# CONCEPT NOTE ON ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION

IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The Concept Note on Adult Secondary Education in the Republic of North Macedonia was adopted by decision no. 13 - 14147/1 by the Minister of Education and Science on 23.11.2022

# CONCEPT NOTE ON
# ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION
## IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Skopje, 2022

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **BDE** | Bureau for Development of Education |
| **VNIL** | Validation of non-formal and informal learning |
| **SSO** | State Statistical Office |
| **SEC** | State Examination Centre |
| **SEI** | State Education Inspectorate |
| **EQF** | European Qualifications Framework |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **ETF** | European Training Foundation |
| **MoES** | Ministry of Education and Science |
| **MQF** | Macedonian Qualifications Framework |
| **NGO** | Non-governmental organisation |
| **NQF** | National qualifications framework |
| **OECD** | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **RVETC** | Regional Vocational Education and Training Centre |
| **ASE** | Adult secondary education |
| **VET** | Vocational education and training |
| **UNDP** | United Nations Development Programme |
| **UNESCO** | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| **AEC** | Adult Education Centre |
| **VETC** | Vocational Education and Training Centre |

**INTRODUCTION:
STATE OF AFFAIRS AND PERSPECTIVES
IN ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Adult education has been recognized internationally as the major driver of social development and economic growth. It plays a crucial role in creating better jobs, raising the quality of life, and promoting the personal development and active citizenship. For these reasons, adult education has come to constitute a political priority, too, for the EU over the last two decades.

The constant technological and information development has increasingly substituted the low-skilled jobs with machines, whereas criteria for entry-level jobs have become increasingly high, requiring more and more specific relevant experiences and certain level of technical and digital skills.[1] This strong technological development has at the same time created many new activities and new job opportunities which require new knowledge and skills. By living in a modern, technological world people have started learning about new technologies and developing various skills outside the formal educational processes. It is now necessary to systemically recognize and upgrade these knowledge and skills people have and use them for the purposes of their personal and professional development. This will allow the citizens to become competent participants in labour exchange and contribute for the economic development of the society. This issue is particularly important in the context of the greatest challenges that humanity is facing right now: climate change, biotechnological innovations, and the ever more pronounced social stratification. For the education system to be able to help the people cope with the challenges and participate efficiently in the ever-changing society, it is necessary to ensure the conditions that will allow the learning to span continuously over one's entire life. For these reasons, the concept of lifelong learning has become a dominant approach in 1990s which raised the lifelong learning to the level of a crucial tool of competitiveness, employability, and economic development in the European Union. Macedonian society can become a competitive one only if it becomes a society that learns, creates, and applies the knowledge. Lifelong learning reduces the social differences and builds the capacities of all people to access the necessary information and public services so as to realize their rights, and it contributes to a greater employability of people coming from all classes of the population – and thus it contributes to a more efficient social inclusion and social cohesion.

The concept of lifelong learning simultaneously led to a shift in our understanding of the concept of adult education. The basic postulates in this concept say that: education is for everybody, it takes place everywhere and it happens throughout entire life, that life is the major source of learning, whereby the learning process itself is more important that the individual subjects. Hence, lifelong learning is understood as a flexible and dynamic approach to learning, whose objective is to improve the people's quality of life and ensure social development. This approach also leads to a significant shift in our understanding of learning. The reality has been accepted that there are several different types of knowledge and several different learning contexts: formal, non-formal and informal, and the necessity has been acknowledged that all learning outcomes should be recognized, regardless of the context. Therefore, the primary focus is placed on the importance of the concept of validation of non-formal and informal

---

[1] Why digital training is so important for young job seekers | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

learning (VNIL). In 2012, the European Commission published a recommendation[2] to all EU Member States and candidate countries to develop a system of validation of prior learning outcomes. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is perceived as an efficient and effective instrument for promoting the adult education process, which is also based on the people's right to have recognition of something they already possess. This approach in education and learning also leads to shifting the focus of these processes: from academic knowledge – the focus has now been placed on competences important for life. This shift emphasized the importance of the concept of key competences.

At the same time, the education system should respond to the same challenge that traditional education faced several decades ago worldwide – becoming elitist. Humanity is facing a basic inequality which is reflected in the inequality of access to quality education for all. Today, in a situation of a high technological development, when advanced tools remain inaccessible to a great number of people, the danger exists that these people will become irrelevant in the highly technological society. This is a far harsher consequence than unemployment itself, that would lead to an unprecedented social stratification.

The crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic underlined these differences in many areas. The pandemic showed us how important is learning, knowledge and skills to be able to adjust to the change. The pandemic also emphasized the importance of online learning and communication, and of one's preparedness to use digital tools and contents. Adult education should necessarily respond to these needs and serve the function of developing the digital competences of people.

The processes and changes described show that secondary education for adults serves a wider function than that of merely acquiring knowledge and skills. The adult education process should provide support to people for their empowerment and socialization in the society. The adult education will have failed its function if it merely satisfies only by creating new opportunities for adults in regard to acquiring professional qualifications through non-formal education, rather, it should strive towards a higher level of empowerment, horizontal and vertical educational and professional mobility, and social inclusion for all people. This is an important transformative role of the adult secondary education system, where the participation of decision-makers in cooperation with companies, as well as of the teaching staff involved in teaching and training of adults is of key importance. The empowering role of adult education is a particularly important for adults found on the margins of the society: the poor, the low-skilled, vulnerable ethnic groups, persons with disabilities, and people in penalty and correctional institutions. In this way, adult education plays an exceptionally important role in preventing delinquency and radicalism, offering a second chance to people at risk. Accomplishing these objectives is an indicator of how successful a society is in achieving its basic functions – to en-

---

[2] Official Journal of the European Union, (December 2012) Council Recommendaton on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, C 398/01, 2012.
http://eur-ex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF

sure social, educational, and economic inclusion for all of its citizens.

This Concept note presents a vision of postulates and mechanisms upon which adult secondary education should develop in the next 10 or so years. The focus is placed on measures and activities that will allow the adults to actively adapt to changes in the society, which will ensure their personal development and an inclusive and cohesive ever changing and learning society..

# INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS, INITIATIVES AND EXPERIENCES

Since mid-1990s[3], education has been in the center of European policy making for creating economic perspectives based on cooperation and mobility. The European Union, with the recommendations from 2000, placed the focus on lifelong learning, and with the 2002 Copenhagen Declaration, qualifications framework and validation of competences previously acquired in the non-formal and informal learning process have become core elements of the European education policies. Adult education and lifelong learning are in the core of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and they become particularly important in the highly technological world of the 21st century. The European Employment Strategy, of the EU Council, in 2000, has defined the lifelong learning as a continuous process of learning regardless of the context, which includes all forms of learning that lead to development of competences. In other words, lifelong learning includes all form of teaching and learning that may take place in everyday life: formal, non-formal and informal. The 2000 "Lifelong Learning Memorandum" calls teaching and learning methods to be developed in a way to  ensure that "adult learning opportunities are as close and familiar as possible to the adults".

The UN "Sustainable Development Agenda 2030" and the UNESCO Incheon Declaration "Education 2030", both from 2015, recommend that all people, regardless of their sex, age, ethnic community, persons with disabilities and members of other vulnerable categories should have access to lifelong learning in order to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them actively and fully to participate in social processes. This is one of the ways to decrease the risks of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion.

Assessing the importance of adult education, UNESCO periodically published a Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), and RNM has participated in all 4 studies conducted so far. The 2019 GRALE 4[4]  recommends that countries should invest more efforts in developing the VNIL system, in particular for members of groups and communities in risk of exclusion. Pursuant to the 2012 recommendations[5], in the latest report UNESCO's recommendations are upgraded in order to provide, among others, opportunities for adults to acquire qualifications from the formal education by implementing the VNIL measures.

The 2016 "EU Council Recommendations on Upskilling Pathways"[6], building on the 2006 "Recommendations on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning"[7], recommends that low-skilled persons should be allowed to progress towards achieving qualifications levels 3 and 4 as per the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which is equivalent to levels 3 and 4 of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF).

---

[3] Delors, J. et al. (1996). Learning: The treasure within. Paris: UNESCO.
[4] UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2019). Global Report on Adult Learning and Education: Participation, Equity and Inclusion. UNESCO
[5] UIL (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning), 'UNESCO guidelines for the recognition, validation and accreditation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning', UIL, Hamburg, 2012.
https:// unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000216360
[6] Official Journal of the European Union (2016). Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults. Council of the European Union
[7] Official Bulletin of the European Union, (2006), Recommendations of the European Parliament and Council of Europe on the Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning.

The EU Strategic Framework – Education & Training 2020 (ET2020)[8] defines four targets of the adult education and training:

- Lifelong learning and mobility to become reality

- Quality and efficiency of adult education and training to be improved

- Equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship to be promoted (through adult education measures)

- Creativity and innovation to be enhanced, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

In order to improve the conditions for vocational education and training, with the 2009 Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council, the EU designed a tool which set the standards, descriptors, and indicators for quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET). This tool is a guideline for developing a quality assurance system – which is also completely applicable in the adult education.

In the area of digitalization, in September 2020, EU adopted the revised Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)[9]. The Action Plan also serves the function of achieving the EU objective of developing a European Education Area by 2025. In this line, to support the cooperation and lifelong learning, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) was developed.

In November 2020, EU adopted two important documents in the area of vocational education and training. The line ministries for education and training adopted the "Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies" (The Osnabrück Declaration 2020)[10], which defines and operationalises the main objectives. Related to this Declaration, in the same period, the EU Council adopted the "Recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience"[11]. The document includes guidelines for implementation on national level and specific recommendations grouped in six topics:

1. Vocational education and training (VET) is agile and is adapting to labour market changes;

2. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET, whereby it is particularly recommended to the candidates to enable flexible and modular pathways for developing competences based on recognition and validation of prior non-formal and informal learning outcomes;

---

[8] Available at: https://eaea.org/our-work/influencing-policy/monitoring-policies/european-agenda-for-adult-learning/
[9] https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/deap-swd-sept2020_en.pdf
  https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/deap-communication-sept2020_en.pdf
[10] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/osnabrueck_declaration_eu2020.pdf
[11] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29

3. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for the digital and green transitions;

4. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills;

5. VET promotes equal opportunities;

6. VET is underpinned by a quality assurance culture.

# International experiences and good practices with VNIL

Based on the recommendations by the European Commission, and under the supervision of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group, EU Member States and candidate countries develop their own VNIL systems. These processes are supported by the European Training Foundation (ETF), whose mandate also includes compiling an Inventory[12] of the progress made in setting up the VNIL systems.

International experiences from a number of countries testify to the good practices in implementing the VNIL measures. In Finland, validation measures have been implemented sine 1970s, and have contributed to the remarkable progress the country has made in both education and economy.

In 2001, Portugal set up its national system for recognizing the prior learning (analogous to VNIL).[13] The process led to people obtaining educational or vocational qualifications – at the level of primary or secondary education. In 2005, the "New Opportunities" programme was introduced allowing one million Portuguese people to acquire certain level of qualification. 90 centers were established to implement the validation, and in 2013 they were transformed into "Educational and Professional Qualifications Centers".

In France, the VNIL system has been in place since 2002. The system allows any qualification to be obtained from the national qualifications base (framework) by way of validation.

The legal framework in Slovenia provides for validation of non-formal and informal learning to take place at any level of education.[14] This country's approach is such that it has no single in-

---

[12] https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_North_Macedonia.pdf
[13] Doutor C., & Lucio-Villegas E. (2014). From Adult Education to Emancipation: Adult education and emancipation at crossroads of tensions and reconfigurations. Bo: Local Change, Social Actions and Adult Learning: Challenges and Responses. Proceedings. Lisbon: ESREA
[14] Source:https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-74_en#ValidationNonFormalInformalLearning

stitution or a single framework to implement the validation procedures, rather, different tasks and roles have been distributed among the institutions which have already been involved in the lifelong learning. On a central level, the main decisions are taken by the ministries in charge of education and of qualification standards, while the national examination center is responsible for preparing the grading procedures. The Slovenian Adult Education Centre is responsible for training the advisors and assessors (for the validation), while the National Vocational Education and Training Centre is responsible for the qualification system in vocational education and training.

# ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION
# IN RNM

# Regulation and institutions relevant for the adult secondary education

Adult secondary education (ASE) is an integral part of the single education system in the country. It is principally regulated within the Law on Adult Education, but various aspects of ASE have also been regulated within the Law on the Macedonian Qualifications Framework, the Law on Vocational Education and Training, the Law on Secondary Education, and the Law on the Bureau for Development of Education.

Under the 2008 Law on Adult Education, adult education covers the formal, non-formal and informal learning, and any person older than 15, which also meets the other requirements stipulated in the programme, can participate in the adult education programmes. The Law provides that the Adult Education Centre (AEC) is, inter alia, responsible for:

- preparing the curricula for the primary and the secondary general and vocational education of adults, verifying the adult education programmes, developing a model of publicly valid adult education programmes,

- proposing arrangements for improving the links between the formal and non-formal education.

The 2013 Law on the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF) (as amended in 2016) has defined that this framework should serve as an instrument for developing, classifying, identifying, and recognizing the acquired qualifications based on the learning outcomes. The framework constitutes a mandatory national standard which regulates the acquisition and application of qualifications in RNM. It makes the qualifications clearer and easier to understand, by comparing them with different countries and education systems in Europe and has set two main objectives: to promote and ensure mobility, and to facilitate the lifelong learning. In defining the qualifications, MQF uses the concepts of key competences and VNIL. According to the Global Inventory of CEDEFOP, ETF and UNESCO[15], national qualifications frameworks should make the qualifications visible and help the citizens be informed about them. The importance of VNIL in the context of acquiring qualifications is underpinned with the fact that by referencing the MQF in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) the country has committed to develop the VNIL system, and the EQF Advisory Group has explicitly charged the country to report on the progress made in setting up the VNIL system.

---

[15] Source: CEDEFOP, European Training Foundation, UNESCO and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. 2019. Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks 2019, Volume I: Thematic chapters. Available at: http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/recognitionvalidation-accreditation/global-inventory-regional-and-national

Under the 2006 Law on Vocational Education and Training (as amended by 2019), the regular secondary education is implemented through the curricula for MQF level 2 -vocational capacity building, MQF level 3- vocational education for an occupation, and MQF level 4- technical education. According to this law, adult education can be implemented in the facilities for vocational education and training as an integral part of the lifelong learning, which connects the individual segments and forms of education into a single system.

The 1995 Law on Secondary Education (LSE) (with several amendments till 2016) envisages that "three-year programmes for vocational capacity building and vocational education can be also delivered in adult education facilities but only for the part-time students", and it does not envisage for the establishment of secondary schools for adults. Persons aged 17 may engage in part-time secondary education in mainstream secondary schools, which is then understood as "education which these persons acquire through self-education, by taking exams according and as per certain secondary school curricula". The Vocational Education and Training Centre oversees preparing the teaching programmes, which are then subject to opinion of the Bureau for Development of Education, as an institution competent to propose the secondary education curricula to the MoES.

In addition to the legal framework, adult secondary education is stated in a number of other strategic documents: Education Strategy 2018-25, Adult Education Strategy 2017-21, Concept Note on the Inclusive Education. In 2015, upon initiative from AEC, and in cooperation with MoES and UNDP, the Concept Note on Adult Primary Education was developed based on the concepts of key competences, learning outcomes and VNIL. To operationalise it, experimental subject-based curricula were developed with learning outcomes equivalent to those of the full-time primary education.

The specified strategic documents also stipulate the possibility of educational qualifications to be acquired through VNIL. On an official and institutional level, the country has been implementing a number of activities for setting up a VNIL system since 2014. In cooperation with the EU Education and Training Foundation (ETF), AEC and MoES developed the VNIL Process Roadmap and specific guidelines for the VNIL stages. In 2018, the first RNM Inventory was prepared for CEDEFOP, reflecting the progress in setting up the VNIL system.

### Challenges

From the legal framework, it can be concluded, that adults can pursue their secondary education only with the status of part-time students. However, the measures available to them are inflexible, without opportunities for quality teaching, training, and acquiring relevant competences. These measures fail to take an account of the competences' adults may have already acquired. The legal framework needs to be harmonized and reformed towards incorporating the modern tendencies in adult education, so as to establish a system based on the concepts of key competences and learning outcomes, which also include a mechanism for validation of prior learning outcomes, regardless this prior learning was acquired and whether it was acquired formally, non-formally or informally, in the country or abroad. This will ensure acquisition of both vocational and educational qualifications by adults, greater mobility on the labour market,

active citizen participation in the social processes, and an improved social inclusion and cohesion. participation in the social processes, and an improved social inclusion and cohesion.

# State of affairs with adult secondary education in RNM

At the time of developing this Concept Note, the 2021 Census data had not been processed and published yet, so we could not have a precise insight into the educational structure of the RNM population. According to the SSO data, in September 2021, 135.605 persons were registered as unemployed; of these, 76.458 (40.419 women) had completed only primary education or had no education.  More than half of the unemployed population were people aged 25 to 49. 13.202 people had incomplete secondary education; and 34.214 had completed the secondary education. There is a possibility that this overview of unemployed people fails to consider a significant number of unregistered citizens, meaning that these indicators could be far less favorable.

The EU Eurydice Report 2015-20[16] on the population aged 25-64, provides information about RNM that:

- 28.4% of this population are people without secondary education level qualifications – which is among highest rates compared to other countries in the report

- A staggering 56% have low or no digital skills – a largest share compared to other European countries

- Only 2.8% of these people had participated or had been involved in any form of training or coaching in the month before the research – falling far behind the average 30% of the Scandinavian countries

- Only 0.2% of adults aged 25-64 have acquired MQF levels 3 and 4 qualifications during their mature age (beyond 25 years of age) – which is the lowest share in Europe

- 73% of people aged 25-64 who were not involved in any education and training had reported that they do not even wish to be involved! This share among people with the lowest level of qualifications is even 90%, and as many as 99% of them had not even bothered to seek information about education and training opportunities in the course of the previous year.

---

[16] European Education and Culture Executive Agency, (2021). Adult education and training in Europe: Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. doi:10.2797/788535

These data are not based on Census information, rather, they represent estimations made by relevant institutions. This allows to suggest that the indicators for the participation of adults in education and training may be even less favorable. For example, this report cites an information from 2018, that VNIL is implemented in at least one sector of education and training, and that 2% of people of this age had received VNIL counselling – information that should be taken carefully, considering the fact that the VNIL system is still in its piloting stage with experimental programmes, and has not yet been established by law.

Globally taken, the same report shows that the majority of strategic documents adopted by countries in relation to adult education are referring to development of skills and qualifications, VNIL, digital competences and supporting social inclusion.

Our country does not have publicly available data as to how many adults have been engaged in secondary education. According to SSO data, in 2018/19 (being the last available report in this category), 1.961 people – including 788 women – have completed their secondary education going part-time, however, no data exist to reflect their age structure. So, it is possible that some of these people are actually young people aged 17 or slightly more, who have recently exceeded the full-time schooling age, which is why they had to complete their secondary education going part-time, that is, these could be people who are not older than 25, which is the age category typically considered in adult statistics. Also, there are not data to show the share of people among these numbers who had no secondary education at all, as well as people who had completed their secondary education, but had gone part-time pursuing another educational qualification.

A joint report by CEDEFOP, ETF and the UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning[17] indicates that 75% of the surveyed adults had negative experiences with education – being a factor that discourages them from taking on adult education. Many do not wish to participate in adult learning activities because they do not see the need for that. The costs of the training are among the most frequent barriers. For 25% of men and for twice as many, 50%, of women, family obligations are one of the major barriers preventing them from pursuing adult education.

 Generally taken, the level of education of the population in RNM is unsatisfactory. The main reasons include early dropping out and unequal access to quality education. Members of marginalized groups have been particularly affected. Many studies have shown that the categories of people who are the most deprived from the access to quality education are adults from vulnerable ethnic communities, persons with disabilities and the people from penalty and correctional institutions.

---

[17] CEDEFOP, European Training Foundation, UNESCO and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. 2019. Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks 2019, Volume I: Thematic chapters. Available at: http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/recognitionvalidation-accreditation/global-inventory-regional-and-national

Education of inmates should receive equal attention as education of other vulnerable groups. This implies both a right and an investment. The right to education of people in penalty and correctional institutions has been regulated with many international acts as early as 1955; they have been enhanced on numerous occasions, including the last revision made by the UN in 2015 where a set of recommendations named "The Mandela Rules"[18] were introduced. They stipulate that inmates have the right to education, vocational training, and that their education should be integrated in the education system of the country – with the idea that, once serving the term is over, the convicts can resume their education without any barriers. They also stipulate that education of illiterate people in prisons and of young prisoners should be made mandatory. Education brings benefits for convicts, but also for the penally and correctional institutions and for the society as a whole. Learning vocational skills and thus being provided with job opportunities reduce the risk of repeating the criminal offences, but also these actions contribute to the order and safety in the penalty and correctional institutions[19]. Higher levels of inmates' education go hand in hand with lower rates of recidivism, and greater employment opportunities. Education in penalty and correctional institutions is exceptionally important also for preventing fundamentalism and radical extremism. For these reasons, many countries allocate serious attention and resources to their education in penalty and correctional institutions. In some Latin American and Caribbean countries, 70% of inmates attend a formal education programme.

In the context of education in penalty and correctional institutions, at the initiative of the Directorate for Execution of Sanctions and MoES, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided assistance in institutionalizing the vocational training and education as part of the system of penalty and correctional institutions. Between 2016 and 2020:

- a training was implemented in 5 penalty and correctional institutions (the Prison Idrizovo – the Male and Female Wards, the Prison Štip, the Prison Prilep, the Prison Kumanovo and the Prison Skopje)

- the training was delivered by 7 vocational secondary schools

- 312 convicts attended 8 different training programmes to acquire vocational qualifications.

As regards to the training participants, some 38% of them were under 29 years of age. Majority of the inmates had not completed their primary education, and some 50% of the inmates who attended the vocational training had completed their primary education but had no additional qualifications.

---

[18] UNODC. (2015). The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). Vienna, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
[19] UNODC. (2017). Roadmap for the Development of Prison-based Rehabilitation Programmes. Vienna, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (Criminal Justice Handbook Series.)

# The need for a new concept for the adult secondary education

The fast technological development and the constant changes in economy and society demand inclusive, flexible, and progressive education systems. The findings of the state of affair of adult secondary education in RNM indicate that the existing ASE system and measures are ineffective, failing to provide significant value to skilling of adults, and failing to respond significantly to their needs and the needs of the society. A large share of the working population in the country, which could and should be the major contributor to the social and economic development, is either unskilled or low-skilled. Lack of education, taken in the long run, creates further lack in education. It often leads to poverty, and poverty generates further and larger poverty. Therefore, timely and efficient systemic measures are required to prevent this tendency of regression on both individual and social levels.

The described situation underlines the need and the justification of designing a new conceptual guidance for adult secondary education. It is necessary to engage in an approach that will create the conditions for quality lifelong learning, for inclusive and efficient adult secondary education. It is necessary to have an education system that will provide the relevant qualifications to adults but will also ensure their empowerment and socialization. Conceptualized in such a way, the adult secondary education will significantly contribute to social equality and equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship.

**THE CONCEPT OF ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION IN RNM: GROUNDS, STANDARDS AND MEASURES**

The adult secondary education system should achieve the stipulated functions, relying on certain principles and national standards. The standards will be achieved by implementing the defined curricula and by applying the corresponding measures and recommendations regarding the teaching, grading, quality assurance and advanced relevant use of digital tools. To achieve the objectives, the process should receive support from the relevant stakeholders, policy makers, key institutions, economic factors, non-governmental sector, and most of all, from the appropriately prepared teaching staff.

# FUNCTIONS AND PRINCIPLES
# OF ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION

The main function of the adult secondary education is to support the personal and professional development of citizens and the development of the economy. In this, the measures for adult secondary education must not only serve the function of satisfying the demands of the labour market, rather, they should also ensure the empowerment and social inclusion of citizens.

Adult secondary education should prepare the adults to cope with the ever-changing society and technology, and the challenges they bring. It should help the adults face the changing economy, where many jobs are closed down, many disappear, but at the same time, many new jobs, that have never existed before, emerged. Adults should be prepared to manage those changes constructively and use them as an opportunity for a prosperous future. Adult secondary education should encourage the people to build on their skills and develop a proactive and entrepreneurial attitude to apply their skills in the different professional and private contexts.

The basic principles on which the adult secondary education concept should be built on derive from the humanist and enlightening traditions. These include essential involvement of all adults in a quality lifelong learning, sensitivity to the needs of adults coming from vulnerable groups, gender equality, flexibility, fairness, relevance, and applicability of the learning.

Inclusive, gender-equal and fair adult secondary education will make sure that geographic, language, ethnic, gender or age differences do not pose a barrier for people to access the existing measures. The relevant adult secondary education will incorporate the experiential learning based on key competences.

It is exceptionally important to build confidence among people in order the adult secondary education to be successful. With no trust that the education process will teach someone something new and more, that it is worth investing time in education, and that the specific level of education will truly provide certain competences – the education system will be doomed to failure.

# Recognising the prior learning, knowledge and skills in the context of lifelong learning

The key mechanism in adult secondary education is validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL), as a mechanism for recognizing the competences and qualifications which adults have acquired earlier in their lives. VNIL reflects all the principles of adult secondary education: making it accessible, fair, relevant, flexible, experiential, and problem-solving oriented. The concept of lifelong learning essentially becomes identified as experiential learning of people, regardless of whether they acquired it in the process of formal, non-formal or informal learning. It is exactly from this understanding of lifelong learning that the EU Council recommendations from 2012[20] derive, calling for the recognition of all competences and qualifications acquired through experiential learning, that is, through non-formal and informal learning. These recommendations urge the EU Member States and candidate countries to implement national measures by 2018 for introducing national VNIL systems, which includes, inter alia, connections with the MQF, setting up a VNIL information and guidance system, quality assurance measures, as well as provision of training for VNIL practitioners.

This approach is essentially different from the current form of part-time adult secondary education. The VNIL mechanism is based on respecting the right of individuals to have their competences which they actually possess recognized. At the same time, it works in the interest of the society, as this is the way in which citizens could skillfully join the labour market and contribute to the economic growth. Linking the VNIL with educational and vocational qualifications in a National Qualifications Framework allows for horizontal and vertical mobility of adults throughout their educational and professional perspectives.

---

[20] Official Journal of the European Union, (December 2012) Council Recommendaton on the validation of non-formal and informal learning,  C 398/01, 2012,
http://eur-ex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF

**EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS:
KEY COMPETENCES AND
LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Application of the concept of learning outcomes is firmly incorporated in European education and training policies and practices. Neglecting this approach typically leads to poorer results from education. Learning outcomes are expected to be derived from the national standards for educational achievements– built on key competences and correlated to MQF qualification standards. In this sense, learning outcomes play the role of building blocks in any educational programme. At the same time, they serve as tools for teachers to implement the programme and are a transparent roadmap for candidates as to which knowledge, skills, and attitudes they are expected to achieve and demonstrate so as to acquire the relevant MQF educational qualifications.

According to the Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council, key competences, being the basis for educational programmes, also become the grounds for quality education development, which will ensure the relevant educational and social inclusion of all citizens. In the context of adult secondary education, key competences have been defined as follows:

1.  Competence for communication in a mother (first) tongue: the ability of adults to correctly and appropriately, orally and in writing, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feeling, attitudes, and facts; to use verbal materials in printed or digital form in everyday life and in professional contexts; as well as language interaction in different social situations at work, in the education process, or in private life.

2.  Competence for communication in foreign languages: the basic ability of adults to communicate in another language (or in other languages) and to have skills for intercultural understanding; to use basic verbal materials in other languages in printed or digital form in everyday life and in professional contexts.

3.  Mathematical competence and competence in natural sciences and technology: the ability of adults to develop and apply mathematical reasoning to problem solving in everyday life. Competence in natural sciences and technology refers to the ability to apply the knowledge based on scientific facts and to apply the technological achievements in explaining the events and phenomena in nature, as well as in the everyday private and professional contexts.

4.  Digital competence: the ability of adults to safely, actively, and critically use the information technology and digital tools in their everyday private and professional contexts, and the basic ability to assimilate the fast digital technological changes for a more efficient application of digital technologies.

5.  Competence for learning for a personal development: the ability of adults to use different forms of learning for their personal and social development; the ability to organize their own learning and persevere in their own learning; to efficiently manage the time and information both when learning independently or in a group. It includes the ability of adults to find and use information necessary for problem solving and dealing with tasks in their everyday private and professional contexts.

6.  Social and citizenship competence: the ability of adults to actively, efficiently, and constructively participate in social and professional processes in a multicultural society. It includes

the ability of adults to identify and differentiate the important social, economic, and political concept, and to develop personal, interpersonal, and intercultural skills for active and democratic citizenship.

7. Initiative and entrepreneurship competence: it refers to the development of positive attitudes and initiatives by adults to develop ideas for realizing their own capacities in professional - business - context; skills and proactive attitudes to take actions for realizing their own ideas; the ability to plan their own objectives and to monitor the plans for their realization; and ability to take risks rationally for implementing the business concepts.

8. Competence for cultural and artistic expression: it includes the awareness of one's own culture and of the local, national, and European cultural heritage; and the ability of adults to creatively express their ideas, experiences, and emotions through different media, including the performing arts, music, literature, and visual arts.

Learning based on key competences, in addition to developing the learning acquisition component, also develops the other two components of mental activities: these are the meta components of problem solving and decision making, as well as performative components. In this way, conditions are created to develop all three cognitive skills: analytical, creative, and practical.

The approach based on learning outcomes and key competences allows the adults to develop the ones skill that is now imposed as a priority skill in the world of fast technological changes, and this is the skill for adapting to change. The constant and fast changes in the technological world are particularly strongly reflected on the form and the content of professional competences in all sectors. Qualification standards and learning outcomes expected from the curricula should necessarily be flexible and provide the capacity for fast assimilation of novelties and changes. At the same time, they should be sensitive and include relevant indicators for identifying the modern technological competences of adults which they have acquired non-formally or informally.

**ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULA**

The adult secondary education curricula are based on key competences translated into national standards and on expected learning outcomes deriving from them. Key competences are incorporated across all curricula. Depending on the aspects they refer to, certain key competences will be incorporated in several teaching programmes (subjects), and at the same time, several subjects may include learning outcomes for the same key competences. Curricula should reflect the interrelation between phenomena studied in individual subjects. Therefore, the learning contents belonging to different, yet close subjects, should become interrelated by integrating the topics which discuss the same or similar phenomena. This approach corresponds to the experiential adult learning, and to their life experiences, and it allows for an integrated perception of learning contents which concern complex concepts of which they already have certain experiences. Table 1 shows which key competences can be covered with ASE programmes as per each subject-based curriculum from the mainstream secondary education.

Table 1: Correlation of subject-based curricula with key competences

| Subjects in the mainstream secondary education | Key competences covered with the ASE subject-based curriculum |
|---|---|
| Macedonian / Albanian / Turkish language and literature | • Communication in mother tongue<br>• Social and citizenship competence<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Digital competence |
| Foreign language | • Communication in foreign language<br>• Social and citizenship competence<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Digital competence |
| Mathematics | • Mathematical competence and basic competence in natural sciences and technology<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Digital competence |
| Physics | • Mathematical competence and basic competence in natural sciences and technology<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Digital competence |
| Biology | • Mathematical competence and competences in natural sciences and technology<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Digital competence |
| Chemistry | • Mathematical competence and competences in natural sciences and technology<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Digital competence |
| Vocational / technical subjects | • Mathematical competence and competences in natural sciences and technology<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Digital competence<br>• Learning for personal development competence |

| Subject | Competences |
|---|---|
| Geography | • Mathematical competence and competences in natural sciences and technology<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Social and citizenship competence<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Digital competence |
| History | • Social and citizenship competence<br>• Competence for cultural and artistic expression<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Digital competence |
| Informatics / programming languages | • Digital competence<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Social and citizenship competence |
| Philosophy / Ethics / Logics | • Social and citizenship competence<br>• Competence for cultural and artistic expression |
| Sociology / Civil Education | • Social and citizenship competence<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Competence for cultural and artistic expression |
| Pedagogy | • Social and citizenship competence<br>• Competence for cultural and artistic expression |
| Psychology | • Social and citizenship competence<br>• Competence for cultural and artistic expression |
| Law | • Social and citizenship competence<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship |
| Economy / Business and Entrepreneurship / Management | • Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Social and citizenship competence<br>• Digital competence |
| Visual / Music / Dramatic Arts | • Competence for cultural and artistic expression<br>• Social and citizenship competence<br>• Learning for personal development competence<br>• Initiative and entrepreneurship<br>• Digital competence |

The ASE National Standards are equivalent to the national standards for the mainstream formal secondary education. Therefore, it has been foreseen to develop different curricula for the general and for the vocational adult secondary education, which will be developed in accordance with the plans and programmes for the mainstream secondary education.

Since the anticipated learning outcomes which are expected to be achieved from the curricula for the general and for the vocational adult secondary education are equivalent to the standards for the mainstream secondary education and training, by completing the programmes, adult persons will acquire educational qualification as per the MQF levels 2, 3 or 4 and will receive a public document or a diploma for the corresponding level:

• MQF level 2- vocational ability, by completing the programme equivalent to the 2-year programme for vocational capacity building;

• diploma for vocational education for an occupation, by completing the programme equivalent to the 3-years programme of vocational education for an occupation; and

• diploma for MQF level 4 -technician, by completing the programme equivalent to the 4-year programme for technical education.

There are crucial differences in the approach and the processes by which adolescents and adults achieve the learning outcomes from the teaching plans. Life positions and life experiences of adults, who have experientially acquired a range of competences, render the form of fixed course load per teaching plan, used in the mainstream secondary education, inapplicable to adult education. Adhering to a fixed course load of instruction per week or per year is inadequate for adult education, where the anticipated learning outcomes can be acquired and confirmed by applying the VNIL measures. The dynamic of the educational process and the required course load of teaching are conditioned by the level of previously acquired competences by each individual adult candidate. This level is identified through the assessment taking place in the course of the validation. Based on this assessment, a personalized work plan is designed for adult candidates – which includes flexible and adaptable course load, which is reacquired to teach the candidate above the level identified with the assessment. This means that different adults, depending on their abilities and life circumstances, will acquire the anticipated learning outcomes and the necessary competences at different pace and with different dynamics.

Teaching plans for occupations within the group of regulated professions – and the method of their implementation – are developed and approved by involving the representatives of professional organizations pertaining to a given profession, that is, vocational/professional chambers and chamber associations. This applies not only in the phase of organizing the VNIL but also in the phase of setting up evaluation and certification commissions as part of the VNIL, and for any form of examination.

Each teaching plan which forms part of the vocational education, be it for 2-year, 3-year or 4-year education, consists of two clusters, that is, two groups of teaching programmes (subjects): 1. general education subjects, and 2. vocational education subjects, which also includes the prac-

tical training. For each occupation, adult teaching programmes are developed for the cluster of general education subjects, with learning outcomes equivalent to the vocational education teaching programmes for that occupation. This set of general education subjects would be used in all institutions where ASE will be implemented, for all qualifications and occupation as part of the profession. If the teaching plans overlap, certain general education subjects may be used as part of several occupations.

The teaching programmes from the vocational cluster of a particular occupation are developed in compliance with the MQF qualification standards for that occupation and adequate to the level of educational qualification.

In the next stage of operationalization of the Concept Note for Adult Secondary Education, Operational Teaching Programmes for ASE should be developed, with learning outcomes equivalent to the national standards. These programmes should include detailed learning outcomes, so that they can serve the adults as guidelines in the process of acquiring and validating the competences, but also to the ASE staff, primarily in the VNIL stages – as a common platform for both teachers and candidates. In this way, the programmes will transparently show to adults which competences are expected from them, that is, which knowledge, skills, and attitudes they are expected to possess and demonstrate so as to acquire a corresponding educational qualification. These programmes should be clearly understandable to adult candidates, so that they can use them as didactic guidelines which will help them make their own initial personal assessment as to which competences they probably already have, and which knowledge, skills, and attitudes they will have to develop additionally so as to acquire a specific educational qualification they are interested in. Conceptualized like this, the programmes will have a strong motivational effect on the potential adult candidate to join ASE, because it will be easier for them to visualize the final objective of this process and the gradual steps on the way.

Teaching programmes for adult vocational education should be modular, harmonized with the MQF qualification standards. Modularity of programs will allow the candidates to achieve horizontal mobility through various qualifications that have the same or related/similar modules as part of the standard, and also will facilitate the vertical mobility across the qualification levels thanks to the already covered modules.

In the context of developing digital competences, teaching programmes should be developed and made available to adult candidates in a digital form.

# TEACHING IN ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION

Teaching knowledge, skills, and attitudes to adults, which are necessary to acquire a specific qualification, is the key aspect of adult secondary education. Teaching can strongly motivate the adults but at the same way teaching inappropriateness can demotivate them even more to participate in the process. Teaching should be related to the experiential learning acquired in various areas of life and should be stimulating. Teaching should reflect the principles of adult secondary education in the sense of encouraging the learning for personal development and lifelong learning based on candidates' prior experiences and designed in a way to pose a challenge for achieving higher and realistically attainable levels of competences; it should encourage learning through research within the topics discussed, as well as active approach to finding information and resources necessary for completing a task.

For teaching purposes, teachers of the general education subjects and of the vocational education subject should cooperate and jointly design the structure and the steps of individual teaching programmes – with an ultimate objective to allow the candidates to achieve the expected learning outcomes in a rational way. This can be achieved by general and vocational subject teachers jointly defining the steps and learning outcomes. For example: the teaching of a vocational subject should include elements of mathematical operations, working with and processing data, tabular and graphic representations, application of adequate knowledge and skills from natural or social sciences, application of skills from the area of language, culture etc. The teaching and training for vocational competences should be based on work experiences and principles of dual education, in cooperation with corresponding companies.

Teaching should rely on and encourage the use of digital tools and information technology. The programmes should make it possible for adults to be in interactive online communication with the contents, which will allow them to engage in a time which suits them best and to adapt the learning to their own free time; or to practice the programmes during working hours and while doing the professional activities. In this way, the programmes would be available for consideration to all potential candidates, thus achieving greater efficiency and flexibility in teaching, in a situation when providing the teaching staff for adults may be one of the major problems from the aspect of resources and logistics. This will provide significant savings from the aspect of engaging the teaching staff. In any case, teaching face to face, with physical presence, remains one of the most influential positive factors in this process, however, it will be reduced to the necessary quantum. In the context of connecting the contents from different subjects and in the spirit of experiential learning, the staff involved in a specific group of subjects may make assessments as to how to organize the teaching periods for adult candidates in a way that will ensure integration of contents from related subjects. The teaching of subjects from the same group of sciences or arts may be organized in connected blocks, followed up by an interdisciplinary approach in evaluating or grading the candidates' competences.

**GRADING IN ADULT
SECONDARY EDUCATION**

The Concept Note on Adult Secondary Education envisages application of a development-oriented approach to learning and grading, where grading is in support of learning, and learning is in support of grading. Evaluating the candidates' competences through validation or examination should be a mechanism that will serve to the adults as an indicator of their actual accomplishments and a guidance to achieving the next learning outcomes.

Grading should not be focused only on knowledge, without considering the skills and attitudes (values). Adult education is based on key competences and the grading should necessarily refer to them in their entireness, or totality. Competences should be evaluated (graded) in the context of candidates' experiential, or lifelong learning, regardless of whether they (adults) have acquired the expected learning outcomes in a formal way or not. Professional conduct is evaluated (graded) within a realistic context, by simultaneously evaluating (grading) the knowledge and skills which underpin that professional behavior. In this way, a valid and relevant assessment is made of the candidates' preparedness to be involved competently in social processes and labour exchange and their preparedness to cope with the changes in the highly technological society.

The dynamics of evaluating (grading) the adult competences is adapted to the dynamic of their progress in achieving the learning outcomes. Grading can be organized in blocks, as per general education and vocational education subjects, or subjects from the same or related scientific fields.

As a process, grading in general includes formative and summative methods. It is common for the formative evaluation to be neglected in adult education. When the grading of adults is principally based on summative methods, this can pose a specific risk because adults who have stayed outside the education process for so long have lost their school habits, and because of the importance of the entire process, the summative grading may become exceptionally stressful. Additionally, applying the summative grading alone reduces the "ecological validity" and the contextualization of the overall process of learning and grading. This approach increases the risk for demotivation of candidates and their dropping out from the lifelong learning process.

The role of the formative evaluation can be partly replaced with a defined method of portfolio development, prepared by the adult candidate, where the learning outcomes achieved in a non-formal and informal way can be documented. The portfolio can become an integral part of the VNIL assessment by the assessor (teacher). The "Operational Teaching Programmes" that will be developed in the next stage of operationalization of the Concept Note for Adult Secondary Education can serve as the basis for developing the portfolios for formative grading, which will include detailed learning outcomes and examples of grading criteria. They will allow the candidates to gain an idea of what is expected from them to demonstrate in the process and will help them think of ways in which they can prove their competences. If the authenticity and authorship of the portfolio cannot be determined, it will not be taken into consideration when grading the candidate. But even in this case, this procedure will have an added value of engaging the candidates in topics and concepts of the programme, the expected learning outcomes would become familiar and closer and attainable and will probably increase their motivation to acquire the anticipated learning outcomes.

On the other hand, adherence to the "Operational Teaching Programmes" will allow all stakeholders in the process to have the same and clear idea of what needs to be taught and evaluated, that is, what the teaching staff should teach and grade, and what the candidates should demonstrate for grading purposes. This will ensure that the evaluation (grading) process will be objective, reliable, and consistent, independently of where in the country it is implemented.
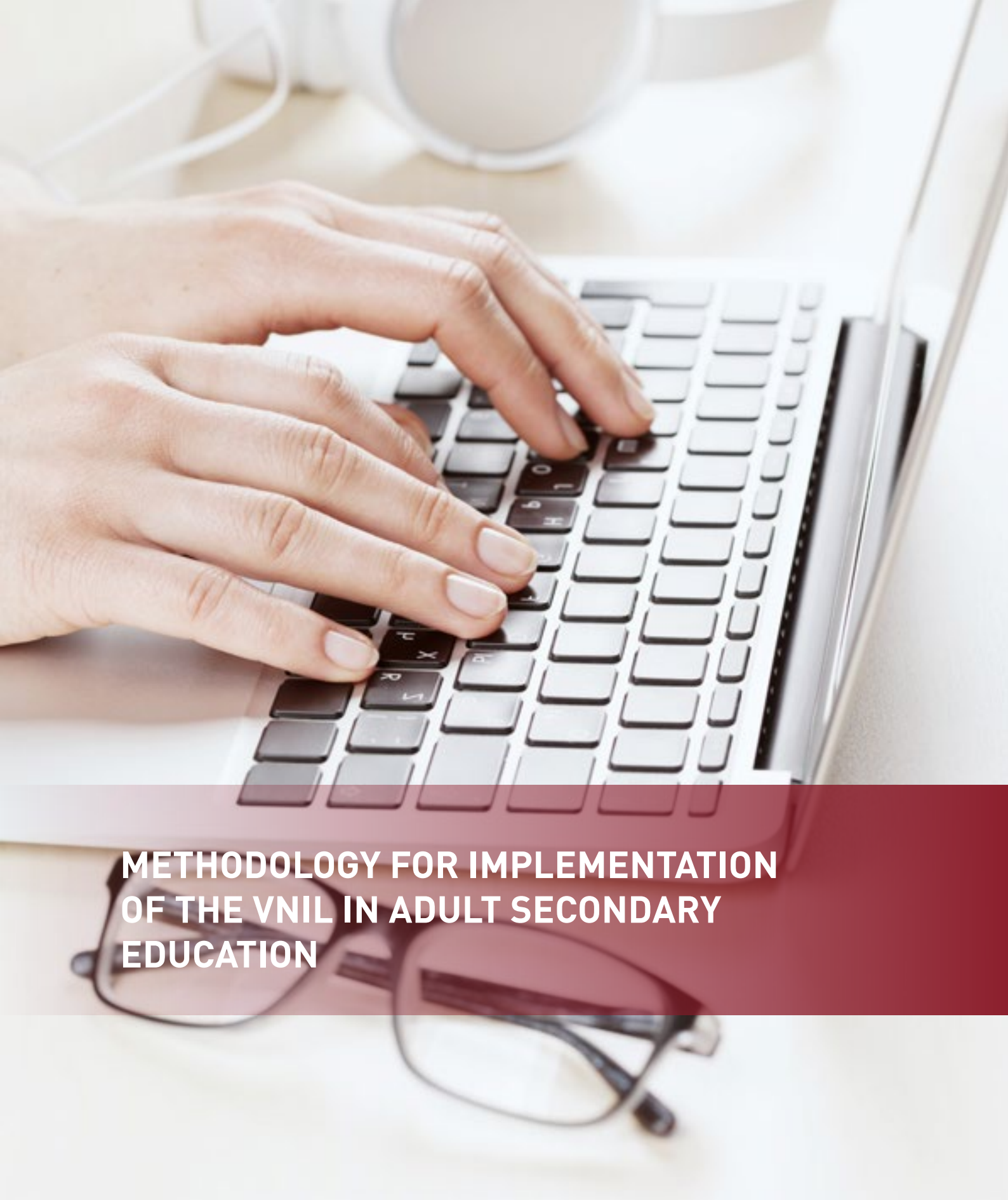
**METHODOLOGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VNIL IN ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Adult secondary education is an integral part of the single system of formal secondary education. However, it differs from the mainstream secondary education in the way it is implemented. There are number of reasons why adults cannot engage in the mainstream secondary education together with the current secondary school students, most prominent of which are age differences and the specific everyday responsibilities of adults. Because of the age difference, adults and adolescents do not attend the lessons together, and on the other hand, work and family responsibilities of adults imply a completely different organization of the day, which prevents them from attending the lessons full-time. Moreover, adults have gained a rich life experience which has allowed them to acquire a lot of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are specified in the mainstream secondary education programmes, due to what do not need to attend regular instruction. For these reasons, a progressive and inclusive adult education system should enable identification and recognition of the competences and qualifications adults already possess, as well as lifelong learning opportunities that can build on them. This approach makes ample use of the validation mechanism for non-formal and informal learning (VNIL or validation). The 2015 European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning[21], define the VNIL process as follows:

> *"Validation is, first, about making visible the diverse and rich learning of individuals. This learning frequently takes place outside formal education and training – at home, in the workplace or through leisure time-activities – and is frequently overlooked and ignored. Validation is, second, about attributing value to the learning of individuals, irrespective of the context in which this learning took place. Going through validation helps a learner to 'exchange' the outcomes of the non-formal and informal learning into future learning or employment opportunities. The process must generate trust, notably by demonstrating that requirements of reliability, validity and quality assurance have been met. These elements of visibility and value will always have to be taken into account when designing validation arrangements, despite differences in the ways and combinations that might arose."*

Application of VNIL means that the defined standards in the adult secondary education teaching plans and the teaching programmes are implemented through a flexible process of continuous, consecutive, and interrelated stages of teaching and assessment. These are assessment stages of the actual level of candidates' competences acquired in prior learning, to which the personalized additional teaching and training will build on by appropriate teaching staff, in order to support further development and completion of certain competences and qualifications.

VNIL is in the core of the fourth UN sustainable development goal, requiring that a fair access to inclusive and quality education is ensured and lifelong learning is promoted for all. The need and the role of VNIL essentially derives from the approach to designing educational programmes based on learning outcomes. All learning outcomes, that is, all competences and qualifications that people have acquired, should, in principle, be made visible and appropriately validated (recognized), regardless of when, where and in what form of learning they have been acquired. This

---

[21] European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP reference series 104 Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015

mechanism provides a flexible progression of adults in the course of their lives.

Validating the non-formal and informal learning and certifying the qualifications will become even more important in the professional context in future when people are expected to find themselves in a situation to change jobs much more frequently and acquire new skills continuously. By applying the validation, it is possible to reduce the deficit of qualified staff within economic operators, as well as to reduce the costs for acquisition of qualification by low-skilled people and the costs for reskilling and upskilling of workers. This means that VNIL is becoming one of the central mechanisms for providing educational and social inclusion and for creating policies that will improve the labour market. More specifically, the benefits for the adult secondary education stakeholders are the following:

Benefits of the VNIL for adults involved in ASE

- adults will not have to attend instruction and training for competences they already have;

- adults will save time and costs for education and training for competences they already have;

- adults will get an opportunity to validate their knowledge and skills in a faster, more flexible and simpler way;

- VNIL will give more opportunities to adults to reskill and upskill their competences and qualifications;

- possessing a public document for a particular educational qualification makes the adults more competitive on the labour market and allows them to achieve horizontal and vertical mobility;

- VNIL results contribute to the self-confidence and the personal development of adults and to their recognition in society.

Benefits of the VNIL for society and economy

- an appropriate response is provided to the rapid changes in the labour market and the share of qualified workforce on the labour market is increased, especially in the segment of deficient qualifications;

- employers can make a better use of the competences of their employees which now become visible;

- motivation and productivity of employees grow;

- the general economic productivity and competitiveness improve;

- social inclusion and cohesion, as well as active citizenship are promoted.

 Benefits of the VNIL for the education system

- the time of the teaching staff is saved, and all costs related to implementing education and

training are reduced;

- opportunities open up for people to continue their lifelong learning – including to the level of higher education;

- the education system is allowed to contribute significantly more to raising the level of education of the citizens;

- institutions for adult education get an opportunity to develop intensively.

# VNIL methodological guidelines and stages

The VNIL process is relatively precisely defined in the relevant EU documents on educational policies. It consists of four defined stages following a particular order: 1 – Identification, 2 – Documentation, 3 – Assessment, 4 – Certification.

In order for information about VNIL opportunities to reach as many potential adult candidates as possible and have them adequately informed and prepared for the process before applying, a pre-stage has also been provided for initial information of potential candidates for adult secondary education. An adequately trained and delegated staff will provide the potential VNIL candidates with:

- necessary initial information about the opportunities arising from the validation process,

- encouragement and stimulation to engage in the validation process for the purpose of completing their adult secondary education,

- information about accredited institutions for validation and for adult secondary education, as well as about the enrolment procedure.

The initial information is implemented through a network of "information points" which may consist of the local offices of all relevant institutions involved in adult education and inclusion: secondary schools / RVETC, regional units of the local self-government, local offices of the MLSP and ESA, employers, economic chambers, trade unions, open citizens' universities, non-governmental organizations, youth clubs, religious organizations.

Re-joining the education process can prove stressful for adults, which is a risk factor for the success of the adult secondary education measures. Therefore, having a preparatory stage is very important for adults, when they should be equipped with the courage and support that they have already acquired specific knowledge and skills in the course of their lives which can now be verified and recognized through the process of VNIL.

Following the initial information, regardless of the way it is to be achieved, the candidates enroll for completion of adult secondary education with the predefined requirements and procedures, upon which comes the implementation of the VNIL stages:

### Stage 1 – Identification

In this stage, the competences that an individual has acquired through non-formal and formal learning are identified. The crucial task of the identification stage is to make the knowledge, skills, and competences of the candidate visible, so that they can be assessed further in the process. Identification stage begins with an initial examination and review of the candidate's knowledge and skills compared with the learning outcomes set for the general education and vocational education subject-based curricula and corresponding specific qualification standard.

The staff involved in this stage engage in a counselling and guiding process, explaining to the candidates which are the assessment criteria, how the documentation of evidence is carried out for the competences they already have, what opportunities they have for further learning and acquiring specific levels of qualification etc. The stages of identifying and documenting the evidence of acquired competences have greater applicability in adult vocational education since the circumstances in which the vocational competences can be proved are more complex and require spatial and technical prerequisites. Following outcomes are expected to be achieved as a result of the initial identification and guidance:

• The candidates will become aware of all the requirements they are expected to fulfil to be awarded a qualification;

• The candidates will have clear guidelines about the documentation stage for the evidence of their acquired learning outcomes;

• For learning outcomes which cannot be supported with available evidence and cannot be assessed, the candidate will be advised to engage in additional education and training and will receive guidance as to the available opportunities.

### Stage 2 – Documentation

This stage of the VNIL process includes documenting the evidence of the achievements of an individual against the predefined learning outcomes. The evidence of the acquired learning outcomes is documented in a Portfolio. This is particularly important for documenting the vocational competences (learning outcomes from the vocational subject-based curricula), where it is necessary to present the evidence of one's abilities, that is, possessing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a particular qualification. The evidence submitted by the candidates should be verifiable, so as to prove their authenticity. Portfolio is the starting point for the next stage of validation – assessment of acquired learning outcomes, which is why it should be designed in a way to benchmark the learning outcomes of the target qualification. When designing the portfolio, consideration need to be made that verification of evidence (joined by verification of

one's abilities), should help the Commission to assess whether the candidate can demonstrate a satisfactory level of achievement stipulated in the qualification standard, and then, if the decision is positive to issue a corresponding certificate, or a public document.

Documenting the evidence in the portfolio can prove useful also for the formative assessment when validating the competences from the general education subjects.

### Stage 3 – Assessment

The assessment stage is organized and implemented by an accredited institution for validation of the educational qualification, which typically is a secondary school. The assessment of a candidate's knowledge, skills and attitudes is made by the Assessment Commission, comprising representatives from institutions relevant for the qualification under assessment, and pursuant to the relevant bylaws. The Commission makes an assessment of the level at which the candidates have acquired the learning outcomes stipulated for a particular educational qualification.

When validating the vocational competences, that is, the learning outcomes from the vocational subject-based curricula, greater importance is attributed to assessing the portfolio. Here, an assessment is made as to whether and to what extent the evidence can prove the candidate's competences. At the same time, the Commission assesses authenticity of the portfolio, and if needed, may examine the vocational competences. In the assessment stage, the Commission may use classical grading methods and tests. Validation of learning outcomes from the general education subjects rely more on such methods.

The assessment should result in a clear outcome and information for the candidates – at what level their competences stand compared to the stipulated learning outcomes for the educational qualification. If the assessment can verify that the candidate possesses all the competences for a particular qualification, the Commission can proceed with certification, that is, issuing a public document for educational qualification corresponding to a particular MQF level. If the assessment shows that not all learning outcomes have been achieved for the targeted qualification, the assessment will then provide valuable information as to the level at which the candidate has built his competences, that is, which learning outcomes the candidate has already achieved, which are yet to be achieved, so as to be awarded the qualification. More precisely, from which level of learning outcomes the learning and teaching of the candidate should continue so that the candidate can achieve the desired learning outcomes. The educational institution's staff will propose a personalized work plan for the candidate to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The candidate may go through several alternating assessment stages followed by teaching and training until acquiring a particular qualification.

### Stage 4 – Certification

The last stage in the VNIL process is to certify the verified competences in compliance with the educational qualifications as per the National Qualifications Framework. Following a positive

assessment, the candidate is awarded a public document of educational qualification. This public document is identical to the one awarded in the mainstream secondary education. The documents represent an official confirmation that, through an official process, the candidate has achieved a particular standard and it serves to confirm the candidate's abilities. The assessment stage is organized and implemented by an accredited institution for validation of the educational qualification, which typically is a secondary school.

Further operationalization of the Concept Note for Adult Secondary Education will require the development of rulebooks which will regulate the implementation of VNIL, as well as a detailed VNIL methodology for general and vocational secondary education.

**INSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN
RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION
THE ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION**

### Institutions and organisations involved in implementing ASE

ASE activities will to a great extent be implemented by the secondary schools accredited to engage in this activity, due to the fact that they have the competent staff and adequate rooms and technical conditions. The activities stipulated for the assessment and certification stages will be fully implemented in the accredited secondary schools.

In addition to schools, other institutions and organizations may take an active part in the stages before the assessment of competences and certification, such as: the initial information, counselling, and guidance to candidates; support in identifying the relevant competences and documenting the evidence of the acquired competences; teaching the candidates so as to achieve the learning outcomes for a particular qualification. These activities, with a corresponding authorization given by the responsible institutions, and in cooperation with the secondary schools, AEC, VETC and BDE, may be implemented by:

- Open citizens' universities,

- non-governmental organizations involved in educational activities – which have experienced and trained staff for communicating and working with vulnerable groups,

- local offices of the Employment Service Agency – considering the nature of their activity, and at the same time, because they have rooms and human resources at their disposal,

- companies with their educational resources,

- local self-government units,

- the State Examination Centre – with its staff trained in different forms of assessment, and with its instruments used in national and international testing.

The support the adult secondary education should receive from the responsible institutions is crucially important, in the sense of harmonizing the responsibilities in this area, translated into a relevant legislation. Support is also required for connecting the implementers of adult secondary education with companies and employers, so as to ensure the appropriate human and technical resources for implementing the activities from the adult vocational education. At the same time, it is highly important to provide the institutions' support in promoting the adult education – by emphasizing the relevance of the different aspects: for enjoying the right to education, from economic aspects, for the purposes of promoting the social inclusion and cohesion etc.

### Adult Secondary Education staff

To achieve the qualifying, empowering and socializing functions of the adult secondary education, the support from the competent and trained staff is of key importance, as they should create a positive and constructive ambience for implementing the education process. To this end, it is highly important that the staff, too, is adequately prepared, considering the specificities of adult candidates, as well as the specificities of the stipulated measures. First, AEC should train the staff involved in ASE about the approach and implementation of VNIL stages, based on the

pedagogical information about adult education. ASE staff should primarily have an affirmative attitude towards adult secondary education and the validation mechanism and should be aware of the development opportunities they offer to the people and the society.

Secondary school teachers are the key staff for implementing the adult secondary education. With optimization measures for the existing staff involved in the education system in RNM, a significant number of teachers who have insufficient course load may be engaged in adult secondary education activities. When preparing the teachers, a significant support should be provided in cooperation with the non-teaching staff in schools, primarily the pedagogues, psychologists, and special educators. In the identification and documentation stages, and in the continuous teaching to candidates, and especially to people from vulnerable groups, the recruitment of staff from other institutions, organizations and companies involved in adult secondary education may prove particularly important. It is recommended to create a digital platform which will provide support and communication to teachers, schools and the entire staff involved in adult secondary education. The platform may serve for sharing good practices and approaches in working with adults, cooperation opportunities with other institutions, organizations, companies, NGOs etc.

ASE staff should have optimally developed digital competences so as to be able to provide quality teaching to the candidates, and strengthen the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of adult candidate in the area of digital technology. If we consider than only 39% of the teachers in EU feel well prepared to use digital technologies in their everyday work, we can assume that the staff in our country, too, will require a strong support in this area. The crisis with the pandemic has raised this issue among the top priorities in the context of strengthening the teaching competences and is a cornerstone in the way digital tools are used in education and training. Considering the great interest EU is paying to this issue, we recommend establishing connections with European networks and funds for this purpose, which will provide the expert and material support. In the course of 2020 and 2021, EU developed a new digital interactive platform for digital education (European Digital Education Hub) with continuous international and expert consultations. The platform will be launched in January 2022. This platform will make it possible to create a cooperation through practice community, national counselling services for digital learning and education, as well as tools for exchanging good practices in the digital education. The platform will operate under the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027[22] which was adopted by the EU in 2020.

---

[22] Source: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/deap-swd-sept2020_en.pdf

# DIGITALISATION IN THE ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION

Contemporary adult secondary education should prepare the citizens for the constant and fast changes in information technology and digitalization, which are also reflected in the everyday private and professional lives. The adult secondary education system should develop and incorporate the good practices and policies and should adapt them to the national circumstances with the purpose of developing the digital competences of the citizens.

The European Digital Competence Framework 2.0[23] , as a document, is the tool the European Commission uses to determine the components of digital competence in five areas. In the context of adult education, it is expected that the adults should become competent in the following areas:

1. Literacy in working with digital data: the ability of adults to find the necessary data, to evaluate the relevance of the contents and the source, and the ability to manipulate and store the data,

2. Communication and cooperation: the ability of adults to interact, communicate and cooperate by using the digital technologies and respecting the cultural and generational diversity; the ability to manage one's own personal digital identity, the ability for active citizenship and to participate in social processes through digital services,

3. Creating digital content: basic ability of adults to create and edit digital contents, in the sense of expressing their own ideas and products digitally, and understanding copyright policies,

4. Safety: the ability of adults to protect the digital devices, personal data, and privacy in a digital setting, to protect their physical and mental health; and the awareness of the impact digital technologies and contents have on the wellbeing and mental health,

5. Problem solving: the ability of adults to identify issues and needs, appearance or solving of which is related to digital technologies; the ability to use digital tools for innovative processes and products.

The education system should have a clear objective and adequate measures which will build the capacities of adults in these areas, and at the same time, will connect these competences to entrepreneurship opportunities and possibilities for opening of own businesses. The measures from the ASE system should encourage the adults to adapt constructively to the constant technological changes which are strongly reflected also on the labour market, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic crises. Adult secondary education should send a clear message that the only thing that is constant is the change – which is manifested in the changing demands for qualifications on the labour market, and at the same time it should help the adults to apply successfully their key and transversal competences in permanent adaptation to technological and economic changes.

---

[23] Vuorikari R, Punie Y, Carretero Gomez S and Van Den Brande G. DigComp 2.0: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens. Update Phase 1: the Conceptual Reference Model. EUR 27948 EN. Luxembourg (Luxembourg): Publications Office of the European Union; 2016. JRC101254

Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) is a document which strategic objectives should serve as a guide for digitalization measures for adult secondary education in RNM. The policies advocated by the plan are in line with supporting the sustainable and effective adaptation of the education and training system to the digital time.

The two priority areas in the development of a digitalized ASE are:

1. To develop a high-performing digital educational ecosystem, which includes:

   • availability of an adequate digital equipment in the education and training of adults,

   • effective planning and development of digital capacities,

   • digital transformation of the curricula,

   • quality digital teaching and didactic materials,

   • relevant, interactive, and easy to use online learning resources;

2. To strengthen the digital skills, which includes:

   • development of digital competences of educators,

   • development of digital competence of adult candidates in ASE,

   • basic knowledge about technologies based on intensive data processing, such as artificial intelligence – for a better understanding of their role in the everyday private and professional lives of adults,

   • equal availability and accessibility of digital opportunities for women and men.

The importance of digitalization of education and training became even more prominent during the COVID-19 crisis. The crisis only accentuated some of the inequality and created a range of challenges for adult education and training. It clearly showed that a modern education system should necessarily be adapted to the digital time so as to overcome these challenges. At the same time, the crisis with the pandemic accelerated the trend of applying online and hybrid learning models. It promoted the new, innovative, and flexible online methods of interaction between people, for both learners and teachers. UNSECO, together with relevant experts in the field, developed a digital tool for comparing and identifying the qualifications: World Reference Levels (WRLs). This tool helps the adults identify their qualifications against international levels of qualification, which then facilitates their international recognition. Following the model of this tool, it would be useful to create a platform that will be developed based on the MQF qualification standards, which will help the adults, interactively and easily, have an insight into the competences and qualifications they possess.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION**

The integrity of VNIL system depends on the underpinning quality assurance measures. Adult secondary education will be valued and sustainable if the system is trusted, if potential candidates believe that the anticipated engagement will grant them expected qualification, and the received public document will be valued for their employment. The measures should ensure consistency of the ASE process, especially in the validation processes, so as to prevent inconsistency across stages – both in regard to activities of an individual stakeholder, and in regard to inconsistencies between different stakeholders.

The quality assurance system provides for several sets of continuous measures in all stages and processes of adult secondary education, and for all involved stakeholders. They include, among others:

- Regulation: bylaws on quality assurance in ASE

- Qualification standards:

  - Standards translated into learning outcomes stipulated in the curricula: they form the basis against which general educational and vocational education competences of ASE participants are assessed,

  - Continuous promotion of ASE programmes.

- Accreditation of institutions involved in ASE implementation:

  - It ensures that the institutions have confirmed to have satisfied the specific quality criteria and that they have a detailed internal quality management system, and that they have the capacities to effectively implement and assess the defined qualification acquisition programmes.

- Final examination: candidates are obliged to take a final exam upon completing the programme for the corresponding MQF level, which can be organized with the involvement of professional/chamber associations.

- Continuous professional development of staff:

  - continuous training of the staff involved in ASE, including trainings for counsellors and assessors as part of the VNIL.

- Monitoring and evaluation:

  - Monitoring the process of implementation of validation activities,

  - Monitoring the efficiency of additional teaching and training of adults towards achieving a particular qualification,

  - Monitoring the availability of ASE and VNIL to adults, of procedures and the time neces-

sary to complete the educational qualification from enrolment to certification,

- Monitoring the accessibility of ASE to members of vulnerable groups: Roma, persons with disabilities, people in the penalty and correctional institutions, low-skilled people, unemployed people etc. – considering that an increased number of ASE participation does not automatically mean higher participation of members from these groups,

- External evaluation by sectoral associations/chambers and their analysis, onsite checks, research etc.,

• Inspection supervision by the State Education Inspectorate,

• Assessment Commissions in the context of VNIL: commissions set up in a relevant and transparent manner should vouch for the assessment process in ASE and VNIL.

• ASE database: an effective database on ASE participants and implementers, as well as on ASE results – with appropriate personal data protection,

• Self-evaluation by institutions: ASE and VNIL implementers should make a periodic reflection and self-evaluation of the institution's performances, in view of improving the quality,

• Participation in international studies: adult competences assessment studies carried out in the country, as an indicator of efficiency of the ASE measures and a roadmap for a future guidance on improvement. Examples of relevant international studies include:

- Adult Education Survey: an EU study where RNM participated in the last round in 2016, with the next one planned for 2022,

- Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies – PIAAC: an OECD study based on data about both formal and non-formal adult education,

- Continuing Vocational Training Survey: an EU study on education and training taking place in companies,

- Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, which covers three key focuses: life and work skills, digital transition (transition in the sense of social processes which are becoming increasingly digitalized), and inclusive social change (in view of making the social changes inclusive of everybody, and above all, of groups most susceptible to marginalization),

• Domestic studies:

- Evaluation studies for the situation in ASE, the level of competences of adult population, and the necessary competences for adults to take and efficient part in the labour market,

- Studies on inclusiveness, equal access, and fairness of ASE.

Generally taken, stakeholders involved in implementing the VNIL process should implement

measures for internal and external quality assurance:

- internal quality assurance: evaluation by the institution itself as to whether the activities it has implemented are valid, reliable, and fully feasible,

- external quality assurance: evaluation whether all institutions make consistent and accurate assessment and whether their internal quality assurance measures are effective.
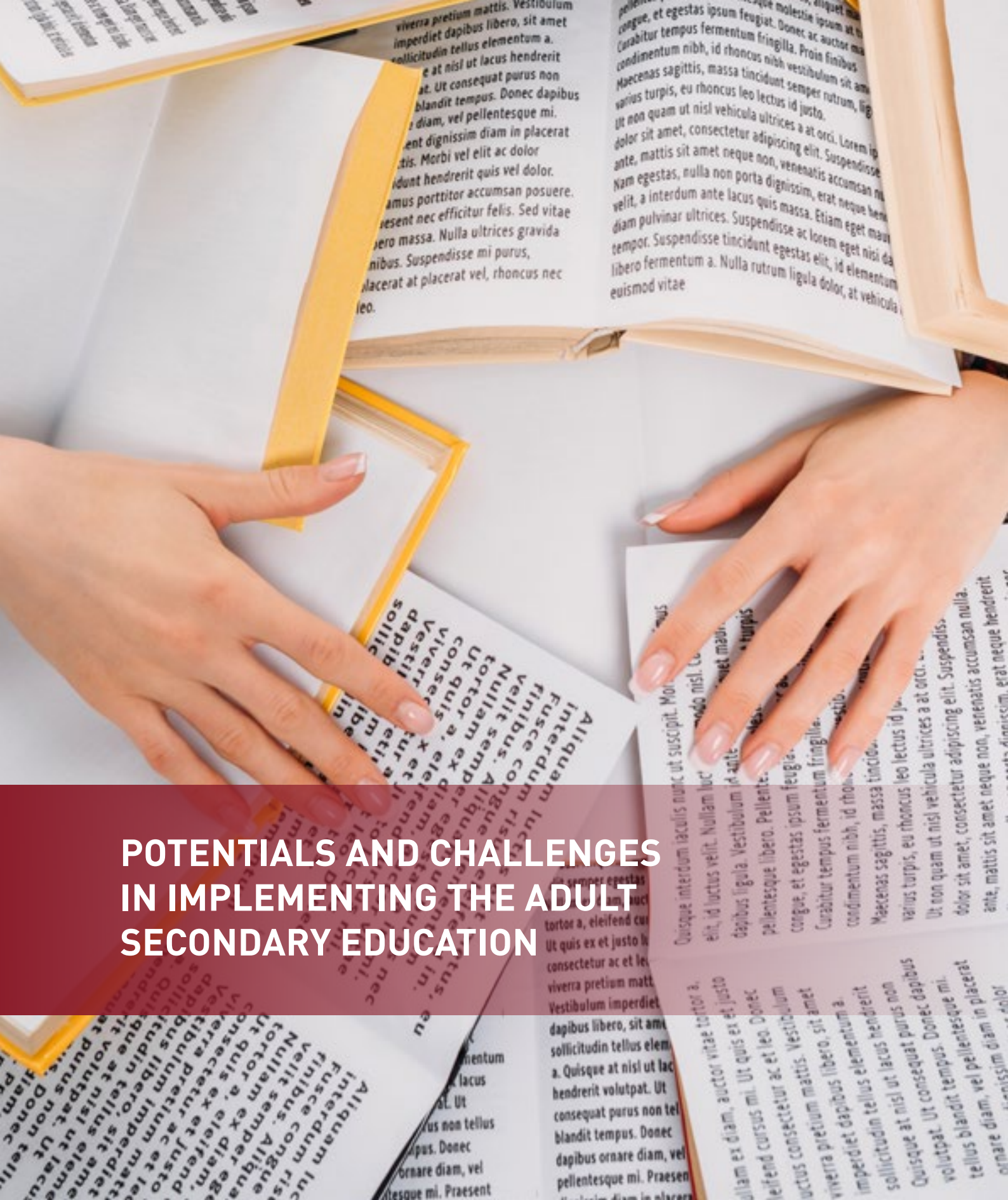
# PRIORITIES IN THE ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION

## Priority target groups

Considering the high unemployment rates and the large number of unskilled or low-skilled people, the implementation of adult secondary education should give priority to vocational education corresponding to MQF levels 2, 3 and 4, which is the vocational capacity building, vocational education for occupation, and technical education. This implies defining the priority target groups, or segments of the population which should be specifically targeted with the adult secondary education measures. This includes the persons with disabilities, people from the marginalized groups, above all from the Roma ethnic community, as well as people from penalty and correctional institutions.

## Financing and incentives

For an effective adult secondary education to be implemented, which can contribute to the empowerment and social inclusion of adults from socially vulnerable groups, and to economic growth, it is necessary to define the priority measures for a stable and sustainable funding. If we take into consideration the importance of these educational measures for the personal and social development of citizens, and for the overall development of economy, it would be worthwhile for the state – if possible, in cooperation with international partners – to financially support the ASE of certain target groups, especially considering that the funds spent will be significantly low compared to the effects achieved.

**POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES
IN IMPLEMENTING THE ADULT
SECONDARY EDUCATION**

To implement the activities provided with the adult secondary education, the system can make use of several existing potentials:

- the country has a well-developed network of secondary schools/RVETC and other public institutions which can be actively engaged in ASE processes,

- the foundations of a VNIL system have already been laid,

- there is a network of non-governmental organizations which operate in the area of education, which can give a significant support in these processes,

- ASE processes have a strong support from the relevant international institutions.

Implementation of ASE activities is facing a number of challenges:
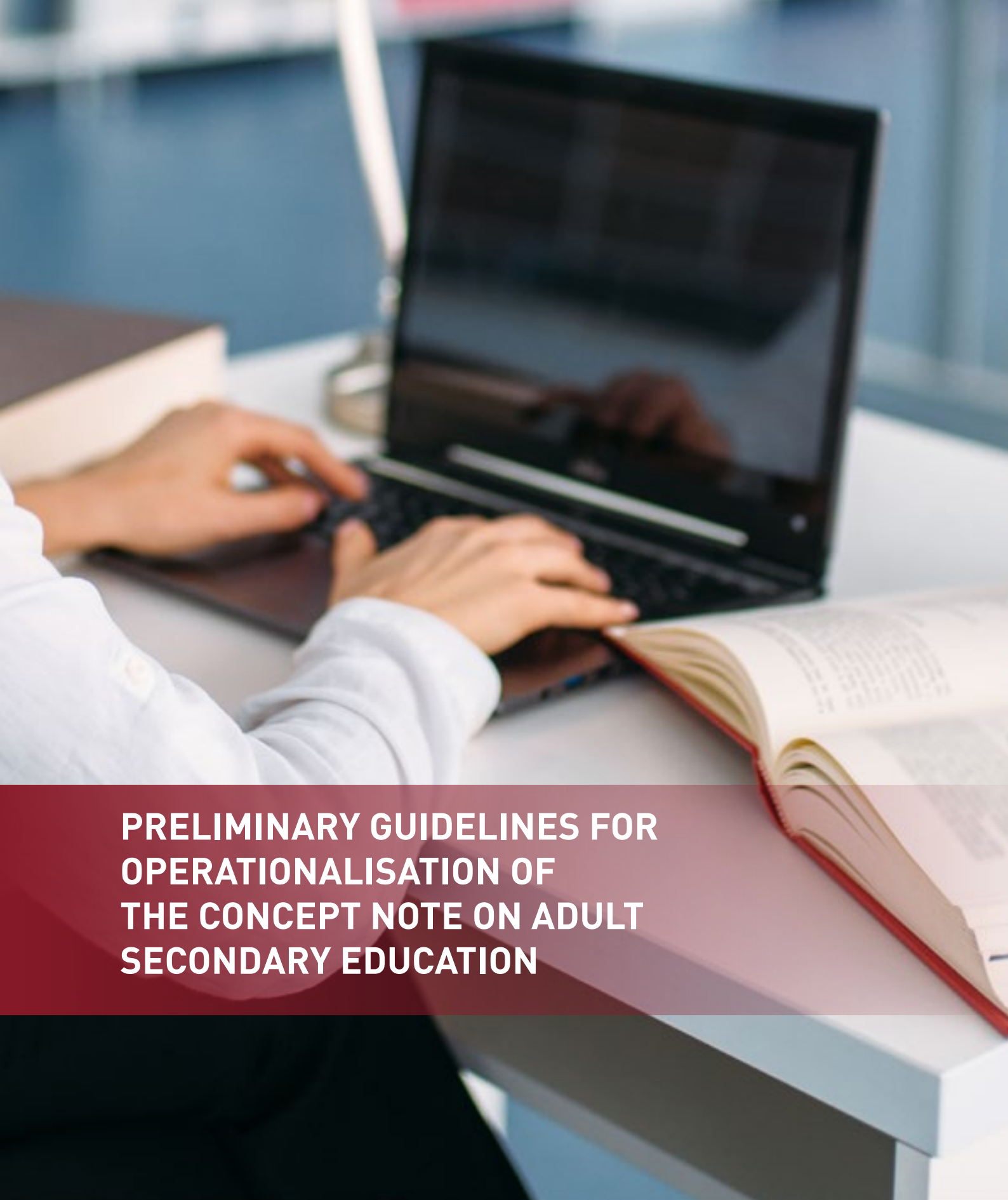
- if the staff involved in ASE is not aware of the importance of ASE and VNIL as a measure, and does not possess the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes for effective implementation of ASE and VNIL,

- if the implementers fail to build trust in the ASE concept and system, and fail to provide the adequate support from the institutions,

- if an effective cooperation between all relevant stakeholders is not developed,

- if the adults fail to build trust in the ASE system,

- if ASE is not treated as a priority in the country, its funding may become endangered, and with it, the implementation of all projected activities,

- the disbalance between the needs and the available resources for ASE among different regions in the country,

- the risk of increased dropping out from the mainstream secondary education – which should be responded by adequate measures for quality inclusive mainstream secondary education,

- ASE mission may become endangered if the implementation is focused only on the needs of the labour market, neglecting the functions of empowerment and socialization of adults.

**INDICATORS TO MONITOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVES SET BY THE CONCEPT NOTE ON ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION**

In order to fulfil its function of promoting the adult secondary education and training, the implementation of the Concept Note for Adult Secondary Education should be followed and monitored. To this end, it is necessary to develop a database on adult secondary education which will serve as the starting point to derive and define precise indicators to monitor the achievements made in different areas. For the situation now, the progress indicator for adult secondary education could include the projected positive changes in view of inclusiveness and quality of adult education, as well as the fulfilment of EU Council recommendations on VET and of the Council of Ministers on education from the Osnabrück Declaration. VET development also entails the development of continuous VET through lifelong learning. This commitment underlines the importance of VET for adults. The development of VET for adults is one of the essential aspects of flexible, quality, resilient and sustainable VET which will be agile in adapting to the labour market and will be a generator of innovations, at the same time incorporating the progressive digital and green technologies. Approximation to these objectives should be monitored as per specific indicators. Generally taken, indicators concerning the implementation of the Concept Note can be classified in several categories:

- Harmonization of the relevant legislation on adult VET,

- Greater accessibility of ASE, suitability of procedures, and flexibility of development pathways,

- Increased number of schools involved in implementation of adult secondary education,

- Greater rate of enrolment in and completion of adult secondary education,

- Greater rate of participation compared to the approximative data from the Eurodyce 2021 Report,

- Greater budget allocations committed to adult secondary education programmes,

- Greater rate of involvement of adult persons with disabilities, people from marginalized groups, and persons in penalty and correctional institutions in adult secondary education,

- Greater equality in the women to men ratio regarding their enrolment and completion of their adult secondary education,

- Greater number of local self-government units involved in adult secondary education activities,

- Greater number of non-governmental organizations involved in adult secondary education activities,

- Greater number of companies (economic operators) involved in adult secondary education activities.

**PRELIMINARY GUIDELINES FOR OPERATIONALISATION OF THE CONCEPT NOTE ON ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION**

- To harmonize the legislation relevant for ASE: the existing regulations do not allow implementation of several important aspects stipulated in the Concept Note. At the same time, certain arrangements in different laws and bylaws are in mutual collision, which only additionally aggravates the implementation of a number of its core elements. Therefore, it is necessary to harmonize the laws, and most of all, the laws on adult education, on secondary vocational education, on NQF, as well as the corresponding bylaws which regulate the area of adult VET, and to align them in a number of important points – above all, validation of NIL, learning by doing, and quality assurance;

- To synchronize the roles of institutions implementing ASE: to define the guidelines for cooperation between institutions and to define their responsibilities in relation to ASE, so as to prevent the creation of overlapping zones or end up with responsibilities not assigned to anyone – which will make it harder to implement the ASE activities. In this context, it is necessary to clearly determine the activities and responsibilities of the Regional VET Centers in the area of adult education and the measures stipulated for them;

- To develop a VNIL Methodology as part of ASE and standards for its implementation: there is a need for a VNIL methodology which will operationalize the specific steps, procedures, and guidelines for actions to be taken by all ASE stakeholders involved in the validation process. In this context, the methodology should in particular address the role on RVETC in the validation process;

- To develop the laws and bylaws on quality assurance – which will serve as the basis for designing specific measures in the area of qualification development, learning by doing process, supervision, and support to ASE providers for improving the quality of the education process which will have the capacity to respond to the needs of adults and of the labour market, and which will be based on digital and green technologies.

- To develop an enhanced system of accreditation of institutions and organizations involved in the adult secondary education process: the accreditation system should be adequate to the actual demands and characteristics of the modern ASE, and should be compliant with the highest quality assurance criteria;

- To develop the national ASE standards: AEC, VETC, BDE, and other relevant stakeholders should develop a platform for the national standards on ASE based on the qualification standards and equivalent standards of the regular secondary education, which will be defined on grounds of learning outcomes;

- To develop the "operational subject-based curricula: based on the key competences and learning outcomes: these "operational subject-based curricula" for different occupations will be based on the qualification standards and programmes for the mainstream secondary education and will serve as a tool for guidance through the education process both for the adult learners and for the involved teaching staff. After the development, this operational subject-based curricula need to be piloted;

- To develop grading criteria for the learning outcomes from the national standards: it is necessary to ensure consistency, validity, and reliability of the grading process at the level of the entire country. All aspects of the grading process, from the general education contents to on-the-job grading of practical competences in the validation process should be subject to unique, comparable, and verifiable criteria;

- To support the development of human resources: one of the preconditions for improving the adult education is for the staff involved in ASE and in VNIL implementation process to receive continuous support to develop their competences which are necessary for the quality implementation of the identification, documentation, assessment, and certification stages;

- To develop an information and support network for adults involved in ASE, including in VNIL: considering the large number of adults who can potentially get involved in the ASE process, it is necessary to upgrade the information, counselling, and guidance network for adults in the ASE process, across different sectors. This support also applies to VNIL opportunities and activities;

- To develop a functional database: the development of a quality ASE system should necessarily rely on accurate records on the current situation in the area of adult secondary education. Therefore, it is necessary to develop da database which will include all the relevant information about adults engaged in the different forms of adult education, about the educational needs of adults, about the needs of the labour market, about ASE providers and their activities, information about ASE quality and other relevant data;

- To develop measures and activities for promoting the ASE and VNIL opportunities: considering the sizeable and diverse demands on the labour market and the large number of unskilled or low-skilled adults who can potentially get involved in the ASE process, it is necessary to develop an informed strategy for promotion of ASE and VNIL opportunities. This strategy, and the measures deriving from it, should be based on an analysis of adult competences and needs, as well as on analysis of the demands of a modern labour market – which is developing sustainably, is adaptable, and applies green and digital technologies.