⁷

The core curriculum of vocational counselling for all students covers the following areas:

1. learning about their own resources;
2. the world of professions and the labour market;
3. educational market and lifelong learning;
4. planning their own development and making professional decisions.

⁵³ The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended) Article 117 paragraph 2

⁵⁴ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 15 February 2019 on general objectives and tasks of education in occupations of sectoral education and classification of occupations in sectoral education (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 316)

⁵⁵ The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended) Article 26a

⁵⁶ The Act of 14 December 2016 Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 996, as amended) Article 26a paragraph 2.

⁵⁷ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 16 August 2018 regarding professional counselling (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1675)

Career counselling in schools, depending on the type of classes during which counselling is provided, are run by general education teachers, form teachers, vocational counsellors with proper qualifications to take the position of a vocational counsellor, pedagogues, and psychologists. Educational and vocational counselling is also carried out by psychological and pedagogical centres and consists in planning and implementing tasks in the field of educational and vocational counselling. Centres provide support by offering direct help to young people and supporting schools in this area⁵⁸.

4.1.3 United Kingdom National System

In this section we will examine the UK national Education system. Firstly, we will examine the national education framework within the UK specific to adult programmes. Then we will explain the context of adult skills and the resulting UK education strategies. We will then explain each of the adult education programmes and their role in developing adult skills. Finally, we will detail the information, advice and guidance provided by information systems and Skills Brokers related to adult education.

4.1.3.1 UK National Education Framework

The UK is a unitary parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy which consists of four constituent countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The UK political system devolves some activities, including the management and monitoring of education, training and employment, to the Welsh Government, Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. While England is not a devolved country, it does operate its educational framework separately from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and this is operated by parliament in London.

The educational framework varies to greater or lesser degrees in each of these constituent countries. As such, in this section, we will concentrate on the largest country in the UK, England.

a. English Educational System

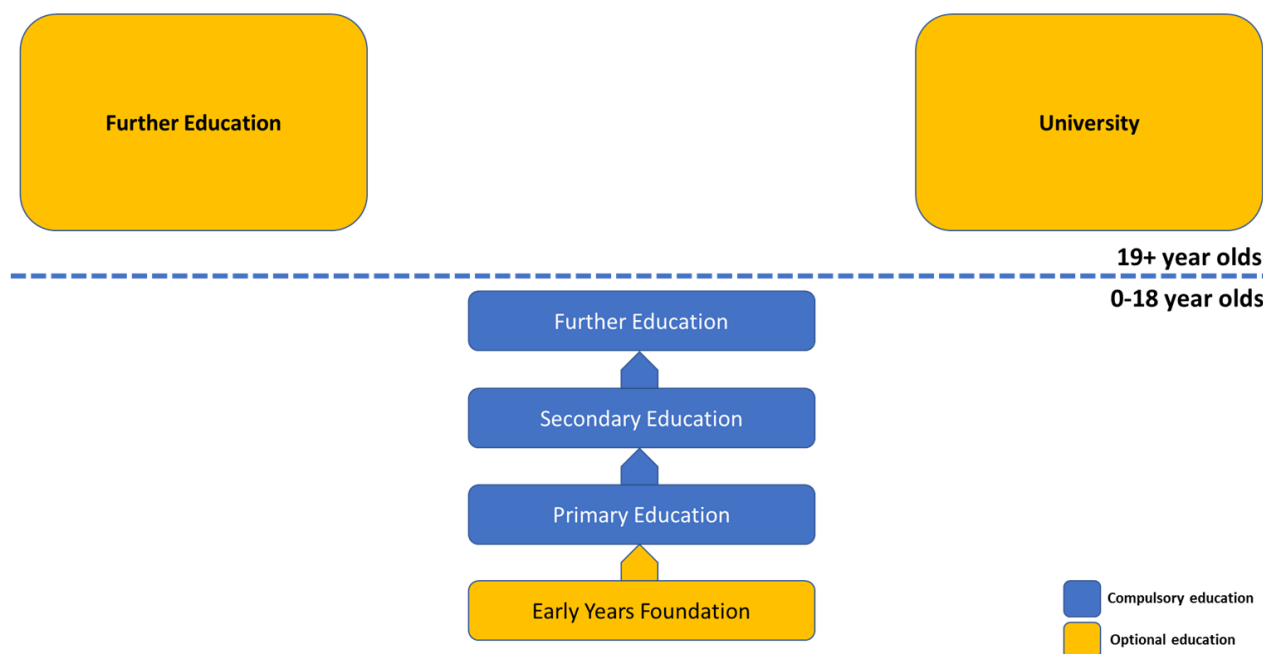
The English educational system is overseen by the UK's Department for Education and managed by agencies where appropriate.

Early Years Foundation starts at the age of 3 years old until a child is 5 years old. This is non-compulsory education. Following this, children move into compulsory full-time education until they reach 18 years of age through primary education (5 years old – 11 years old), secondary

⁵⁸ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of February 1, 2013 on detailed rules of operation of public psychological and pedagogical centres, including public specialist centres (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 199 as amended)

education (11 years old – 16 years old) and further education (16 years old – 18 years old). In England, at the age of 19 years, students can enter optional further education or university.

Figure 11: The English Educational System



Source: Simon Dawson

This section of the report will, therefore, focus on 19+ year old further education.

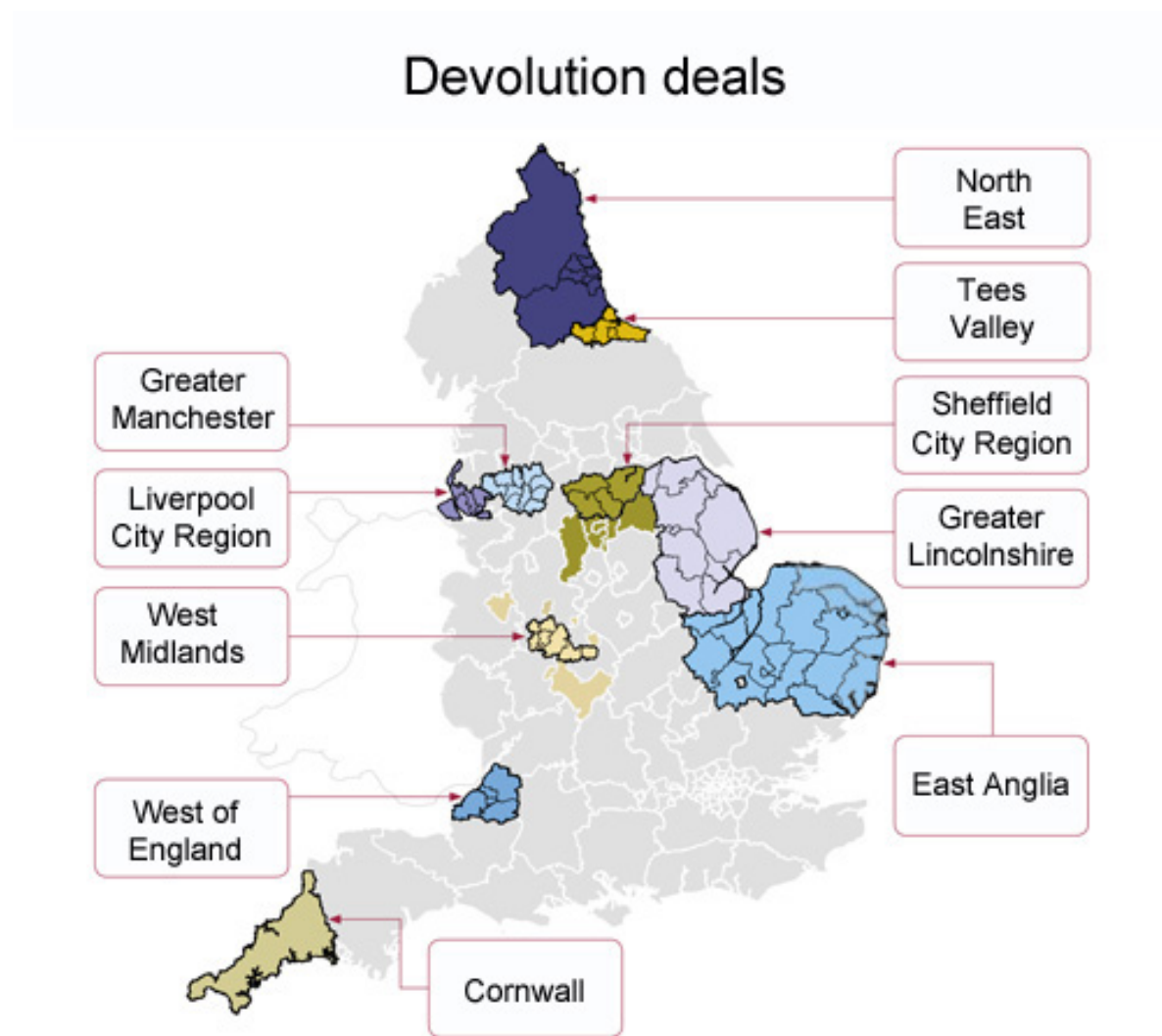
b. Liverpool City Region Educational System

Since 2014, the UK government has signed 'Devolution Deals' with 10 regions of England. Devolution means that decision-making powers and funding are transferred from national government to the local regions. This allows decisions to be made that are closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect.

The belief is that these Devolved Authorities provide greater freedoms and flexibility at a local level, meaning councils and other partners can work better to improve public services and manage the economic growth decisions that affect the local area.

The terms of the Devolution Deals vary on an authority-by-authority basis and some of these include the devolution of adult education.

Figure 12: Devolved Authorities



Source: Steering English Devolution <https://www.nao.org.uk/naoblog/steering-english-devolution/>

The local area of the author includes such an area, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority comprises the local authority areas of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and the Wirral. This covers a population of over 1.5 million residents with additional people working in the area but living elsewhere.

As part of the Devolution Deal, the Liverpool City Region is directly responsible for some elements of adult education from August 2019 rather than this being managed and administered from central government in London.

We will refer to the Liverpool City Region throughout this section as a case study of devolved adult education.

4.1.3.2 Adult Education Context

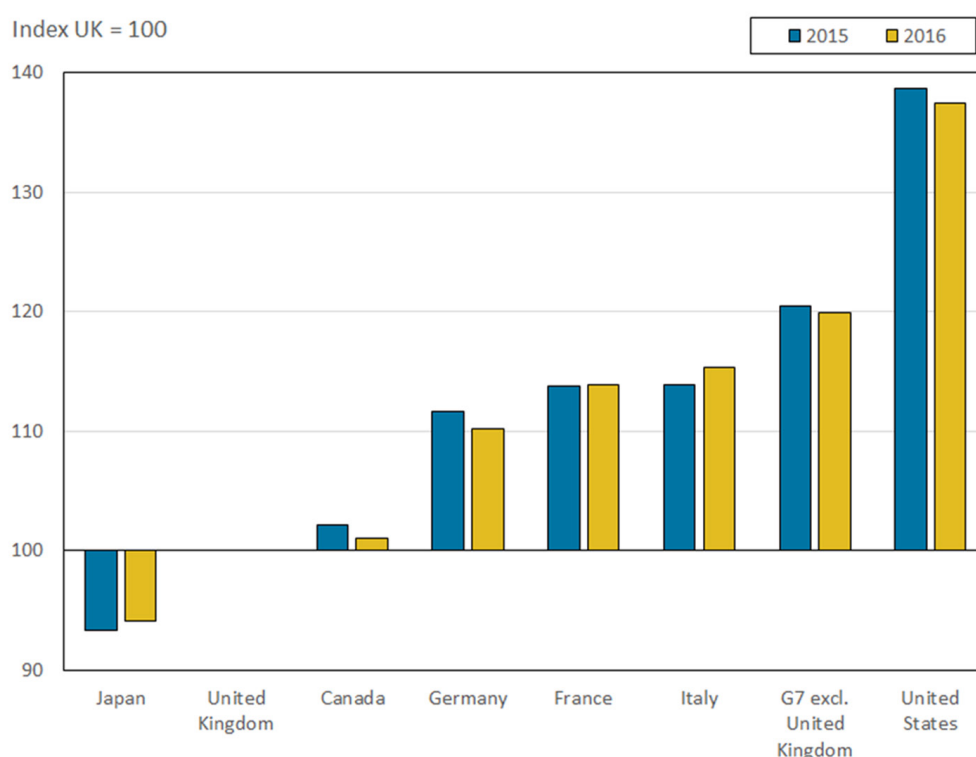
England suffers from a disparity of skills from its wealthier areas to its poorer regions. This leads to poor productivity and a large variation between the various regions of the country.

a. National Context

While London is a well-skilled and wealthy area within England, many of the UK's cities under-perform nationally against the national average⁵⁹.

While the UK's unemployment rates are at near record low levels, Britain's productivity lags behind that of other developed nations. While the UK's productivity (measured in GDP per worker) was 6.3% above Japan's (although the gap is narrowing), it is considerably behind Germany (9.3%), France (12.2%), Italy (13.3%) and the US (27.3%). The UK's GDP per worker is 16.6% below the rest of the G7⁶⁰.

Figure 13: Gross Domestic Product per Worker, G7 countries: 2015 to 2016



Source: International comparisons of UK productivity (ICP), final estimates: 2016, Office of National Statistics, April 2018

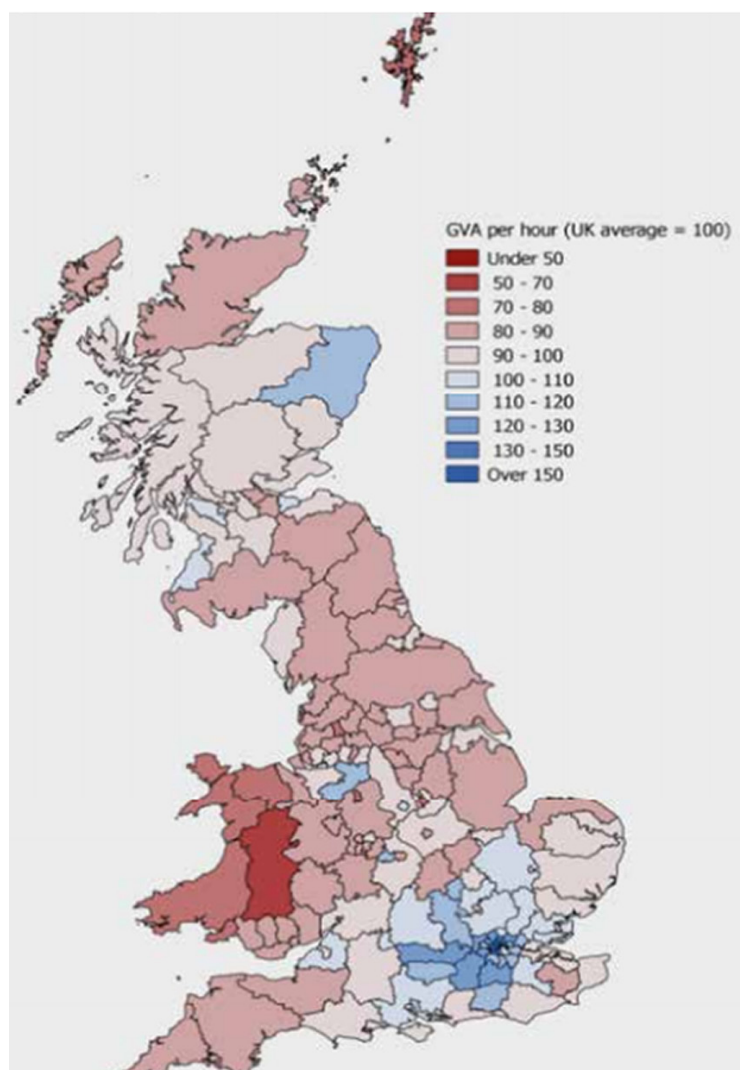
⁵⁹ Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, HM Government, November 2017 pg. 19

⁶⁰ International comparisons of UK productivity (ICP), final estimates: 2016, Office of National Statistics, April 2018

The UK is home to some of the most productive businesses, people and places in the world but suffers from a 'long tail' of underperformance.

Figure 14 shows the concentration and disparity of productivity within the UK. In the London and South East area, productivity is above average. The vast majority of the rest of the country are significantly below the national average.

Figure 14: Regional Productivity



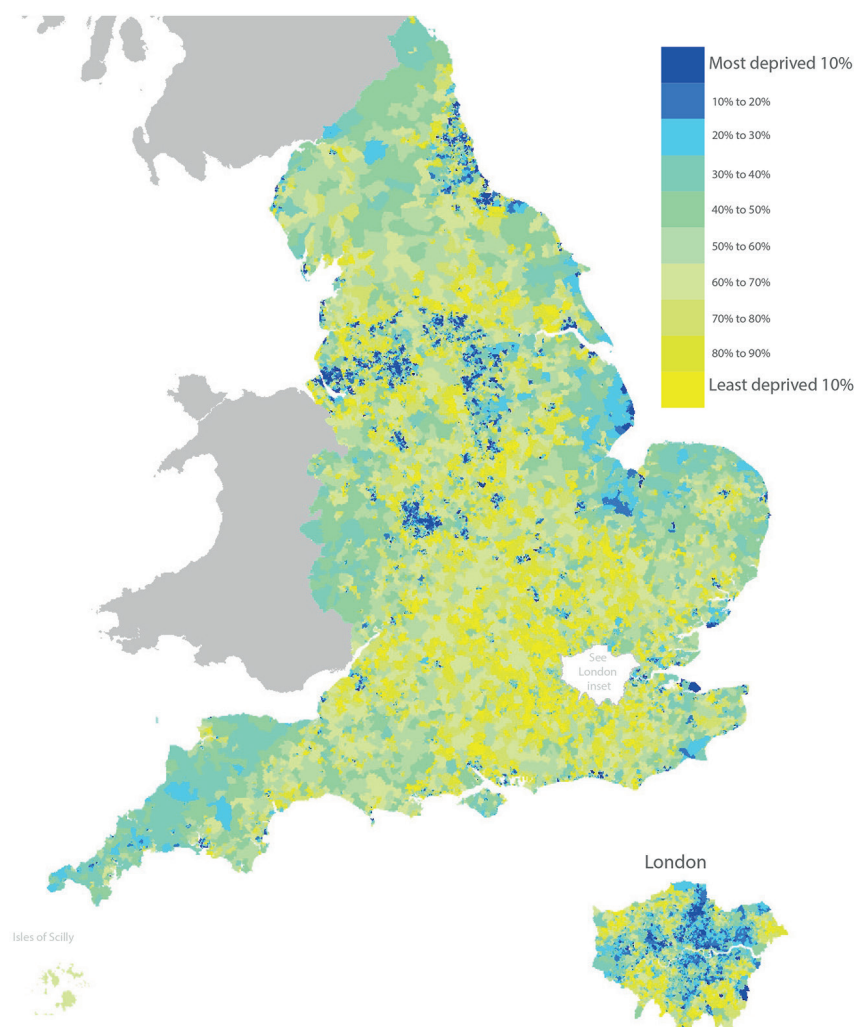
Source: 'Subregional Productivity: Labour Productivity', Office of National Statistics, 2017

b. Local Context

As explained above, there is a significant disparity between different areas of England and the Liverpool City Region is part of the 'long tail' of underperformance.

The Liverpool City Region has the highest level of deprivation nationally according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015). Of the 6 local authorities in the Liverpool City Region, 2 of the top 10 most deprived local authorities and 4 of the top 50 most deprived local authorities nationally are based in the Liverpool City Region (out of 152 local authorities)⁶¹.

Figure 15: The English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015



Source: The English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 Infographic

This is due, in good part, to the levels of employment and unemployment within the Liverpool City Region.

The Liverpool City Region falls well behind both the regional and national averages for economically active and employed. 74.6% of the Liverpool City Region is economically active in comparison to 77% and 78.5% for the north west of England and Great Britain respectively.

⁶¹ The English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015

71.7% of Liverpool City Region residents are in employment compared to 73.8% in the north west and 75.1% in Great Britain.

The percentage of residents in employment as employees is only slightly below the national average (63.9% vs 64.3%), however there is a major difference in self-employment with only 7.7% of self-employed Liverpool City Region residents compared to 10.6% nationally.

Figure 16: Employment and Unemployment (Liverpool City Region v North West v Great Britain)

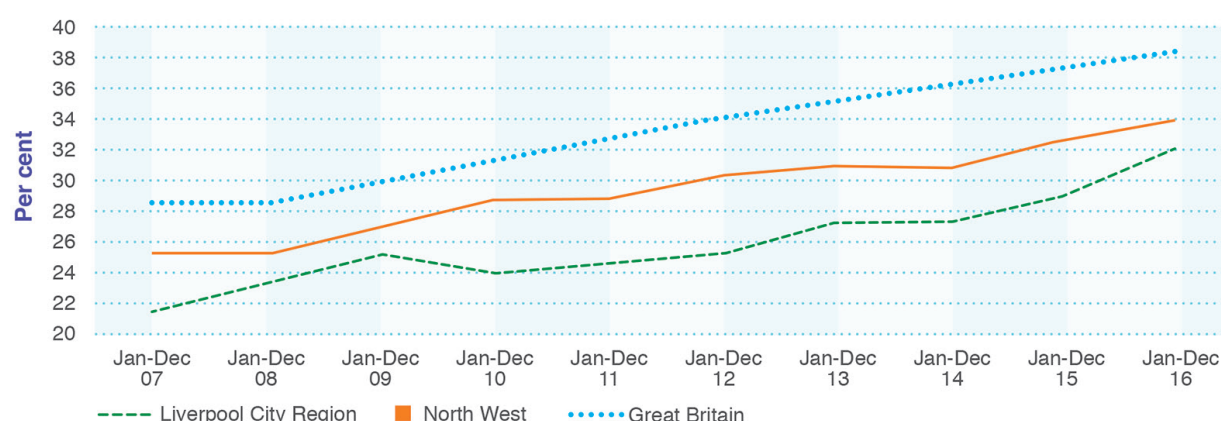
Employment and unemployment (Oct 2017-Sep 2018)				
	Liverpool City Region (Numbers)	Liverpool City Region (%)	North West (%)	Great Britain (%)
All People				
Economically Active†	737,600	74.6	77.0	78.5
In Employment†	709,000	71.7	73.8	75.1
Employees†	627,100	63.9	64.4	64.3
Self Employed†	80,800	7.7	9.2	10.6
Unemployed§	28,600	3.9	4.1	4.2

Source: Labour Market Profile - Liverpool City Region, Nomis

Furthermore, the highest qualification level of working age Liverpool City Region residents is also significantly below the regional and national averages.

Only 31.5% of Liverpool City Region residents have a qualification of Level 4 or above (degree level) compared to 34.5% in the north west and 38.6% nationally.

Figure 17: Working Age Population with a Level 4+ Qualification



Source: Skills Strategy 2018-2023, Liverpool City Region, Local Enterprise Partnership

The gap reduces as the highest qualification level falls with 83.2% of residents having a qualification at Level 1 or above compared to 85.2% regionally and 85.4% nationally.

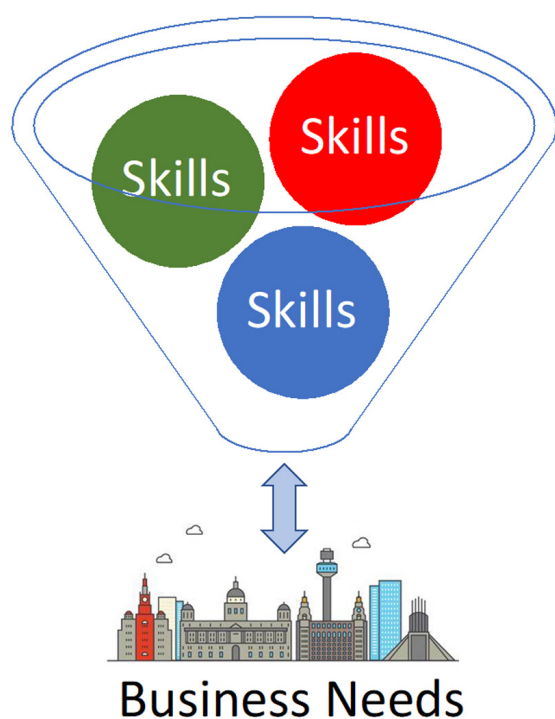
The Liverpool City Region has considerably more residents with no qualifications compared to the north west region and nationally. 11.3% of Liverpool City Region residents have no qualifications compared to 9.0% in the north west and 7.7% in Great Britain⁶².

This has contributed to the need in the Liverpool City Region to boost adult skills.

4.1.3.3 Adult Education Strategy

The UK government utilises a demand-led approach to adult skills as opposed to a supply-driven strategy. This means that they rely, in most cases, on businesses to lead the skills agenda rather than the government imposing skills upon the economy.

Figure 18: Demand-led Approach to Adult Skills



Source: Simon Dawson

The government's position is that it is for businesses to identify the skills required by the UK population to enable them to operate their businesses most effectively. Businesses are expected, increasingly, to be a major part of all skills decisions made both nationally and regionally.

⁶² Labour Market Profile - Liverpool City Region, Nomis

This is demonstrated through both the 'Industrial Strategy'⁶³ and through Devolved Administration's Local Growth Sectors.

a. Industrial Strategy

The aim of the Industrial Strategy is to boost productivity by backing businesses to create good jobs and increase the earning power of people throughout the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure. The UK has five desired foundations:

- Ideas – the world's most innovative economy
- People – good jobs and greater earning power for all
- Infrastructure – a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure
- Business environment – the best place to start and grow a business
- Places – prosperous communities across the UK

The UK government states that '*we still face challenges in meeting our business needs for talent, skills and labour*'⁶⁴. There is a recognition that technical (vocational, non-university) education has not been given the same prestige as the UK academic system and the vocational education system in other countries. There is a focus on narrowing disparities between communities in skills and education and removing barriers faced by people from under-represented groups.

The government have set five targets to improve skills:

1. Improve the quality and reputation of technical education – it is recognised that the technical education system can be complex and confusing and does not always meet the needs of individuals, employers and the wider economy. This has led to the migrant population filling the skills gap.
2. Tackle particular shortages of STEM skills – it is stated that 40% of employers have reported a shortage of STEM graduates as a key barrier in recruiting appropriate staff. Jobs in STEM sectors are expected to rise at double the rate of other occupations between 2017 and 2023.
3. Tackle entrenched regional disparities in education and skill levels – according to the Confederation of British Industry, disparities in education and skills are the biggest drivers of regional variation in productivity⁶⁵.
4. Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to enter into and progress at work and through the education and training system – there is a recognition that barriers which prevent under-represented groups from realising their full potential need to be broken down. For instance, while women make up just under 50% of the labour market, they are more likely

⁶³ Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, HM Government, November 2017

⁶⁴ Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, HM Government, November 2017 p. 94

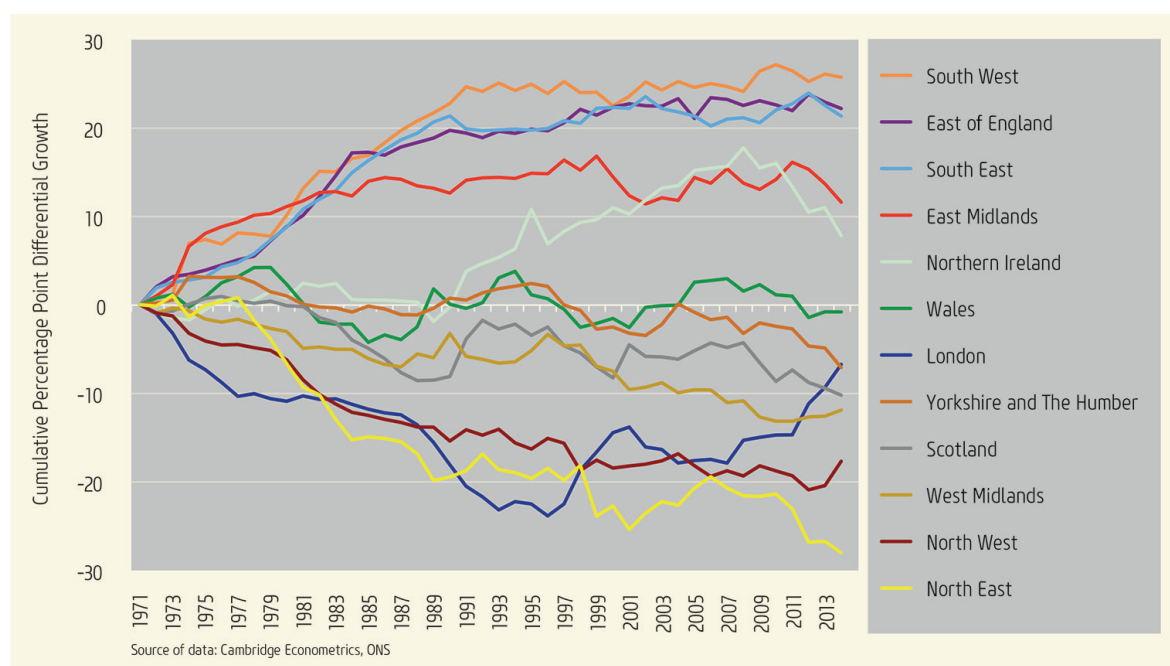
⁶⁵ 'Unlocking regional growth', CBI, 2016

to be in low-paid, low-skilled work. Furthermore, there is an appreciation that, as the economy becomes more technology driven, there is a need for people to have the opportunity to learn and train throughout their working lives. The belief is that the current problem does not relate to unemployment due to technology; rather, the problem is a low earning power caused by a failure to use technology.

5. Employers, individuals and government all have a role to play in helping people develop the right skills – there is a desire to ensure that these three groups work together to create opportunities for people to develop higher earnings.

As mentioned earlier, many places within the UK, including the Liverpool City Region, are not realising their full potential⁶⁶. Furthermore, this regional gap has continued to grow consistently since 1971, with the North West and North East of England 17% and 28% less productive respectively than the national average.

Figure 19: Regional Cumulative Percentage Point Differential Growth Gaps in Employment, 1971-2014

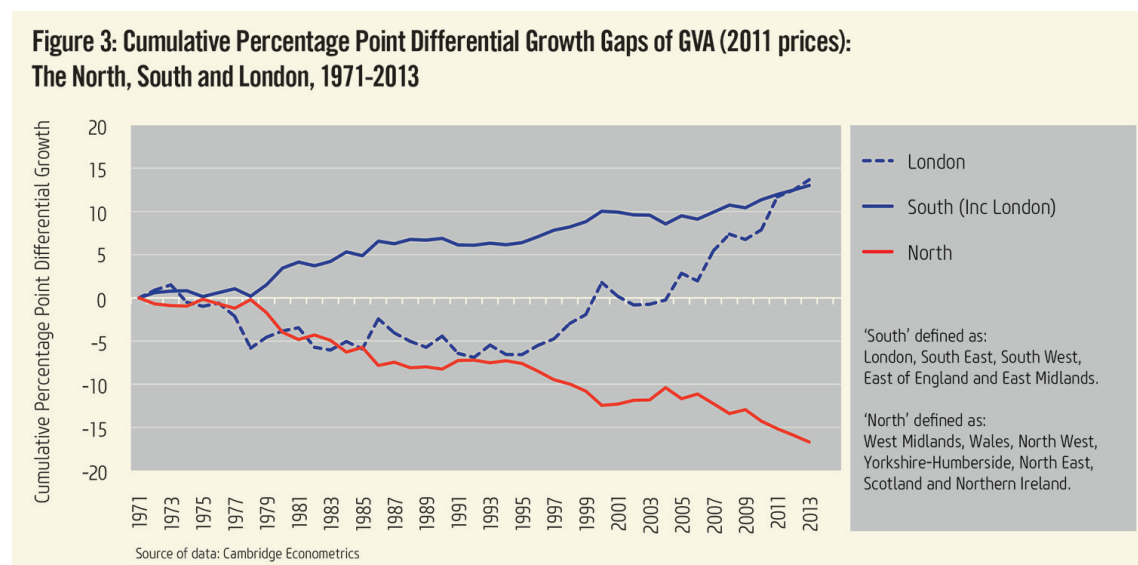


Source: 'Spatially rebalancing the UK economy: The need for a policy model', Martin et al, 2015

While growth has consistently increased in southern regions, the northern regions have lagged behind, with the north as a whole 16% less productive than the national average.

⁶⁶ Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, HM Government, November 2017 p.216

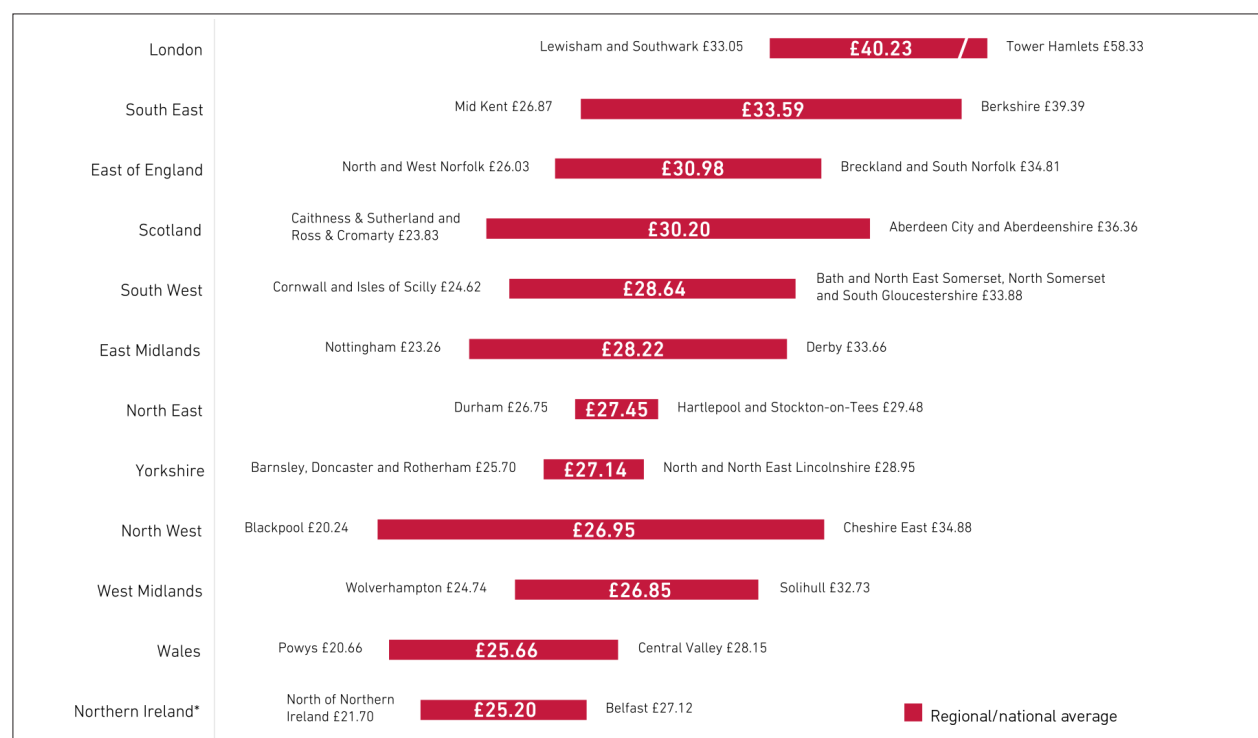
Figure 20: Cumulative Percentage Point Differential Growth Gaps of GVA (2011 prices): The North, South and London, 1971-2013



Source: 'Spatially rebalancing the UK economy: The need for a policy model', Martin et al, 2015

Even within regions there are great spatial disparities, with wide variations in most regions.

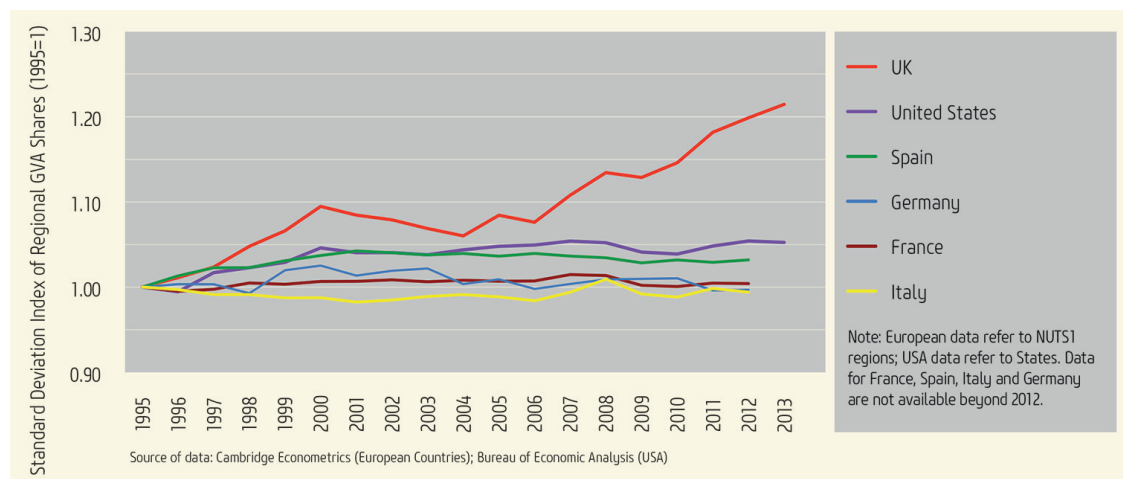
Figure 21: Productivity by Region



Source: 'Unlocking Regional Growth', CBI, 2016

The UK has greater disparities in regional productivity than other European countries

Figure 22: Spatial Imbalance in the UK and other Major European Countries Compared, Indexed Standard Deviation of Regional Shares of National GVA, 1995-2013



Source: 'Spatially rebalancing the UK economy: The need for a policy model', Martin et al, 2015

The UK government's response to this has been the agreement of Local Industrial Strategies through Devolved Administrations. Many of the regions with poor productivity performance have strong, distinctive industrial legacies. The government believes that these legacies were formed not by central government but by local entrepreneurial ambition and ingenuity. However, during the last 100 years, the UK has become one of the most centralised states in Europe⁶⁷. The government's approach has been to devolve economic destinies to local businesses and civic leaders through Devolution Deals⁶⁸.

b. Local Growth Sectors

The Industrial Strategy makes clear that there must be strong public and private leadership locally. Devolution has enabled local areas to develop long-term plans that are implemented through directly elected city-region mayors and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

In addition to infrastructure and transport links, business and management practices and export and innovation, education and skills are the biggest determinant of local productivity⁶⁹. As such, many Devolved Administrations, including the Liverpool City Region, have gained devolved responsibility for local adult technical education.

⁶⁷ 'Spatially rebalancing the UK economy: The need for a policy model', Martin et al

⁶⁸ Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, HM Government, November 2017 p.219

⁶⁹ 'Unlocking Regional Growth', CBI, 2016

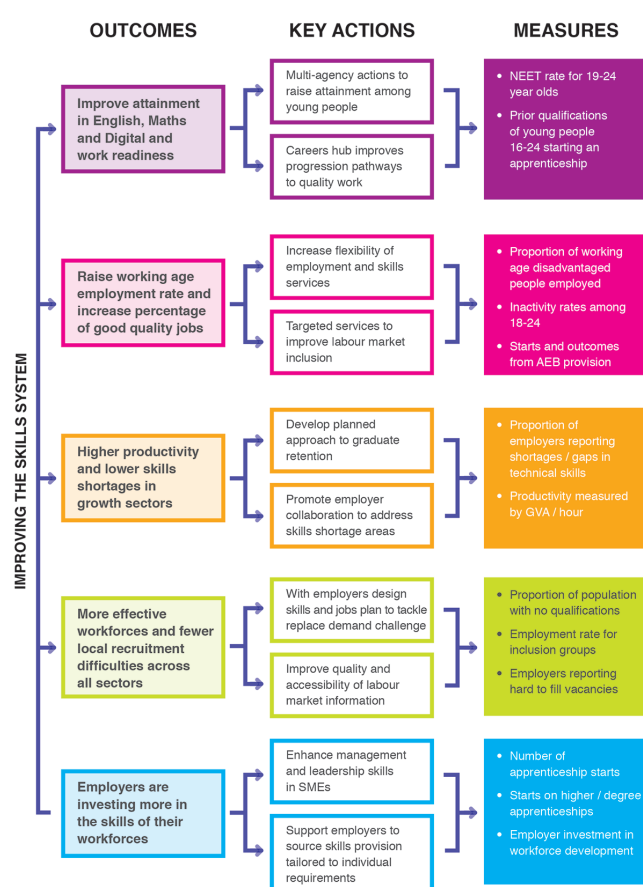
The Liverpool City Region has set a vision that in five years the region will have ‘an outstanding and effective skills system that meets the needs of employers, individuals of all ages and communities and drives high aspirations and attainment, to create a truly global and competitive City Region at the heart of the Northern Powerhouse’⁷⁰.

This will be achieved by meeting five outcomes:

1. A higher percentage of young people achieving good attainment levels in English, maths and digital skills, and higher levels of work readiness.
2. A higher percentage of the working age population being employed, and in good quality jobs.
3. Higher productivity and a lower incidence of skill shortages across key growth sectors.
4. More effective workforces with fewer local recruitment difficulties.
5. Employers investing significantly more in the quality and quantity of the skills of their workforce.

These aims provide starting points to define the actions that are required to improve skills development from 2018 to 2023. These translate into Key Actions and Measures for the implementation of the plan for the Liverpool City Region.

Figure 23: Liverpool City Region Skills Strategy 2018-2023 Implementation Plan



Source: Skills Strategy 2018-2023, Liverpool City Region, Local Enterprise Partnership

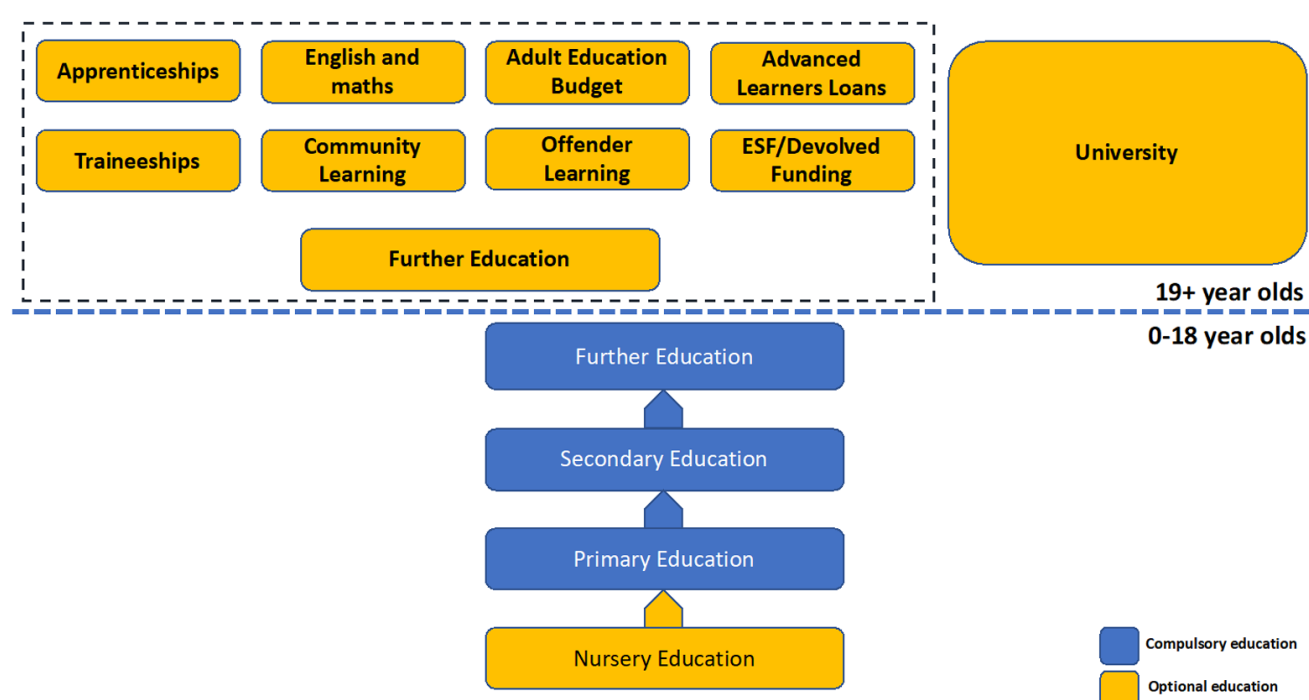
⁷⁰ Skills Strategy 2018-2023, Liverpool City Region, Local Enterprise Partnership p.4

As can be seen in Figure 23, the vast majority of Key Actions include strong links to employment and employers.

4.1.3.4 Adult Education Programmes

Within England there are a variety of programmes to undertake training for adults (19+ years of age). One route is by attending University, however the Further Education routeways are much more complex, focusing on more specific support for vocational skills and includes programmes focused at adults with low qualifications or low skills.

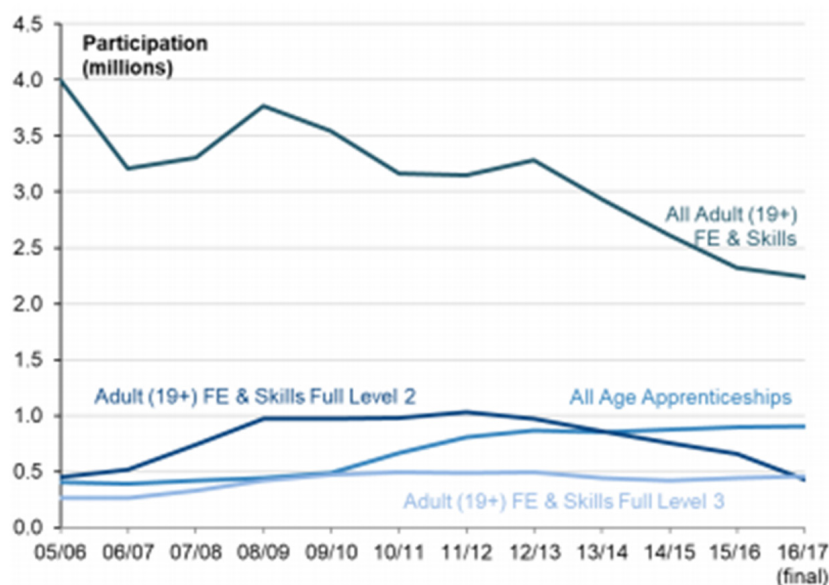
Figure 24: The English Educational System (expanded)



Source: Simon Dawson

Adult education has decreased significantly since a high of 4mln participants in 2005/06. By 2016/17, only 2.3mln participated in adult education.

Figure 25: All age apprenticeships and adult (19+) further education and skills participation (2005/06 to 2016/17)



Source: Further Education and Skills in England, Department for Education – November 2017 (Updated March 2019)

This section will describe each of the adult educational programmes in more detail with focus on both national and more local implications.

a. Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are available to anyone over the age of 16, living in England and have no upper age limit. An apprenticeship is a paid role within an organisation so that the individual is both learning and working. All apprenticeships include elements of 'on the job' and 'off the job' training, leading to industry recognised standards and qualifications. Some apprenticeships also require an assessment at the end of the programme to assess the apprentice's ability and competence in their job role.

The government has a target of delivering 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020.

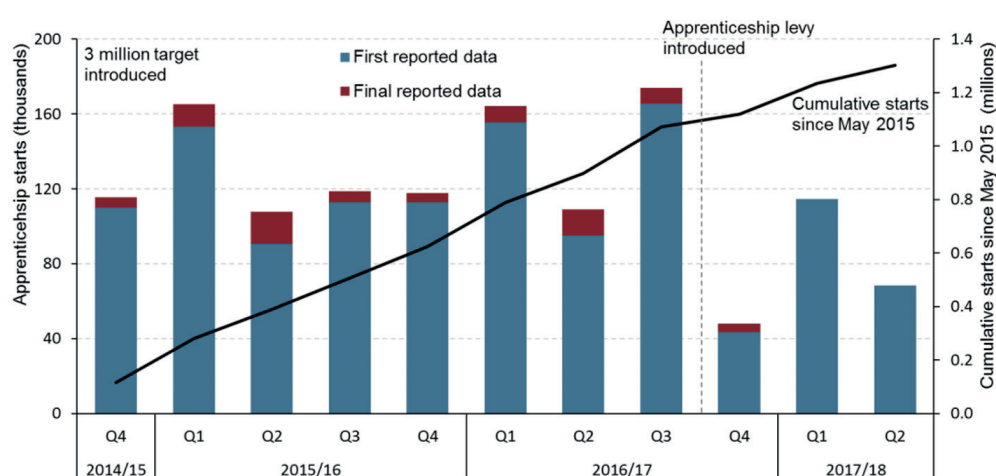
Until May 2017, all apprenticeships were funded directly by the government. Since May 2017, apprenticeships have been funded differently. Apprenticeships are now funded by either a Levy (for companies with a payroll of more than £3m per year) or through a part-funded contribution.

All English-registered companies with an annual payroll of more than £3m must pay a Levy of 0.5% of their payroll value to the government. They are then able to use this money to fund apprenticeships. If the money is not spent then it is retained by the government.

All English-registered companies with an annual payroll of £3m or less do not pay into a Levy fund, however they are required to make a contribution (10% from May 2017 to March 2019, 5% from April 2019 onwards).

Since the introduction of the new funding model, there has been a significant fall in the number of apprenticeship starts. At the last quarter before the introduction of the new funding, apprenticeship starts had reached 1m (a third of the target by 2020). However, since the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced starts have slowed considerably to approximately 1.3m at the end of quarter 2 2017/18 and it now appears unlikely that the 2020 target will be achieved.

Figure 26: All age apprenticeship starts, England



Source: Further Education and Skills: March 2018, Department for Education

Additionally, apprenticeship starts have been focused at higher levels rather than supporting those with low or no skills to develop. As at quarter 2 2017/18, there had been a 38.2% decrease in Level 2 apprenticeships, a 14.6% decrease in Level 3 apprenticeships but a 25.4% increase in Level 4 and 5 apprenticeships compared to the same period in 2016/17. Overall there has been a 29.3% decrease in apprenticeship starts compared to 2016/17⁷¹.

The Liverpool City Region has a strong history of apprenticeship delivery and the programme has grown year on year since 2014/15. In 2016/17, 18,580 individuals started an apprenticeship. The Liverpool City Region is keen to maximise apprenticeship opportunities and has set a target of 20,000 apprentices by 2020⁷²; to date there is no accurate comparable data. However, there have been a number of key challenges identified:

- The impact of apprenticeship reform
- Apprenticeship awareness and understanding amongst employers

⁷¹ Further Education and Skills: March 2018, Department for Education

⁷² Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018-2020, Liverpool City Region

- Falling 16-18 apprenticeship participation
- A misalignment between employer demand and the availability of provision
- The technical skills gap across the Liverpool City Region compared to national averages
- The complexity of navigating and fragmentation of the national and local skills system.

This has led to five priorities being developed for Liverpool City Region apprenticeships:

1. Developing better data analysis and availability across the City Region to inform programme and curriculum planning
2. Stimulating employer demand for apprenticeships
3. Supporting more individuals to follow apprenticeship skills progression routes
4. Extending the breadth and delivery of high-quality apprenticeships
5. Creating the right environment for apprenticeships to develop.

b. English and Maths

England remains unusual among advanced countries in that maths is not studied universally for all students over 16 years of age⁷³. As such this skills gap progresses into adult education.

The government are investing £40mIn to establish Further Education Centres of Excellence across the country. Furthermore they are reforming functional skills qualifications to improve their quality and levels of employer recognition.

Like apprenticeships, there has been a fall in the participation in English and maths by quarter 2 2017/18 compared to the previous year. English participation has fallen by 13.6% while maths participation has dropped by 13.3%. English for Speakers of Other Languages rose slightly by 3.5%⁷⁴.

In the Liverpool City Region, only one of the six local authority has above average levels of English and maths skills.

English and maths is a legal entitlement, meaning that fully-funded training is available to all adults.

c. Adult Education Budget

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require

⁷³ 'Level 2 and 3 attainment in England: Attainment by age 19 in 2016', Department for Education

⁷⁴ Further Education and Skills: March 2018, Department for Education

a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence and/or enhance their wellbeing.

Greater funding is provided for individuals who are currently unemployed and claiming benefits or on a low wage (£16,009.50 or less annual salary).

As part of the Liverpool City Region's Devolution Agreement in November 2015, it was agreed that AEB would be devolved from August 2016. This will enable a closer link between employers' needs and the curriculum offer. In the Liverpool City Region, greater funding is provided for all individuals that are unemployed or earn below the Living Wage (£17,062.50 or less annual salary).

d. Advanced Learner Loans

Advanced Learner Loans are available for individuals aged 19 or above to undertake approved qualifications at Level 3 to Level 6, at an approved provider in England. Advanced Learner Loans give individuals access to financial support for tuition costs similar to that available in higher education and are administered by Student Finance England.

The availability of loans at Level 3 for 19- to 23 year olds does not replace an individual's legal entitlement for full funding for a first full level 3 qualification.

Advanced Learner Loans are paid directly to the college or training organisation on behalf of an individual. They are not means tested or subject to credit checks and any individual who meets the criteria will be able to apply for a loan regardless of their current employment status. Advanced Learner Loans are not repaid until the individual receives a salary of more than £25,725 a year. Repayments are then made at a rate of 9% of your annual salary plus an interest rate of 3% per year.

At the end of 2016/17, there were 119,000 individuals with an Advanced Learner Loan; 93% at Level 3 and 7% at Level 4+⁷⁵.

e. Traineeships

A Traineeship is an education and training programme with work experience that unlocks the potential of young people and prepares them for their future careers by helping them to become 'work ready'.

Designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who don't yet have the appropriate skills or experience to gain employment, Traineeships provide the essential work preparation

⁷⁵ Further Education and Skills: March 2018, Department for Education

training, English, maths and work experience needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment.

Traineeships can last up to a maximum of 6 months and will include:

- work preparation training provided by the training organisation
- English and maths support, if required, provided by the training organisation
- a high-quality work experience placement with an employer
- flexible additional content to meet the needs of the business and the local labour market, where appropriate.

At the end of the Traineeship, each young person will be guaranteed a job interview if a role becomes available or an exit interview together with meaningful written feedback to help them secure an apprenticeship or employment with another employer.

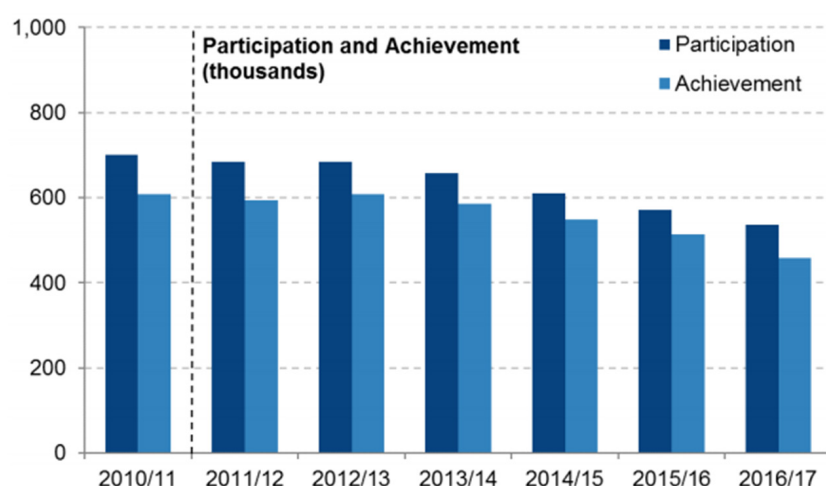
By quarter 2 of 2017/18, there had been 2400 Traineeship starts by individuals aged 19 to 24 years. Approximately 40% of individuals that completed the programme progressed into work, an apprenticeship, further full time education or other training.

f. Community Learning

Community learning includes a range of community based and outreach learning opportunities, primarily managed and delivered by local authorities and general further education colleges designed to bring together adults (often of different ages and backgrounds).

In 2016/17, 535,800 individuals participated on a community learning course. This was a decrease of 6.1% compared to 2015/16. Community learning is showing a continual fall since 2011 when approximately 700,000 people undertook training.

Figure 27: Community learning participation and achievement



Source: Further Education and Skills in England, Department for Education – November 2017 (Updated March 2019)

g. Offender Learning

Training opportunities are provided to offenders while in prison so that they have appropriate skills to gain employment upon release.

In 2016/17, there were 88,900 offenders aged 18 and over in the prison system participating in learning. This is a 6.1% decrease compared to 2015/16. An additional 15,800 offenders sat an English and/or maths assessment but did not participate in any further learning⁷⁶.

h. ESF/Devolved Funding

Each Devolved Authority has access to monies, either from the European Social Fund or their own budgets, which can be used for education and skills. These programmes are employer-led.

5. THE SITUATION OF ADULT EDUCATORS AND CAREER/EDUCATION COUNSELLORS IN THE RESEARCHED COUNTRIES

5.1.1 Italy

The system of adult education in Italy relies on several professional figures, from adult educators to career and education counsellors (*“orientatori”*).

a. Adult Educators and training opportunities

Adult educators who teach within the CPIA and secondary professional, technical and artistic schools offering classes for the adult education system don't usually have specific qualifications. In fact, these educators often hold similar qualifications as their counterparts teaching to high-school pupils and come from previous experiences with them. Teachers in the national system in Italy (both for adults and not) have different and varying types of qualifications (depending on their subject of choice) and are employed for both long and short term contracts through national-level “concorsi” (large-scale tests)

⁷⁶ Further Education and Skills in England, Department for Education – November 2017 (Updated March 2019)

which give the candidates access to regional and national ranking lists, according to criteria such as score on the test, experience, age, etc. They are then selected when vacancies open up.

The teachers who took part to the focus groups conducted by INDIRE within the 2018 report *“Viaggio nell’Istruzione degli Adulti in Italia”* (Journey in Adult Education in Italy), lamented the lack of teachers’ preparedness and training as one of the main difficulties for the system of adult education in Italy to function properly. In fact, adult education presents some specifics that demand specifically trained teaching personnel. It is a highly demanding environment, with students who are characterised by a higher degree of diversity than in “day school” (as the teachers refer to high schools, as opposed to adult “evening” classes) both in terms of background and situations of personal struggle and in terms of levels of educational need, as well as a higher rate of drop out, and a supposedly more flexible didactic method. The teachers need training to be able to effectively support their learners. According to what emerged during the focus groups, teachers who enter the adult education system are often people who “escape” the morning schools, “burnt out” and not adequately prepared. In addition to this, the teachers/educators who were already within the adult education system before the reform (the CTP, *Centri Territoriali Permanenti*) did not receive specific training in order to integrate the new system. There is therefore a strong demand for initial training on the pedagogy, system and students for newly qualified teachers.

In-service training opportunities that do exist are not systematic (at least not in the case of specific training for teaching adults) and are offered either by training centres and organisations certified by the MIUR (*Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca*, Italian Ministry of Education) or by the single CPIAs in the exercise of their territorial autonomy, thus exacerbating the above-mentioned regional divide. That is to say that although teachers from all levels do have an obligation for periodic training, the offer of specific training for adult educators is very narrow and sporadic.

Moreover, the above-described adult education system imposes that educators take upon themselves a rather diversified role as they are demanded to support new learners in the reception and orientation phase in designing their Individual Learning Agreement and personalised learning path through the allocation of Units of Learning following the individual interviews and assessment from the commission (which is composed of adult educators).

b. “Orientators”

Among the training courses offered to adult educators are the ones provided by ASNOR (*ASsociazione Nazionale ORientatori*, National Orientators Association), a MIUR certified entity that offers, among other services, training courses for educators to become “orientators”.

The professional figure of the orientator stems from the need for individuals to receive personalised counseling and orientation in order to be able to face an increasingly complex and diversified job market. The role of the orientator is mainly thought for human resources professional profiles than for adult educators, but adult educators can access training to become orientators and see their expenses reimbursed, thanks to the certification of ASNOR from the Ministry of Education. Orientation, as defined by ASNOR, consists in consulting through a series of activities aimed at supporting individuals in fundamental transition moments in making informed and forward-looking decisions regarding education, training and career, as well as offering guidance and support in undertaking and pursuing them in a lifelong learning perspective.

Therefore, orientation concerns learning – understood as the choice of education and training paths – and “professional opportunities education”, aimed at approaching and getting acquainted with the job market. The nature of orientation can be summarised in 3 main actions:

- information-gathering and offering on training and occupational opportunities and job market trends;
- orientation support and individual accompanying in planning one’s training and/or professional project;
- orientation counseling through psychological support aimed at encouraging one’s self-empowerment ability and the identification, development and mobilisation of individual competences and skills.

The orientator therefore organises available information and tools in order to present learners with adapted opportunities for their personal inclinations and projects. In fact, the orientator works on two levels: firstly, he/she works on the learner’s attitudes, competences and skills and motivation, and subsequently analyses the available professional and training opportunities in order to find matches that help the learner fulfil his/her aspirations. The orientator supports the learner in identifying their educational and professional objectives and presents him/her with opportunities to fulfil them. He/she does so through activities such as face-to-face meetings, skills and competences assessment, orientation training, support in active job search and job inception (ASNOR).

The orientator conducts a small-scale training with each individual learner, adapting its terms and contents to the needs and aspirations and existing possibilities, and drafting a personal project in order to fulfil the identified objectives. More specifically he/she:

- plans personalised interventions and services based on individual needs and aspirations and job market possibilities;
- develops personalised skills assessment paths in order to understand and analyse strengths and weaknesses of the individual;
- offers orientation services (information, training, consulting, job inception support, etc);

- offers information on available training and professional opportunities;
- offers orientation training aimed at reinforcing individual competences;
- implements orientation consulting paths (both individually and in groups) in support of education, training and professional choices;
- accompanies job inception and support active job search;
- evaluates and assesses through questionnaires and face-to-face meetings the effectiveness of the orientation intervention.

c. “Navigators”

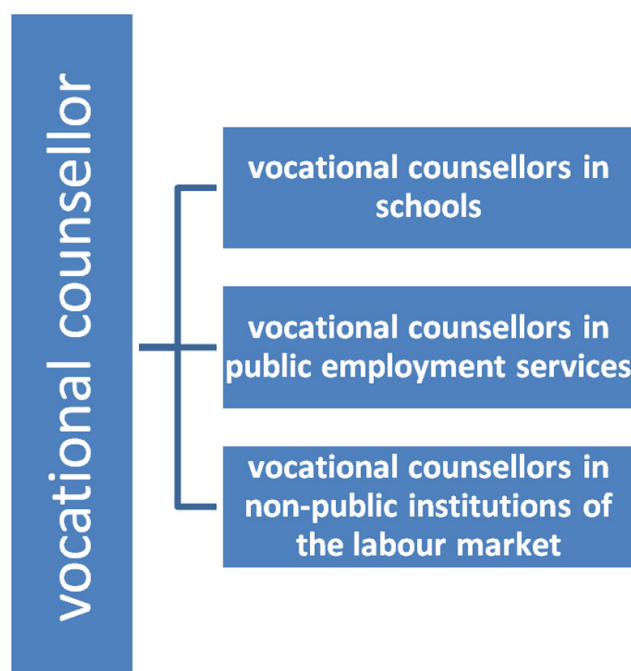
Another relevant professional figure in the framework of this study is the “Navigator”. This position has been recently established by a new legislative provision (*Legge 26/2019 di conversione del Decreto-legge 4/2019 “Disposizioni urgenti in materia di Reddito di Cittadinanza e di Pensioni”*). This new legislation foresees the allocation of a so-called “citizenship revenue”, an economic support granted to those who are unemployed and respond to certain criteria of need. This support is allocated on the condition that the recipient engages to actively look for a job and gives immediate availability. In order to support the beneficiaries of this aid measure, the government has foreseen the institution of the professional figure of the “navigator”, who should play an orientation role and match individual skills and needs to job markets offers and needs, and to training if necessary. Although the figure is still not operative, and not definitive in its prerogatives and functions, the first call has been opened for large scale tests which will take place in the next months. The call defines the “navigators” as an intermediary between the Public Employment Service operators and the beneficiaries of the aid and the prospective employers. They will need to hold a university degree from different possible areas (such as economics, political science, public administration, etc.) as well as knowledge of labour law and job markets, assessed through the tests.

5.1.2 Poland

5.1.2.1 Situation of vocational counsellors in Poland

A vocational counsellor supports people in the choice of profession or direction of education. A Counsellor’s help can be provided in the form of group and individual professional advice, but always personalised, taking into consideration psycho-physical abilities and the life situation of clients. The counsellor working with the client has in mind the needs of the labour market and the opportunities offered by the educational system. The counsellor’s role is to help both in the choice of profession and school, as well as to support people when changing the profession, choosing a field of study or self-employment. The counsellor also equips the client with skills which help in contacts with employers and when looking for a job.

Figure 28: Vocational; counsellors in the system of educational and vocational counselling in Poland (own materials)



Source: Krystyna Mucha

5.1.2.2 Vocational counsellor – qualifications

According to Article 20 of the so-called Deregulation Act,⁷⁷ in 2013 mandatory legal regulations regarding the requirements necessary to take the position of a vocational counsellor employed in employment services have been abolished.

This resulted in greater access to the profession, as well as the ability to match people employed in public employment services, as well as in private labour market institutions with the real tasks and needs of clients.

A vocational counsellor, but also a personal adviser, a career consultant, an education broker, a specialist for professional development, in accordance with the regulations,⁷⁸ are placed in the so-called group 2 of specialists, i.e. a group comprising “occupations requiring a high level of professional knowledge, skills and experience in the areas of: technical, natural, social,

⁷⁷ Act of 13 June 2013 on amending laws regulating the performance of certain professions (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 829)

⁷⁸ Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 7 August 2014 on the classification of professions and specialties for the needs of the labour market and the scope of its application (vol. Journal of Laws of 2018, item 227), Annex to the Regulation.

humanistic and related sciences. Their main tasks are to implement scientific and artistic concepts and theories, to increase the current state of knowledge through research and creation and systematic teaching in this field.”⁷⁹

Universities and higher education institutions offer first and second cycle studies in the field of vocational and personal counselling, as well as postgraduate studies in this area. **Qualifications of teachers** employed as vocational counsellors in the institutions of the educational system have been specified in the regulation of the Minister of National Education.⁸⁰

Depending on the type of school, the position of a vocational counsellor teacher, as a rule, can be occupied by a person who completed second-cycle or uniform Master’s degree studies in career counselling and has got pedagogical qualifications or a person who has got an appropriate level of education for a given type of school/institution and post-graduate studies in the field of vocational counselling, and pedagogical qualifications.

5.1.2.3. Vocational counsellor – the obligation to increase the competences of public employment services

The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment⁸¹ obliges, among others, vocational counsellors, specialists for professional development to improve professional qualifications, “in particular through participation in training using modular training programmes for the employees of public employment services, provided by the minister competent for labour issues”.

Moreover, the Minister of Labour and Social Policy created a legal instrument in the form of a performance-related allowance for improving professional qualifications. Such an allowance may be granted to an employee after the direct superior has assessed the quality and effectiveness of his/her work during the three calendar months immediately preceding the date of the assessment, and after confirming that the employee has improved his/her professional qualifications required at the workplace at least once in 12 months immediately preceding granting the allowance⁸².

⁷⁹ Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 7 August 2014 on the classification of professions and specialties for the needs of the labour market and the scope of its application (vol. Journal of Laws of 2018, item 227), Annex to the Regulation.

⁸⁰ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 1 August 2017 on specific qualifications required of teachers (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1575 as amended), paragraph 21.

⁸¹ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 99b

⁸² Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of May 14, 2014 on the supplement to the remuneration for employees of public employment services and Voluntary Labour Corps (Journal of Laws from 2014, item 640) paragraph 3. 1.

The abovementioned act also specifies the method of financing activities for the promotion of employment and mitigating the effects of unemployment and professional activation, including raising the qualifications of vocational counsellors through the creation of the so-called Labour Fund.

The Labour Fund is a state fund, which can be used by the minister competent for labour issues⁸³. The money from the Labour Fund can be spend for:

- training and studies, including post-graduate studies, of employees of public employment services and Voluntary Labour Corps;
- conferences, seminars, meetings, including international ones, organised by the minister competent for labour issues, in particular for the employees of public employment services and Voluntary Labour Corps⁸⁴.

Planned tasks in the field of increasing the quality of services provided by persons offering vocational counselling, including training, result from the **Regional Action Plans for Employment** prepared by local governments in each voivodship.

As part of the Regional Action Plan for Employment for 2019, the following tasks have been planned for the Mazowieckie voivodship:

- equipping vocational counsellors' workplaces with tools, materials and equipment supporting the provision of vocational counselling services;
- organising meetings aimed at unifying work standards for career counsellors from the centres of the Mazowieckie voivodship, assuring the quality of services, exchange of experience and information;
- coordinating vocational guidance in public employment services in the voivodship by organising instructional meetings for vocational counsellors from district labour offices;
- raising the competences of the employees of the Voivodship Labour Office in Warsaw, as well as vocational counsellors and advisors from district labour offices.

The basic forms of improving qualifications are: training, language courses, postgraduate studies, as well as complementary master's degree studies and doctoral studies.

"The implementation of the above task is based on the training plan, the preparation of which is preceded by the analysis of the training needs of employees. The training plan also includes participation in language courses and postgraduate studies. The remaining forms of upgrading qualifications, that is supplementary master's studies and doctoral studies, are available to the

⁸³ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 103.

⁸⁴ The Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1265 as amended) Article 108 paragraph 1 items 38,38a.

employees after submitting individual applications. Studies are reimbursed from the budget of the office or Labour Fund in an amount depending on the currently held funds.

Tasks concerning the organisation and conducting of training for vocational counsellors employed in district labour offices in the area of the Mazowieckie voivodship are provided in particular by vocational counsellors from the Information and Career Planning Centre at Voivodship Labour Office in Warsaw on the basis of the reported needs and in agreement with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy”⁸⁵.

5.1.2.4 Vocational counsellor in educational institutions - professional development

The key duties of a vocational counsellor in the field of education were defined as striving for full personal development and professional development, in accordance with the school’s needs⁸⁶.

Costs borne by teachers, also employed as vocational counsellors, related to supplementing, and upgrading qualifications and competences may be subsidised.

In accordance with the provisions on subsidising teachers’ professional development⁸⁷ the following activities can be supported:

1. participation of teachers in seminars, conferences, lectures, workshops, training, postgraduate studies and other forms of professional development provided by teacher training institutions, universities and other entities, which statutory tasks include in-service teacher training;
2. participation of teachers in the forms of teacher education conducted by universities and teacher training institutions;
3. supporting schools and facilities, as well as cooperation and self-education networks for teachers, conducted by teacher training centres, psychological and pedagogical centres, including specialist centres and pedagogical libraries⁸⁸.

The obligation to improve competences by vocational counsellors results from the teacher’s career progression path and the procedures for assessing their work.

The teacher, also a vocational counsellor, in the course of achieving further **levels of professional advancement** must: participate in professional development, in particular in the area

⁸⁵ Regional Action Plan for Employment for 2019 for the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, Annex to Resolution No. 359/31/19 of the Masovian Voivodeship Board of March 18, 2019 p.62.

⁸⁶ The Act of January 26, 1982, the Teacher’s Charter (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 967, as amended) Article 6

⁸⁷ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of January 18, 2019 regarding subsidising teachers’ professional development (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 136).

⁸⁸ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of January 18, 2019 regarding subsidising teachers’ professional development (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 136) paragraph 2.

of improving methods and forms of work; develop competences in relation to duties performed; take actions aimed at improving work techniques, including the ability to use information and communication technologies.⁸⁹

The **criteria for assessing teacher's (vocational counsellor's) work** include, among others, expanding knowledge and improving skills related to the work performed and using the acquired knowledge and skills in practice⁹⁰.

5.1.3 Adult Education in England

Due to the variety of adult education programmes available within England and the local area, it can be difficult to identify the correct programmes for an individual's circumstances and encourage the individual to undertake the training.

Information, advice and guidance on adult skills are provided by information systems and Skills Brokers.

5.1.3.1 Information Systems

In England, there is a national inter-connected information system which provide details relating to adult learning programmes.

The National Careers Service provides a website, helpline and webchat to either search for a course or to communicate with a career advisor. It provides help on exploring careers, completing a skills assessment and searching for a course.

This service provides details on courses being delivered by training providers throughout England such as entry requirements, start dates, fees and funding. In addition, learner satisfaction scores and employer satisfaction scores are provided for the training provider.

However, the information provided on each course is completed by the training provider and, as such, the information can be inaccurate or omitted.

In the Liverpool City Region, an Apprenticeship Hub has been created. The Apprenticeship Hub is a collaborative group. It is funded by the European Social Fund through the Education

⁸⁹ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of July 26, 2018 on achieving further levels of professional advancement by teachers (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1574).

⁹⁰ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 29 May 2018 on detailed criteria and procedures for assessing the work of teachers, the scope of information contained in the evaluation card, composition and method of appointing the evaluation team and the procedure of appeal (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1133 as amended)

and Skills Funding Agency and it aims to increase the awareness, number and quality of apprenticeships available to regional residents by supporting and coordinating activities and making apprenticeships work for businesses and individuals.

5.1.3.2 Skills Brokers

On a national basis there is no skill broker service outside of the career advisors discussed in the above section.

Within the Liverpool City Region, there are Skills Brokers who work for the Apprenticeship Hub and Local Enterprise Partnership.

The role of the Skills Brokers is to promote training solutions to various stakeholders across the Liverpool City Region. These include businesses, training providers and adult learners. Furthermore, they work across key intermediaries in the Liverpool City Region such as Growth Sector groups, local government counsellors and local authorities. They are required to establish and build strong working relationships and respond to referrals from local partners and agencies. They undertake targeted and focused visits to understand the current and future skills needs. Conversely, they also support training providers to articulate and promote their skills offer in a way that businesses and residents understand.

The Skills Broker offers independent and impartial professional skills support to stimulate demand for Apprenticeships and wider adult skills provision. Skills Brokers would have a Level 4 Information, Advice & Guidance qualification or a degree. They are expected to have a practical senior operational level experience in engaging businesses and training providers and working with a wide range of agencies to build and develop relationships. They are expected to understand the skills needs of businesses and negotiate with training providers to ensure the training requirements are met in a way that offers value for money for the public purse.

Furthermore, they would have a good understanding of recent education reforms and the Liverpool City Region skills priorities together with knowledge of local sector and business intermediaries. They communicate these reforms to businesses.

They are also required to have experience of financial management, including financial monitoring and control procedures. This enables them to monitor and produce regular progress reports to project manage the project deliverables and associated expenditure. Additionally, they must maintain details on the Customer Relationship Management system and use this to evaluate the impact of the activity.

Skills Brokers are also expected to have a good working knowledge of current policy and legislation relating to employment and skills together with a sound understanding of local government and economic regeneration.

They are required to have good IT skills and be able to utilise technology to aid decision-making and operational management. Skills Brokers should have highly developed communication and influencing skills.

Finally, Skills Brokers have flexible working expectations including evening and weekend meetings⁹¹.

5.1.3.3 Matrix Standard

Ultimately the Skills Broker is the conduit between all adult education stakeholders and they link adult skills to business needs.

The Matrix Standard is a quality standard for organisations to assess and measure an organisation's advice and support services, which ultimately supports individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals.

The Matrix Standard consists of several elements which must be achieved to be awarded the accreditation:

ELEMENT ONE: Leadership & Management

ELEMENT TWO: Resources

ELEMENT THREE: Service Delivery

ELEMENT FOUR: Continuous Quality Improvement

All training providers gaining public funds are expected to achieve this accreditation to demonstrate their ability to provide effective and independent information, advice and guidance to organisations and individuals.

⁹¹ Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Skills Hub Person Specification and Job Description, June 2018

6. MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Shortcomings of the national systems

6.1.1 Italy

The shortcomings of Italian National Adult Education system have been previously analysed in this document. The identified problem areas can be summarised in two main categories: systemic shortcomings and skills and competences gaps of adult educators and counsellors.

- **Systemic**

Systemic shortcomings in Italy include a lack of funds and structures and of specialised personnel. This influences the way that the didactics are implemented and creates a contradiction between a system that desires to be flexible and concentrated on the student, and the reality of a rather fixed structure, which leaves little space to encompass the specifics and needs of adult learners. Moreover, the professional figures of educational and professional counsellors are quite rare and not institutionalised, therefore the system lacks effective orientation and counselling for its students.

- **Skills and competences gap**

As INDIRE's focus groups⁹² with adult educators highlight, educators in Italy suffer from a rather significant skills and competences gap, as they are not specifically trained for teaching adults. Specific professional training and selection for adult educators in the national public system doesn't exist, and adult educators are usually reconverted from high schools, and in-service training is sporadic and often not directly linked to the specifics and needs of the adult student target group. Moreover, adult educators in Italy lack training opportunities in order to acquire the necessary competences and skills to effectively counsel adult learners in learning, training, and/or professional choices, if not on an informal level.

6.1.2 Poland

The analysis of the educational and vocational guidance system should be carried out from two perspectives: a student preparing for the labour market and an adult who wants to be professionally active.

⁹² INDIRE (2018), *Viaggio nell'Istruzione degli Adulti in Italia: alla scoperta di esigenze, problemi e soluzioni*, Istituto Nazionale Documentazione Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa

In both cases, the weakness of consultancy is still cooperation with employers who can provide support both in the area of information about the needs of the labour market, as well as to offer internships and training.

The research also indicates insufficient interest of parents in the professional counselling: “it is parents and students who, on the one hand, put pressure on the school and, on the other, offering cooperation, may be the initiators of changes in the functioning of counselling”⁹³.

Another element affecting the quality of the advisory system for children and young people is the lack of an obligation to employ vocational counsellors in schools and educational centres. Currently, the contents of educational and vocational counselling resulting from the core curriculum are taught by teachers as part of compulsory educational activities. In addition, schools adopt solutions consisting in entrusting the tasks of a vocational counsellor, e.g. to a teacher of other subjects or to a school pedagogue, who have additional qualifications in the field of vocational counselling.

In the adult vocational guidance system, minor importance is given to non-formal education. The proposed offer of formal education for adults is based on the forms and content used in youth education. Adults are not always happy to use such an offer.⁹⁴ The lack of an interesting offer of non-formal adult education is a weakness of the educational and vocational guidance system.

- **Skills and competences gap**

Qualifications to occupy the position of a vocational counsellor in labour market institutions and in schools / centres of the educational system can be obtained first of all during postgraduate studies, i.e. it is treated as complementing qualifications or gaining new ones. It is assumed that a two-semester or, at most, a three-semester cycle of education is sufficient to acquire the competences of a vocational counsellor.

In addition, the classification of occupations⁹⁵ describes the tasks of a vocational counsellor common to a school counsellor and a counsellor working with adults. The role of the above counsellors are different and that is why both the proposed model of training educational and

⁹³ K. Podwójcic, Diagnosis of the state of educational and vocational counselling in lower secondary schools and secondary schools in the relations of school directors and people implementing counselling, IBE, Warszawa 2015, s. 116 <http://produkty.ibe.edu.pl/docs/raporty/ibe-ee-raport-diagnoza-stanu-doradztwa.pdf>

⁹⁴ Faces of non-professional adult education in the ERASMUS + program, benefits from project implementation, FRSE, s. 9. <http://czytelnia.frse.org.pl/oblicza-niezawodowej-edukacji-doroslych-w-programie-erasmusplus-korzysci-z-realizacji-projektow/>

⁹⁵ <http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/bazy-danych/klasyfikacja-zawodow-i-specjalnosci/wyszukiwarka-opisow-zawodow/->

vocational counsellors, as well as a common description of tasks, are a rather weak side of vocational counselling in Poland.

6.1.3 United Kingdom

- **Systemic**

There are two major weaknesses within the UK's system of vocational and educational advisors.

Firstly, Government policy is based upon employer demand for skills. While this would appear to be a sensible approach in that they will be readily supplied with individuals having the appropriate skills to grow the business, businesses are often not best placed to determine future skills demand. In general, businesses are short-term focussed and, as such, focus on short-term skills needs. This leads to future needs not being met and skills gaps appearing. Additionally, businesses' needs are not focussed on the lowest skilled in society and so those people who are furthest from the workforce will tend to become increasingly poorly skilled in comparison to those in or close to the workforce. This approach also disadvantages areas of highest deprivation where there are likely to be fewer employers and this leads to the growing gap in skills and productivity between London and most of the rest of the country. Where there are many employers, employer demand for skills will be greatest and, consequently, where there are areas of economic hardship, employer demand for skills will be lowest. This policy has led to the increasing inequality between skills levels across the whole of the UK. It is clear that Government policy should counter some of the employer demand for skills with a skills strategy that identifies key skills that all citizens should gain.

Secondly, there is a lack of a proactive, central approach to information, advice and guidance on a national basis. While the National Careers Service aims to provide this linkage between skills providers and individuals wishing to gain skills, it is heavily dependent upon accurate information being supplied to the system in a timely manner. In many cases the information provided to this service is not consistent nor accurate with only a limited assessment. The decision as to which skills are required and the most appropriate skills provider is almost solely at the discretion of the individual who is often not skilled in making the most appropriate decision. This leads to a lack of informed and measured approaches to developing an individual's skills.

- **Skills and Competences**

As in the systemic concerns raised above, the skills and competences of skills brokers are directed towards employer-led skills development. This is very short-term focussed and does not take account of skills that may need to be developed for the medium- and long-term. Skills Brokers tend to be focussed on working more closely with employers' immediate needs and

their employees or individuals very close to the workforce, rather than lower skilled individuals requiring much greater development that will not provide immediate results.

6.2 Strengths of the national systems

6.2.1 Italy

The strengths of the Italian National Adult education system lay mainly in its didactic and structure, or at least in the theory of its conception.

- **Systemic**

The systemic strength of the national adult education system in Italy depends mainly upon the shift at policy-level from an idea of quality that is based on “technical” performance (and therefore concentrated on the offer of the system) to one that is measured against the ability of the system to satisfy the needs it addresses (therefore concentrated on the end user). This idea is clearly reflected on the structure that allows – through the afore-mentioned Individual Learning Agreement – for a flexible adaptation of the learning offer to the individual learner’s needs.

- **Skills and competences**

The strengths in terms of skills and competences of adult educators in Italy can be identified mainly in their expertise in the subject matter of their teaching and in their ability to cope with the contradictions of a system which heavily relies on the educators’ competences and skills in order to satisfy the end users’ needs.

6.2.2 Poland

- **Systemic**

As a strong point of the educational and professional counselling system one can consider legislative solutions that clearly describe the tasks of two ministries: the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of National Education in this area.

Another advantage is the method of financing adult vocational activation (e.g. Labour Fund) and making vocational counselling classes obligatory educational classes in schools, which means that they are financed from the state budget within the educational part of the general subsidy transferred to local governments.

It should also be emphasised that advisory services for adults can be provided by non-public entities, such as employment agencies and training institutions.

One of the strengths of the system, within the competences of the Ministry of Education, is the formation from September 1, 2019 of a coherent system of vocational education. The new model of vocational education is based on training in sectoral vocational schools in close cooperation with employers.

- **Skills and competences gap**

As a strong point in the area of competences of vocational counsellors one can consider the rich offer, which enable them further education and improvement.

Many universities offer post-graduate studies in the field of vocational counselling. There is also a wide range of training courses provided by various educational entities that complement the professional competences of vocational counsellors.

Both the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education ensure free system of professional development for vocational counsellors.

Educational and vocational counselling in Poland is gaining importance, mainly due to the constantly changing labour market and the society's strive for economic success, as well as for personal development.

As it has been shown in this chapter, in Poland two ministries deal with vocational counselling: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education.

The state's social policy presumes inter-ministerial cooperation aimed at promoting employment and vocational activation and mitigating the effects of unemployment. The presented solutions, in the context of the role of the educational and vocational counselling system, show that it is a rather complementary system. Various entities are involved in this system, among others: children, youth, unemployed people for whom one of the three help profiles was established.

The system's activities are also secured financially. However, intensive socio-economic development of the state and the challenges that the society faces require constant improvement of the quality of advisory services provided to the client.

The analyses made indicate the necessity of providing career counsellors with competences aimed at delivering youth counselling in schools/centres and separately for people with lower qualifications looking for a job.

There is also a need for professional advisors, whose client is a low-skilled person, to use the possibilities offered by non-formal and informal education.

Deregulation of professions in Poland gives many opportunities to people who do not have qualifications in the sense of formal education. They can choose their professional path, according to their predispositions and skills based on the non-formal education market, which will be recommended intentionally by a professional advisor.

6.2.3 UK

- **Systemic**

As explained previously, the UK's approach to adult skills is employer-led. Employment has many important benefits to wider society such as increased wealth, improved health and reduced crime. As such it is important that any adult skills strategy has the ultimate aim of increasing sustainable employment and improving an individual's earning potential through higher skills. By involving employers in developing skills strategies, the UK is investing in relevant skills for the current marketplace. However, as discussed earlier, this also leads to concerns regarding wider skills and the ability to reverse the economic decline in many parts of the country.

The devolution of the adult skills agenda in many parts of the heavily populated section of the UK has meant that there has been a movement towards more appropriate and linked strategies for adult education. By focussing on smaller, more local skills issues, a more defined system can be implemented.

In the Liverpool City Region, a local Apprenticeship Hub has been created to concentrate efforts at local employers. This provides a more focussed approach for local employers and links to local skills providers.

- **Skills and Competences**

The Liverpool City Region employs Skills Brokers with formal information, advice and guidance qualifications. This is an attempt to develop a network of informed people who can be used to support businesses in identifying suitable routes to develop the skills of their employees and future recruits. These individuals develop relationships with employers and adult skills stakeholders to implement the Liverpool City Region's skills strategy and can communicate educational reform.

6.3 Summary

The report has identified a number of key areas for best practice and areas that need improvement based across each country's experiences.

6.3.1 Balanced Approach between Employer-led and State-imposed

Both Italy and Poland have a more state-imposed adult education system in comparison to the UK. The Italian and Polish adult education system can be criticised for not developing the skills that employers require. However, in contrast, the UK places such a heavy reliance on employer involvement that it can be criticised for short-term skills planning and a lack of focus across all areas of the country.

While it is important to ensure that adults are receiving the skills required by businesses, it is also essential that there is investment in skills that will be required in the medium and long-term across all sectors. Furthermore, by relying upon employers to control the adult education agenda, a skills gap naturally occurs between areas with large numbers of high value employment and areas of deprivation. This means that areas of deprivation, which are in most need of adult skills but have the lowest numbers of employers, are disadvantaged while more prosperous areas with the highest levels of adult skills and many employers are most likely to be impacted positively.

For an adult education system to be effective it must be well-balanced between employer driven skills and state supplied skills. The aim should be to create an adult education system which focuses on medium- and long-term skills that are applicable across all sectors (such as language and maths skills) as much more short-term skills that are often sector-specific.

6.3.2 Legally Enshrined Entitlement

It is important that the adult education system is legally protected to ensure that there is a strong and consistent provision in place. By making adult education a legal obligation, the importance of this training is promoted and government are made responsible for its delivery. Furthermore, this ensures that a budget is provided for this provision.

6.3.3 Personalised

For adult education to be effective, it is essential that it is bespoke for the learner's individual needs. This requires careful analysis of current skills and the development of an individualised Individual Learning Plan. This analysis must be undertaken by someone skilled in adult skills, subject knowledge and employment needs.

6.3.4 Strong Tutor Subject Knowledge

Subject knowledge is a key requirement for adult educators to ensure that the skills being taught are effective. This should be linked to employer needs and state needs to ensure currency of the skills being taught.

6.3.5 Utilising Skills Brokers

Skills brokers can be very effective in linking adults to appropriate training provision and employment opportunities. We found limited effective examples of skills brokers linking all of the stakeholders in an effective adult education system. An effective system should consider the needs of the individual, the state's objectives and the employers' needs. Skills brokers tend to focus on the individual's needs and either the state's needs or the employer's needs.

One interesting model is that of the 'Navigator' which has recently been created in Italy. The Navigator is responsible for working with unemployment offices, the state, employers and individuals to ensure that a well-rounded Individual Learning Plan is formulated.

6.3.6 Regular Training & Professional Development

It is important that there is a formal training programme for people wishing to deliver services to adult education so that they are skilled in working with people with low or no skills. Furthermore, it is essential that they continue to receive regular professional development so that they can improve their skills and maintain their knowledge regarding new developments and information, advice and guidance.

6.3.7 Localised Information, Advice & Guidance

It is essential that there is both a framework of information, advice and guidance and localisation which can be used to quickly identify suitable pathways.

An information, advice and guidance framework such as that provided in the UK by the Matrix Standard gives a defined level of expectation for excellent support which can be compared across different individuals. This framework lays the basis for a consistent approach.

It is also important to ensure that the information, advice and guidance being provided is accurate and timely. This is almost impossible to manage on a large-scale due to the resource required to check the accuracy of any information that has been provided. As such, local institutions should be tasked with managing provision within small geographical locations in a similar manner to the Devolved Authorities in England.

Legal Acts:

1. Ustawa z dnia 26 stycznia 1982 r. Karta Nauczyciela (j.t. Dz. U. z 2018r., poz. 967 z późn. zm.).
2. Ustawa z dnia 13 czerwca 2013 r. o zmianie ustaw regulujących wykonywanie niektórych zawodów (Dz. U. z 2013 r. poz. 829).
3. Ustawa z dnia 20 kwietnia 2004 r. o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy (j. t. Dz. U. z 2018r., poz. 1265 z późn. zm.)
4. Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016r. Prawo oświatowe (j. t. Dz. U. z 2018r., poz.996 z późn. zm.)
5. Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 18 stycznia 2019 r. w sprawie dofinansowania doskonalenia zawodowego nauczycieli (Dz. U. z 2019r., poz. 136).
6. Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 26 lipca 2018 r. w sprawie uzyskiwania stopni awansu zawodowego przez nauczycieli (Dz. U. z 2018r., poz. 1574).
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