

Report on Peer Learning Activity

Inclusive national strategies for the
implementation of EHEA principles for the
social dimension

United Kingdom, Oxford, 11th November 2025



This document was developed in the framework of the ERASMUS-EDU-2024-EHEA-NARIC (European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) call.

This Peer Learning Activity report is part of the Work Package 2 deliverables (D2.1.) for project INSPIRE – Inclusive national strategies for the implementation of EHEA principles for the social dimension.

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Version 1.1.

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List of abbreviations:

Centres Régionaux des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires – CROUS network

Contribution to Student and Campus Life – CVEC

European Higher Education Area – EHEA

Higher education – HE

Higher Education Institution – HEI

Key performance indicators – KPIs

Lifelong Learning – LLL

National Education Opportunities Network – NEON

Recognition of Prior Learning – RPL

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership – SCQFP

The Lifelong Learning Platform – LLLP

World Access to Higher Education Day – WAHED

World Access to Higher Education Network – WAHEN

Report of the Peer Learning Activity

1. Agenda

Tuesday, 11th November 2025, Ruskin College, Oxford

09:00 – 09:30 Welcome and introduction

Artūrs Čerņiševs, Ministry of Education and Science, Latvia

Jana Kazarjan, Malta Further & Higher Education Authority, Malta

Arno Schrooyen, European Students' Union

Prof. Graeme Atherton, Ruskin College, United Kingdom and World Access to Higher Education Network (WAHEN)

09:30 – 10:15 Presentation on Principle 3 and WAHEN

Presentation of Principle 3 implementation in United Kingdom and presentation on World Access to Higher Education Network (WAHEN) by Prof. Graeme Atherton, United Kingdom

10:15 – 10:30 Coffee break

10:30 – 11:00 Ensuring student safety: three French projects as example (catering, health, inclusion)

Presentation by Alain Bouhours, Ministry of Education, France

11:00 – 11:30 Austria's SD strategy 2017–2025: mission accomplished?

Presentation by Anna Rechberger, Federal Ministry for Women, Science, and Research, Austria

11:30 – 12:00 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Malta

Presentation by Jon Vercellono, Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, Malta

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch break

13:00 - 14:30 Cross-sectoral collaborations for lifelong learning: needs, challenges, avenues for strengthened collaboration

Presentation by Andrei Frank, Lifelong Learning Platform

14:30 - 15:00 Coffee break

15:00 - 16:30 World Cafe session (Principles 2 and 3 - discussion on challenges linked to flexible learning pathways and inclusive education)

Arno Schrooyen, European Students' Union

2. Participants

Name	Organization	Country
Alain Bouhours	Ministry for Higher Education	France
Andrei Frank	Lifelong Learning Platform	-
Anna Rechberger	Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research	Austria
Annette Dolan	EI/ETUCE	-
Arno Schrooyen	European Students' Union	-
Artūrs Čerņiševs	Ministry of Education and Science	Latvia
Berit Johnsen	Ministry of Education and Research	Norway
Bianka Paulovics	Ministry of Culture and Innovation	Hungary
Emmi Kraft	The free association of student bodies (fzs)	Germany
Horia-Serban Onita	EHEA Secretariat	-
Jana Kazarjan	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)	Malta
Jessica Sammut	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)	Malta
Jon Vercellono	Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC)	Malta

Lasha Zivzivadze	National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE)	Georgia
Maria Svendsen Roed	Ministry of Education and Research	Norway
Martin Unger	Institute for Advanced Studies, EUROSTUDENT	-
Martina Kokavec Bedatšova	Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth	Slovakia
Monica Cavalli	Ministry of Education	San Marino
Oana Alexandra Tintar	EHEA Secretariat	-
Priscila Couto	DGES – Directorate General for Higher Education	Portugal
Sandra Jurika	Ministry of Education and Science	Latvia
Tilman Dorr	Rectors Conference	Germany
Tereza Vengrinova	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	Czech Republic

3. Peer Learning activity

3.1 Introduction to the project and agenda

Mr. Artūrs Čerņiševs, co-chair of the TPG-D, welcomed everyone on behalf of the TPG-D and Inspire consortium. He asked for permission to record the meeting for the purpose of the minutes only and briefly introduced the PLA programme.

The INSPIRE (Inclusive national strategies for the implementation of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) principles for the social dimension) project was briefly introduced. The aim of the project is to support the implementation of the new EHEA Framework for the Social Dimension of Higher Education on national levels as adopted and endorsed at the 2020 Rome and 2024 Tirana Ministerial Conferences. One of the objectives of the project is to facilitate Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) and develop targeted training sessions to build the capacity primarily of public authorities to implement social dimension principles across their policies and practices in higher education, as they hold the most significant leverage for greater impact. Consequently, higher education institutions and the broader stakeholder community would be also assisted through these PLAs, with the goal being to present implementation experiences and measures that have had a proven positive impact in various countries. This Peer Learning Activity in Oxford is the first planned on-site PLA within the Inspire project. Mr. Artūrs Čerņiševs informed the participants that three on-site PLAs are planned, all aligned with TPG-D meetings. Moreover, at least three online PLAs are planned as well. Additionally, the INSPIRE project team will continue to explore alternative PLA formats, which may result in changes to certain organizational aspects in the future.

Mr. Čerņiševs encouraged participants to be proactive and engage in today's discussions and if some members recognize certain good practices they would like to share today and in future PLAs, all suggestions would be welcome. Mr. Čerņiševs gave word to prof. Graeme Atherton, who briefly introduced himself as the Vice Principal of Ruskin College and gave a brief introduction to Ruskin College- a college that exists to address social equity imbalances for individuals who have not followed a traditional educational pathway.

3.2 Presentation on World Access to Higher Education Network

Professor Graeme Atherton introduced the participants with World Access to Higher Education Network (WAHEN) that was launched in December 2024 as the first global network explicitly dedicated to promoting equitable access and success in higher education with its origins lying partly in the earlier work of the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) in the United Kingdom and the international demand for more systematic cooperation in the widening participation field. The presenter noted that although widening

access practitioners across the world grapple with comparable challenges, international exchange has often been hindered by resource limitations and the difficulty of convening global events. Led by Ruskin College, Oxford, and supported by organizations such as UNESCO, the Asia-Europe Foundation and the World Bank, WAHEN builds on the legacy of World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED). WAHED was a decentralized global framework initiated in 2018 that allowed institutions and organisations to host their own activities under a shared thematic umbrella. WAHED attracted approximately one thousand participating organisations between 2018 and 2022 and demonstrated the potential for global mobilisation even without extensive central funding. In 2025 WAHEN engaged more than 1,500 individuals from over 300 organisations across nearly 100 countries, supported by a programme of online launch events, a joint conference with the University of Oxford's Centre for Global Higher Education, and the reinstatement of WAHED in October 2025 at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. More than twenty associated events took place across multiple continents.

A key output presented during the session was the publication of Drawing the Global Access Map 2, the most comprehensive comparative dataset currently available on participation inequalities in higher education. The study integrates information from the OECD, the World Bank, Eurostat and national data sources, covering approximately 150 countries for socio-economic background indicators and around 200 for gender. The findings indicate that inequality in access remains pervasive worldwide; although some countries exhibit incremental progress, gains are fragile and uneven. Considerable data gaps persist, particularly in relation to socio-economic indicators, underscoring the need for coordinated international efforts to improve comparability and transparency. Professor Atherton emphasized that global collaboration is indispensable not only for sharing effective practice but also for strengthening collective advocacy, particularly in contexts where widening participation initiatives face political resistance.

Looking ahead to 2026, WAHEN intends to introduce a membership model open to universities, ministries, non-governmental organisations and philanthropic foundations. Plans include the establishment of eight global online communities of practice, the launch of the WAHEN Global Academy for professional development, the expansion of the Equity Hub as a repository of international practice, and the development of a WAHEN Quality Mark. These initiatives reflect an ambition to embed widening participation more firmly within global policy discourse and to support practitioners through structured collaborative infrastructure.

3.3 Presentation on Principle 3

Principle 3: *The inclusiveness of the entire education system should be improved by developing coherent policies from early childhood education, through schooling to higher education and throughout lifelong learning.*¹

The second presentation by Professor Atherton focused on Principle 3 of the European Principles and Guidelines¹, which calls for coherent policy across the entire education system, from early childhood education through schooling and higher education and extending into lifelong learning. The United Kingdom was offered as a case study to illustrate how differing national contexts can shape the implementation of such a principle.

Education policy in the United Kingdom is fully devolved, resulting in four distinct national systems in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These jurisdictions operate with different regulatory authorities and funding structures, leading to divergent approaches to tertiary coherence. Wales and Scotland have made notable moves towards integrating post-16 education systems. Wales has created a single body responsible for higher education, further education, adult learning and apprenticeships, while Scotland has pursued similar consolidation through reforms to its funding and regulatory architecture. England, by contrast, continues to maintain more separate structures between higher education and further or technical education.

The presentation provided an overview of the new Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper published in England in October 2025, the first major policy statement of the current government. The White Paper seeks to bring higher education and non-HE learning closer together within a more unified post-16 landscape. Central to this reform is the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), which aims to allow individuals to access modular or full programmes over the life course. The policy also places strong emphasis on vocational and technical routes and sets a target for two-thirds of young people to participate in higher-level learning—whether academic, technical or apprenticeship-based—by the age of 25.

The White Paper outlines a clearer distribution of responsibility for funding different types of learning: employers are expected to invest in the skills of their own workforce, government is responsible for education up to age 18 and for supporting disadvantaged adults, and joint government-business arrangements are envisaged for strategic skills needs. Individuals are also expected to contribute, particularly through LLE-supported loans.

Despite these ambitions, the presentation highlighted significant challenges within the UK lifelong learning landscape. Adult participation in learning has declined sharply, from 52 per

¹ Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA
https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf

cent in 2024 to 42 per cent in 2025. Public funding for adult skills has fallen by approximately 25 per cent since 2010–11. Adults who left formal schooling at 16 or earlier are markedly less likely to re-engage in learning, and adults with higher qualifications remain disproportionately represented among lifelong learners. This entrenched inequality illustrates a persistent participation paradox: those who stand to benefit most from learning are least likely to access opportunities.

Professor Atherton noted further tensions within the policy discourse. While policy frameworks frequently stress learning for work and economic productivity, broader forms of learning linked to personal development, social inclusion and citizenship receive less policy attention. Loan-based models such as the LLE may be insufficient to motivate adults in precarious circumstances to take on additional debt. Moreover, the UK higher education system is experiencing acute financial pressures, with course closures, staff reductions and a strong reliance on international student fee income. These conditions raise questions about the system’s capacity to support meaningful expansion of lifelong learning.

3.4 Ensuring student safety: French projects on catering, health and inclusion

Mr. Alain Bouhours introduced the participants to the three ongoing practices in France: affordable catering, national mental health policy and disability-inclusive universities.

Affordable Catering for All Students

The first initiative concerned the long-standing French system of affordable public catering for students, managed by the CROUS network (Centres Régionaux des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires). CROUS operates as a state-mandated infrastructure responsible for student services, including catering, housing, culture, sports and financial aid. The system represents a core component of French social policy in higher education, backed by a substantial annual budget of approximately €650 million.

In 2024 CROUS provided 46.7 million meals, largely at subsidised rates. Standard student meals are priced at €3.30, while highly subsidised meals are available for €1 for disadvantaged students. ‘Meals for 1 €’ was a measure originally introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and maintained due to persistent need. The network covers more than 800 locations and 186 student cities.

To address territorial inequality, the French government adopted a new law in April 2023 guaranteeing the right to affordable catering near every educational institution. The law obliges CROUS to develop local partnerships in “white zones” where no CROUS facilities are present. To support students in these areas, a prepaid digital catering card was

introduced: €20 per month for non-grants students, €40 per month for students receiving grants, and a supplement of €10 in overseas territories. By the end of 2024, CROUS had established over 200 partner providers supporting the territorial expansion.

Complementing the institutional system, student associations continue to play an important role in promoting solidarity, including subsidised “solidarity grocery stores,” €5 food baskets, and baskets costing less than €1 for the most vulnerable students. Many of these initiatives receive support from the CVEC (Contribution to Student and Campus Life), a compulsory €100- €105 contribution paid once upon initial enrolment by every French higher education student. The CVEC is used to fund welfare, health, cultural and preventive activities at universities and partially finances CROUS social initiatives. The French student support landscape thus combines centralised infrastructure with community-based solidarity networks.

National Mental Health Policy

The second major initiative is focused on the mental health. The year 2025 was designated as the official national year of mental health, reflecting heightened concern about rising levels of psychological distress among students. The approach has two central aims: responding to acute student distress and promoting broader mental well-being.

A key measure is the “Santé Psy Étudiant” programme, offering up to 12 free psychological consultation sessions per academic year for all students, with no upfront payment. The scheme mobilises around 1,900 psychologists nationwide. Since its introduction in 2021, more than 650,000 consultations have been delivered, supporting approximately 120,000 students.

Complementary support is provided through CNAé, a national listening platform offering professional and peer-based support. The platform works closely with Nightline, a student-run listening service originally founded in Ireland and now established in five European countries. In France, Nightline received over 2,300 calls in 2024, demonstrating significant demand for confidential peer support. The French government supports these initiatives not only financially but also through nationwide outreach campaigns to destigmatize mental health difficulties (information on mental health support is available in Nightline’s webpage: <https://www.nightline.fr/en/first-aid-kit>) . Podcasts, videos and social-media campaigns form part of the communication strategy, aiming to normalise help-seeking while raising awareness among peers.

At the institutional level, French universities host student health services, strengthened through increased staffing in 2023. These services provide comprehensive health support, including mental health consultations. In some regions, specialised BAPU's (psychological support offices) provide long-term assistance to students. Additionally, over 6,500 students and staff have been trained in mental health first aid, a preventive approach designed to equip the academic community with basic skills to identify and respond to mental health crises. Universities are increasingly expected to develop health-promoting campuses, embedding well-being considerations into local governance and everyday campus environments. Students access information and services through national platform: Étudiant.gouv.fr (www.etudiant.gouv.fr/), which provides general guidance on student life, and "Student Point", a student-oriented portal consolidating information on mental health, housing, financial aid and support services. Universities complement these platforms through local communication and collaboration with student associations.

Disability-Inclusive Universities

The third initiative presented was the national programme of "Exemplary Disability-Inclusive Universities", conceived as part of the 2023 National Disability Conference. The Ministry of Higher Education launched a three-year call for proposals (2024–2027) to identify institutions capable of leading structural transformation in disability inclusion. The programme is supported by €10.5 million in ministerial funding, supplemented by €17.5 million in institutional co-funding.

Six universities were selected as exemplary sites (Université Bretagne Occidentale, Université d'Angers, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Université de Lorraine, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3). Their remit is to initiate and test innovations across a wide range of domains, including governance, inclusive pedagogy, accessibility of training and student life, communication, digital accessibility, staff training and accessibility of the built environment. The goal is not to create specialized institutions but to develop replicable models that can be disseminated across the entire sector.

A strong participatory approach characterizes the programme. Several universities have created student-led bodies such as accessibility collectives or councils for students with disabilities. Others engage students as "experimenters" in pilot initiatives. The programme also builds on academic research: for example, in law (rights and self-determination), neuroscience (learning remediation) and social sciences (participation of students with disabilities).

Early reflections revealed common barriers faced by teaching staff, including perceptions that accessibility is irrelevant to their practice, concerns about time and workload, fears that

accessible pedagogy may compromise academic standards, and issues related to intellectual property when sharing teaching materials. To address these concerns, the programme promotes a diversified set of levers, including expert guidance, regulatory backing, peer-led practice exchange, emotional engagement (via testimonials or role-plays), and improved training schemes for new and existing staff. Structural change is supported by a long-term national objective to develop “health-promoting and inclusive campuses” across the country.

3.5 Austria’s social dimension strategy 2017-2025 evaluation

Ms. Anna Rechberger introduced participants with the national evaluation of Austria’s Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education (2017–2025) and the country’s preparations for a forthcoming relaunch of the strategy.

Austria has often been regarded as a European good-practice example for the social dimension due to its development of a comprehensive national strategy specifically targeted at improving access, participation and equity in higher education. Austrian Ministry commissioned an external evaluation of the strategy, recognizing the need for evidence-based policy refinement. The evaluation comprised several methodological components designed to triangulate different forms of evidence.

The evaluation began with extensive desk research, covering both national and international sources. This included the analysis of Austrian statistical datasets alongside comparative data from European partners. The evaluation team then conducted a broad online survey among higher education institutions (HEIs), building on an earlier interim evaluation conducted in 2021. While the earlier survey focused on cataloguing measures implemented by institutions, the 2024 survey asked HEIs to identify which measures they considered successful or unsuccessful and to explain the factors shaping these outcomes.

Further qualitative data were collected through expert interviews, which included not only institutional leaders but also external stakeholders and social partner organizations. The evaluation therefore captured multiple perspectives from across the national higher education ecosystem. Based on these findings, the evaluation team formulated a set of recommendations for the anticipated relaunch of the strategy, which the Ministry is currently preparing.

Quantitative Findings

The evaluation’s quantitative results revealed that progress toward the strategy’s targets was limited, and in several domains, outcomes moved in an unfavourable direction. A set of

quantitative indicators (9 indicators) had been established when the original strategy was launched. These included targets for gender balance, regional balance, participation of non-traditional students, and participation of students from lower educational backgrounds.

Some indicators displayed slight improvements, particularly with respect to gender balance, although the original targets were highly ambitious and remained far from being met. Similarly, there was a small increase in the number of recipients of certain scholarships. Regional disparities showed marginal improvement, yet considerable differences persist between urban and rural areas.

More concerningly, the evaluation found declines in the number of non-traditional entrants and students from lower educational backgrounds. This suggests that inequalities in access are not only persisting but, in some areas, might be widening. The evaluation team offered several explanatory hypotheses, many of which were echoed by HEIs. Institutions argued that the time frame of the strategy may have been too short to yield measurable structural changes in participation patterns. They further observed that many determinants of unequal access lie outside the remit of higher education policy and are therefore shaped by broader political and educational structures. Consequently, HEIs emphasised that they cannot be held solely responsible for outcomes fundamentally driven by pre-tertiary education systems.

The evaluation recommended more targeted programmes for under-represented groups and highlighted the potential of virtual and hybrid mobility as a part of the quantitative indicators.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative component generated a somewhat more positive picture. Both HEIs and external stakeholders generally viewed the national strategy as a useful steering instrument, providing coherence and signalling political commitment to equity. The strategy's priorities were judged to align closely with institutional priorities, and stakeholders expressed strong support for the continuation of a national framework rather than abandoning it due to modest quantitative outcomes.

The evaluation also identified success factors associated with effective institutional measures. A key factor was the sustainability of initiatives—measures that were embedded institutionally and supported by stable resources were more likely to succeed. Conversely, unsuccessful measures often reflected a lack of innovative potential, limited scalability or insufficient institutional capacity. Interestingly, scalability emerged as an ambiguous criterion: although a lack of scalability was cited as a reason for failure, the evaluation team

noted that a measure could still be effective locally or for some of the criteria even if it was not transferable to other institutions.

Additional qualitative insights emphasised the need for more sustained communication, networking and knowledge exchange within the higher education sector. Stakeholders expressed interest in a national platform for sharing good practices, although concerns were raised about maintenance responsibilities and resource implications.

Recommendations and Future Directions

The evaluation's recommendations for the strategy relaunch addressed both structural and operational dimensions. One significant recommendation was to extend the strategy across the full educational life cycle, rather than restricting it to higher education.

Other recommendations included consolidating and simplifying some of the strategy's action lines, strengthening indicators to better reflect the student life cycle, and identifying measures over which HEIs can exert more direct influence. The evaluation also called for a longer-term planning horizon and the establishment of an expert advisory group to accompany the relaunch process.

Importantly, the evaluation stressed the need for a more proactive communication strategy, including stronger networking activities and enhanced visibility for the social dimension agenda. The Ministry is currently preparing several major events to support this work, with the annual national networking conference (Vienna, 25th November, 2025) and additional peer learning events that are planned for early 2026, including a February meeting in Salzburg on 18-19th February and a national conference on 20th February. The Ministry aims to produce a draft of the relaunched strategy by late 2026.

3.6 Malta's experience on recognition of Prior Learning

Mr Jon Vercellono introduced participants to the Recognition of Prior Learning in Malta. In recent years, Malta has positioned Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a central mechanism for widening participation, supporting lifelong learning, and strengthening the permeability of its education and training system. RPL in Malta operates at the intersection of higher education, further education and training, and adult learning, with strong links to national qualification framework and quality assurance structures. The country's approach reflects an ambition to formalise diverse learning experiences—non-formal, informal and previous formal—within a coherent policy framework that supports both equity and labour-market responsiveness. The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) has positioned Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a cornerstone of its lifelong learning strategy. In 2024, the MFHEA commissioned the Scottish Credit and Qualifications

Framework Partnership (SCQFP) Partnership to undertake research into RPL practice in Malta and the impact of the previous MFHEA document: "*Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines*", and to refresh the document based on the findings. The 2024 revision followed extensive research to evaluate the impact of the 2021 guidelines and address institutional challenges.

RPL is defined as the formal recognition of learning acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal contexts, including life and work experiences. It enables candidates to gain admission to programmes or exemptions from components of formal qualifications by demonstrating achievement of learning outcomes. The scope includes micro-credentials and full qualifications within the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). RPL is conceived not merely as a technical procedure but to expand adult participation in education and improve access for non-traditional learners. The legal and regulatory frameworks explicitly require RPL mechanisms to be transparent, equitable, and aligned with learning-outcome-based standards. As a result, qualifications, awards (micro-credentials) are all, in principle, accessible through validation pathways that recognise competences acquired outside traditional routes. Ten overarching principles govern RPL implementation: learner-centeredness, equality and diversity, accessibility, recognition based on learning rather than experience alone, alignment with MQF levels, transparency and consistence, formal assessment for summative claims, equivalence to formal learning, and rigorous internal and external quality assurance as well as considering statutory legislation.

Implementation of RPL across Maltese institutions shows both progress and variation. Larger institutions—particularly public universities and state-recognised vocational and further education providers—tend to have more established RPL systems, including detailed guidelines, assessment rubrics, and advisory services for applicants. However, institutional capacity remains uneven, with smaller providers sometimes lacking the resources or expertise to implement comprehensive RPL pathways. Institutions seeking to offer RPL must establish comprehensive policies detailing scope, responsibilities, and quality assurance mechanisms. They must ensure staff capacity and training, provide clear procedures for accessing RPL, and maintain transparent communication regarding application formats, evidence requirements, timelines, and fees. Guidance and support for candidates, standardized assessment practices, and consistent decision-making are mandatory.

A notable feature of Malta's RPL landscape is the increasing integration of RPL with workforce development. Employers and sectoral skills councils play a growing role in identifying competencies relevant to occupational standards, enabling RPL to function as a bridge between labour-market needs and educational provision. This collaboration has strengthened the credibility of RPL in vocational and professional fields, particularly in

sectors experiencing skills shortages or undergoing technological transitions. At the same time, the expansion of micro-credentials has provided flexible entry points for adult learners, allowing RPL to contribute to modular learning pathways that combine formal, non-formal, and experiential learning.

Despite these advances, several systemic challenges persist. First, awareness and understanding of RPL among potential beneficiaries remain uneven. Many adults, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are either unaware of RPL opportunities or uncertain about their eligibility. Second, institutional differences in procedures and criteria can result in inconsistent practices, creating barriers to transferability and transparency. While national guidelines exist, their operationalization varies widely. Third, the administrative workload associated with RPL can be substantial for both learners and institutions, limiting scalability and sustainability. Fourth, there is continuing debate regarding the balance between flexibility and academic integrity, with some academic departments expressing concerns about equivalence, standards, and assessment validity.

MFHEA facilitates implementation through post-approval check-ins, capacity-building initiatives, an RPL Provider Network, and planned annual conferences to share best practices. These measures aim to strengthen institutional readiness and promote systemic coherence. In conclusion, Malta has developed a robust conceptual and regulatory foundation for RPL, aligning with European standards and responding to national socio-economic priorities. Implementation has advanced, particularly in public institutions and vocational sectors, and RPL is increasingly embedded in workforce development strategies. However, challenges remain in institutional capacity, stakeholder awareness, consistency of practice, and long-term policy impact evaluation.

3.7 Lifelong Learning Platform and lifelong learning needs and challenges

Mr. Andrei Frank from Lifelong Learning Platform introduced the participants to Lifelong Learning Platform network goals and achievements. The Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL), a Brussels-based network of civil society organizations, presented its latest feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms during the peer learning session. The discussion focused on the holistic vision of Lifelong Learning (LLL), stakeholder collaboration, and systemic challenges in implementing flexible learning pathways across Europe. Founded in 2005, LLLP represents 45 EU networks, reaching over 60,000 education and training institutions and 2.5 million individuals. Its mission is to promote inclusive, democratic education systems and ensure access to quality learning opportunities throughout life. The

platform advocates for integrating formal, non-formal, and informal learning and strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation among stakeholders, including learners, educators, practitioners, and volunteers.

Lifelong learning has become a central organizing principle of contemporary education systems, requiring coordinated action across sectors and stakeholders. In the European Higher Education Area, the shift toward flexible, learner-centred pathways aligns with Principle 3: The inclusiveness of the entire education system.

In the presentation, evidence from the feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms underscored that strong systems rely on cross-sectoral cooperation. Such collaboration provides coherence, reduces fragmentation, and allows stakeholders to align curricula, validation mechanisms, and learner support measures. It also enables the sharing of best practices, the amplification of communication efforts, and the creation of a common understanding of lifelong learning beyond narrow conceptions of adult education. However, the feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms (conducted in Finland, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Spain) revealed significant variation in how LLL is conceptualised. While 32% of respondents adopted a holistic understanding, 42% equated LLL primarily with adult education. Cross-sectoral collaboration emerged as a crucial enabler of successful lifelong learning policies. The study found that 70–80% of respondents participate in networks or alliances, yet only 45–55% engage in multi-stakeholder cooperation. Limited awareness of EU policies (15–30%) contrasts with much higher awareness of funding mechanisms (39–70%). This gap underscores the need for strengthened communication, shared understanding, and more coherent governance.

The rationale for national LLL platforms lies in their capacity to enhance knowledge exchange, facilitate funding access, ensure transparency, support policy alignment, and improve dissemination of lifelong learning initiatives. However, barriers persist. These include financial constraints, an overemphasis on formal education, fragmented collaboration, and insufficient institutionalised processes for stakeholder engagement in policy monitoring and implementation.

Recent discussions—drawing on both the thematic presentation on cross-sectoral collaboration and the workshop’s group work—highlight how systemic cooperation, institutional innovation, and stakeholder engagement are essential to building robust lifelong learning ecosystems.

After the presentation, a workshop was organized between participants to determine lifelong learning practices, ways of improvement, and needs. Participants provided rich qualitative insights into existing practices and areas requiring

attention from their countries. Successful practices included the role of committed individuals and role models who actively promote lifelong learning, cooperation between ministries, and well-functioning digital platforms such as Latvia's *stars.gov.lv* and France's *Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF)*. The need to revive or strengthen community education spaces – such as *Volkshochschulen* (in Germany), and *folkehøgskole*-like models (in Nordic countries) were recognised as crucial entry points, especially for disengaged or hesitant learners, because of their pedagogical approach on students' motivation rather than formal education and grading.

Workshop groups identified several needs that must be addressed for LLL implementation to progress. These include improved recognition mechanisms, particularly for informal learning; enhanced stackability and transparency of learning pathways; hybrid learning options; employer involvement; and greater awareness-raising among both learners and institutions. Participants also emphasised the need for political commitment, a clear definition of LLL, and stable funding structures.

Areas for improvement align closely with identified needs. Participants called for stronger legal frameworks, better communication from public authorities, increased employer incentives, coordinated interministerial strategies, and targeted support for self-funded learners. Concerns were also raised about learner retention, job protection for individuals undertaking study, and the importance of building learner confidence.

Incentives proposed to strengthen lifelong learning systems included tax incentives for companies, employer funding of tuition and study time, government-backed grants, revived public infrastructure such as adult education centres, and recognition awards that promote participation. Alumni networks were suggested as a means to strengthen community engagement and provide aspirational role models.

3.8 Discussion on challenges linked to flexible learning pathways and inclusive education

At the end of the peer learning session, Mr. Arno Schrooyen led a workshop on Principle 2 (Flexibility of higher education systems) and Principle 3 (The inclusiveness of the entire education system). Participants were divided into working groups, with the task of analysing Principle 2 and Principle 3 respectively and to first identify and document challenges related to implementing these principles within their specific national policy contexts.

Results and Discussion on Principle 2

The dialogue regarding Principle 2 centred heavily on the governance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the delicate balance between autonomy and regulation. A primary challenge identified by participants was the difficulty of making institutions responsible for social dimension goals without infringing their autonomy or creating excessive administrative burdens. Amongst participants were discussions regarding how to balance national requirements with institutional needs, with participants noting that while definitions and target groups must be clearly defined at a national level to ensure consistency, the specific approach to implementation should remain within the purview of the individual institution.

Participants highlighted that current strategies are often too formal and fail to "live" within the institution, leading to a lack of outreach capacity and creativity. Furthermore, a significant barrier identified was the lack of trust in HEIs, occasionally stemming from lack of institutional capacity. Specific discussions also touched upon the complexities of determining the specific target groups for support.

To address these governance challenges, the groups proposed utilizing accreditation and funding mechanisms as primary levers for change rather than relying on unstable project-based funding. Solutions emphasized the need for a broader policy toolbox that includes capacity building and trust-building measures to distribute the administrative burden more equitably. To counter the "formalism" of strategies, participants suggested fostering individual commitment by convincing leadership through evidence-based advocacy and mandating stakeholder involvement in defining national needs. Ultimately, the consensus pointed toward a model of "transparency of communication" and peer learning to harmonize central control with institutional freedom.

Results and Discussion on Principle 3

The analysis of Principle 3 revealed deep-seated structural issues related to the fragmentation of the responsibilities. Participants described a "divided responsibility" among ministries and stakeholders, effectively operating in different areas where secondary education and higher education function as separate "boxes" with no transition responsibility or policy coordination. This lack of communication extends to different policy levels, such as the disconnect between regional municipalities and national bodies. A critical gap identified was the lack of coordinated support in early childhood and the absence of data throughout the student's educational journey, which hinders evidence-based decision-making. The participants noted that vocational paths are often treated as

"second rate," and there is frequently resistance to inclusiveness combined with misaligned incentives for schoolteachers.

The proposed solutions focused on breaking down these areas through legislation and structural reform. Participants recommended legislating early childhood education policy and shifting the educational focus from pure knowledge to skills acquisition. To address the administrative fragmentation, the groups proposed "joined actions" between departments supported by linked Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to enforce collaboration. Further recommendations included the creation of national websites or social arenas to provide better guidance for learners and policy implementation. The discourse emphasized that making education a top priority requires political will, clear definition of roles between departments, and consistent communication to bridge the gap between different stakeholders.

3.9 Next steps

Mr. Artūrs Čerņiševs briefly summed up the discussions of the PLA and informed the participants that the next Peer Learning Activity will be announced along with the next TPG-D meeting on the following day under the TPG-D meeting AOB. The next PLA "***We make a change': Making institutional cultures in higher education more inclusive***" is planned to take place in Salsburg, Austria in February 18-19th 2026 and it will be focused primarily on the Principle 5 (Counselling and guidance) and Principle 7 (Inclusive institutional culture and inclusive teaching and learning).

Annex I – Presentations

- Presentation of Principle 3 implementation in United Kingdom and presentation on World Access to Higher Education Network (WAHEN) by Prof. Graeme Atherton, United Kingdom.
- Ensuring student safety: three French projects as example (catering, health, inclusion). Presentation by Alain Bouhours, Ministry of Education, France.
- Austria's Social Dimension strategy 2017-2025: mission accomplished? Presentation by Anna Rechberger, Federal Ministry for Women, Science, and Research, Austria.
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Malta. Presentation by Jon Vercellono, Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, Malta
- Cross-sectoral collaborations for lifelong learning: needs, challenges, avenues for strengthened collaboration. Presentation by Andrei Frank, Lifelong Learning Platform.

World Access to Higher Education Network



[About](#)

[Activities](#)

[Research](#)

[Equity Hub](#)

[Equity Map](#)


[Get involved](#)

**Working for a world where
access and success in higher
education is available to all**

[About World Access to Higher Education Network](#) ▶



What is WAHEN?

- Launched in December 2024.
 - Led by Ruskin College, Oxford which is part of University of West London.
 - First global network focused on equitable access and success in higher education.
 - Follows on from World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED) which ran from 2018-2022.
 - Board includes World Bank, UNESCO, Asia-Europe Foundation.
- 

What will WAHEN do



What has WAHEN done in 2025?

- WAHEN has engaged over 1500 people from over 300 organisations and nearly 100 countries.
- 2 online global community launch events
- Joint conference with the Centre for Global Higher Education, University of Oxford.
- Return of World Access to Higher Education Day on 28th October.
- WAHEN monthly newsletter.
- ‘Drawing the Global Access Map Report 2’ launched

World Access to Higher Education Day

- WAHED is the global day of action to address inequalities in access and success in higher education.
- In 2025:
- Hybrid conference in person at University of Western Cape, South Africa
- Over 20 events across the world under the WAHED banner – India, Colombia, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and others.

Drawing the Global Access Map 2:

Understanding higher education inequality across the world

<https://worldaccesshe.com/news/drawing-the-global-access-map-2/>



Drawing the Global Access Map 2

- Most comprehensive study bringing together data on who participates in higher education by background characteristics.
- Data on gender from 200 countries and socio-economic backgrounds from circa 150.
- Survey of 50 countries on data collection.
- Key Messages
 - **Data gaps still a big issue**
 - **Inequality pervasive**
 - **Progress fragile**
 - **Global co-operation essential.**

WAHEN 2026

- WAHED membership subscription **opens March 2026 to all organisations** including universities, ministries, NGOs and foundations.
- 8 online global communities
- WAHEN Global Academy
- WAHED 2026
- WAHEN Equity Hub
- WAHEN Quality Mark

Global co-operation crucial in equity, access, social dimension.

Principle 3:

The inclusiveness of the entire education system should be improved by developing coherent policies from early childhood education, through schooling to higher education and throughout lifelong learning.

UK Picture

- Devolution across the 4 nations of education:

England

Scotland

Wales

Northern Ireland.

- Different Policy Approaches
- New Post 16 White Paper in England launched late October

Medr is responsible for funding and regulating the tertiary education and research sector in Wales.

For the first time, the tertiary education and research sector is managed and co-ordinated by one arm's length body of the Welsh Government.

Rectangular Snip

Scottish Funding Council

In this section

Letter of guidance

Our strategic plan

Our annual report

Our Board ∨

Our Board Committees ∨

Our team ∨

How we operate ∨

Gaelic language

Contact us

We are the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, more commonly known as the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

We are Scotland's tertiary education and research authority and our purpose is to sustain a world-leading system of tertiary education, research and innovation that enables students to flourish, changes lives for the better, and supports social, economic and environmental wellbeing and prosperity.



Around £2 billion of public money to deliver:



Tertiary learning and teaching.

[Find out more](#)



Skills and apprenticeships.

[Find out more](#)



Student support and participation.

[Find out more](#)



Research, innovation and knowledge exchange.

[Find out more](#)

Gàidhlig

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Privacy - Tr

New White Paper published October 2025

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-education-and-skills-white-paper>)



HM Government

Post-16 Education and Skills

CP 1412

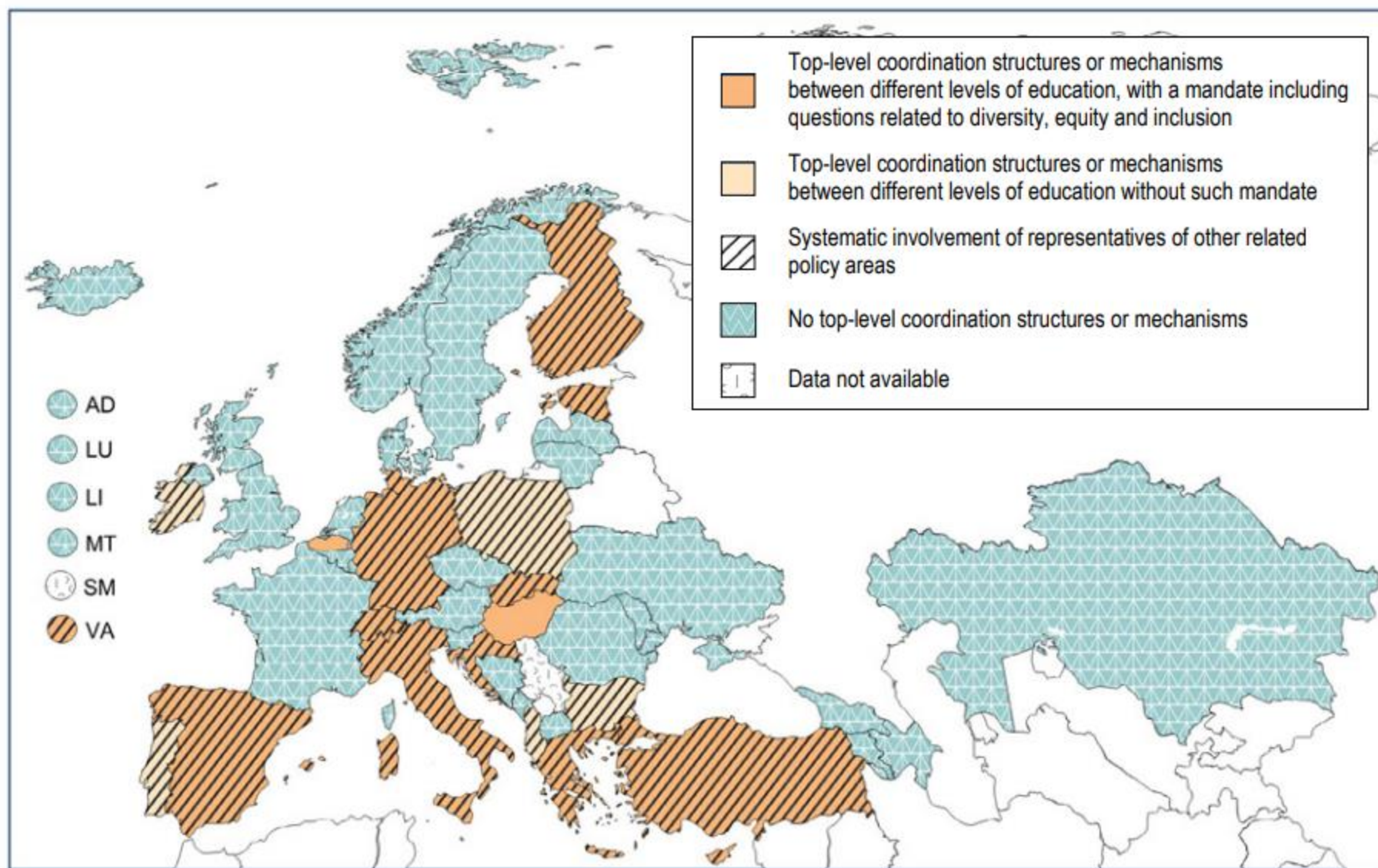
Post 16 White Paper

- **Key Features:**
- Aim to bring higher education and ‘non-higher education’, closer together
- Lifelong Learning Entitlement
- ‘Vocational Levels’
- Focus on learning, skills, economic growth
- Growth and Skills Levy
- bold new target of two-thirds of young people participating in higher-level learning – academic, technical or apprenticeships – by age 25.

Who funds?

....clear expectations of who is responsible for funding different types of training. It is the responsibility of **employers to invest in their own workforces**, and to provide professional development opportunities for staff. **Government is responsible for providing universal education up to age 18**, and supporting adult learners who are disadvantaged in the labour market and who have low, or no, qualifications. Where there is a national need to increase skills – in strategic areas or because of market failure – government will work jointly with business to fund the relevant training. **Individuals will be supported to invest in their own upskilling** and progression, underpinned by the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.’

Figure 4.5: Top-level coordination structures and mechanisms between different levels of education, 2022/2023

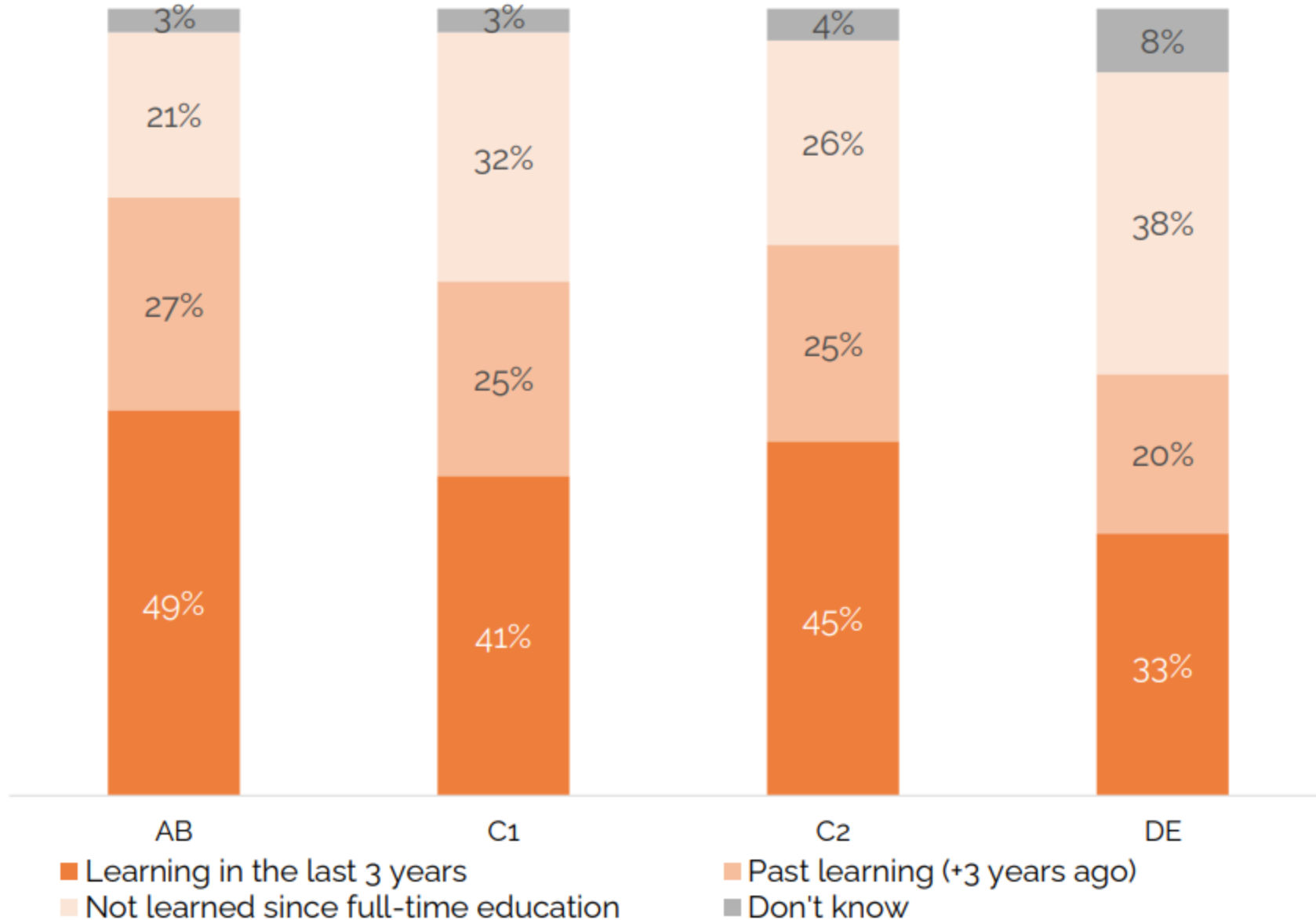


Lifelong Learning in the UK

- In 2025 42% adults reporting taking part in learning in the last three years, down from 52% in 2024.
- Nearly all (94%) of those engaging in learning identify at least one benefit, with self-confidence, personal development, the love of learning, and jobs and skills gains the most commonly reported.
- Public funding for adult skills 25% lower in 2024-25 than in 2010-11.
- Half of those who left full time education age 16 or below haven't engaged in learning since.

(<https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/adult-participation-in-learning-survey-2025/>)

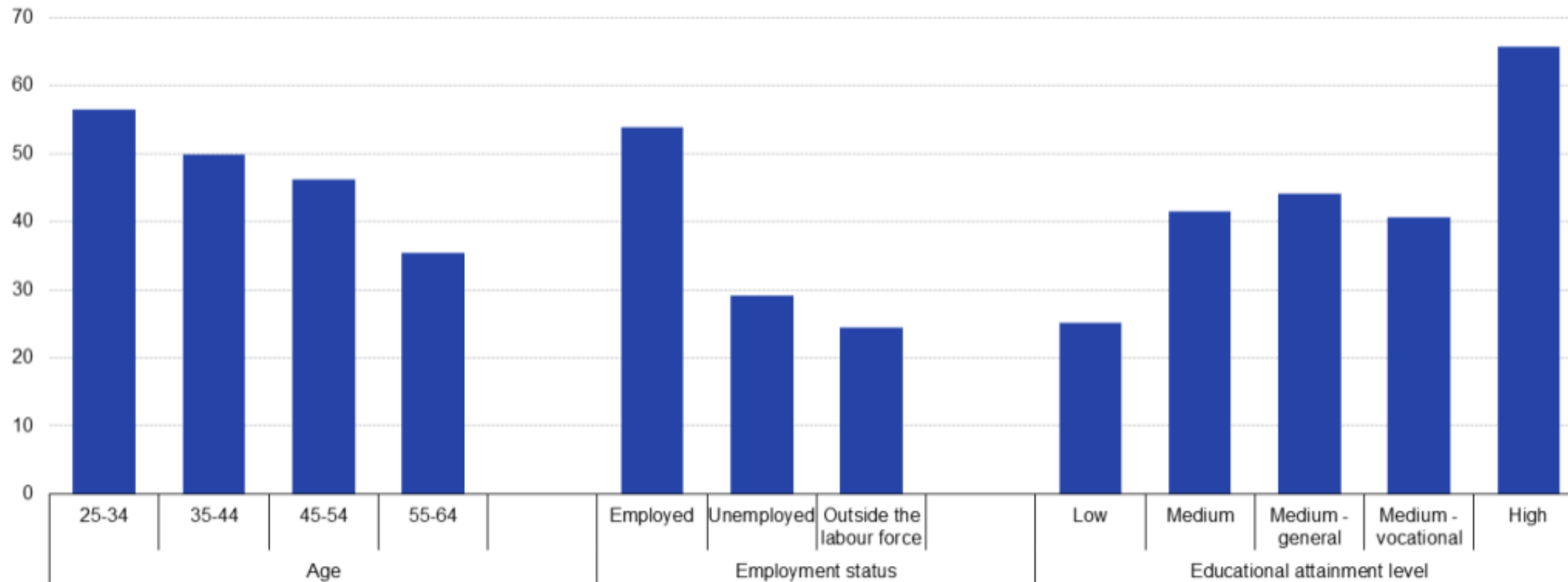
Adult Learning in UK 2025



Adult Learning in Europe

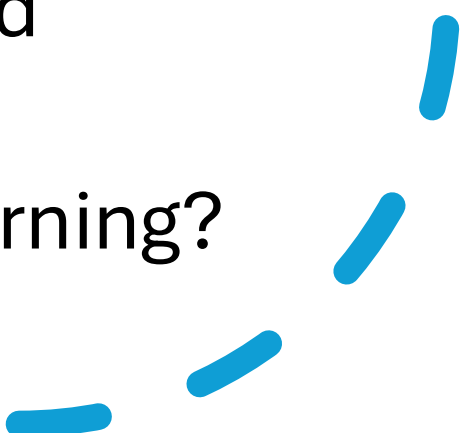
Adult learning (last 12 months) by age, employment status and educational attainment, EU, 2022

(%, AES)



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: trng_aes_101, trng_aes_102 and trng_aes_103)

Global Lifelong Learning questions

- How good is the data on adults participating in higher education and on ?
 - Learning for life and/or learning for work?
 - ‘Tertiary’ adult/vocational/academic – how are terms defined and understood?
 - Who funds what type of learning?
- 



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THREE FRENCH PROJECTS:

1. AFFORDABLE CATERING FOR EVERYONE

2. MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

3. EXEMPLARY DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITIES



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1. AFFORDABLE CATERING FOR EVERYONE

Affordable catering for everyone



CROUS (regional centres for university and school services)

- Affordable catering services
- Varied and balanced meals,
- Maintaining social ties
- State operator (budget ± 650 M€)
- More than 800 locations (approximately 900 points of sale), 186 student cities.
- In 2024, 46.7 million meals at subsidised or highly subsidised prices:
 - nearly 22 million meals at € 3.30 (+ 1.76 million more meals than in 2023),
 - nearly 25 million meals at € 1 (+ 1.782 million more meals than in 2023).

Affordable catering for everyone

Law of 13 April 2023: all students 'are entitled to affordable catering services near their place of study'.

- Development of catering facilities managed by the Crous network or by partners: 211 partners by the end of 2024 (including local authorities)
- Financial assistance for student catering for students in 'white zones' (since early 2025)
 - Prepaid digital card.
 - € 20 per month for students without grants and € 40 per month for students with grants; a € 10 per month supplement is allocated in overseas territories.
 - All regions are concerned, but particularly: Ile-de-France, Occitanie, Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur and Nouvelle-Aquitaine.
 - Budget of € 35 million
- Associations deliver food parcels to students in need (approximately € 700,000 per year from the State). Solidarity grocery stores, food baskets, etc.

Affordable catering for everyone



- Value: € 8
- € 5 per basket
- € 0.70 for students benefiting from the social and solidarity grocery store
- 80% collected within a 60 km radius of Poitiers
- Funded with the contribution of student and campus life (CVEC)



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2. MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Mental health policy

2025, year for mental health

- **Responding** to students' psychological distress
- **Promoting** their mental well-being
- Offering psychological consultations to support students – via the ***Santé Psy Etudiant* scheme** :
 - up to **12 sessions per academic year**, **free of charge** and with no upfront costs
 - a network of **1,900 psychologists**,
 - more than **650,000 consultations** carried out and **120,000 students** supported since the scheme was launched in 2021.
- **Listening to and guiding students** experiencing psychological distress and/or distress: national listening platform – **the CNAé**, support for **the Nightline association**, providing extended hours and complementary services with listening by professionals and peer listening by trained student volunteers. (**2,300 calls in 2024**)

Mental health policy

Improving the mental health of students and young people with Nightline

Because you, like many students and young adults, may be going through difficult times, our nighttime helpline is there to offer you free, anonymous, and confidential psychological support. If you're feeling a little down or just need to get something off your chest, don't hesitate to contact us: our helpline is open from Thursday to Monday from 9:00 p.m. to 2:30 a.m.

Want to get involved? You can join the association by becoming a volunteer on the helpline or a facilitator for The Mental Health Mural®.



Mental health policy




Our mission at Nightline

Our mission at Nightline France is to improve the mental health of students and young people, both individually and collectively. Because good mental health means a state of well-being that enables everyone to flourish and cope with life's normal difficulties, we feel it's crucial to work with young adults in the process of building their lives. For us, mental health is everyone's business, in the same way as physical health.

[Find out more](#)

Mental health policy

- De-dramatise mental health issues through :
 - Communication campaigns on social media



**first
aidkit.fr**

Are you looking for information on mental health? You've come to the right place. We've got you covered with tools and resources to help you take care of yourself and/or your friends. Taking care of yourself and your mental health is essential, but not that easy... There are many things that are difficult to act on and that depend on many external parameters (such as poor living conditions, being discriminated against, having health problems...). This first aid kit can help you take action at a personal level by taking care of yourself, being attentive to your mental health and helping out a friend in need.

Mental health policy

Taking care of my mental health

We ask you how you really feel and we offer you resources suited to your situation to take care of your mental health, with the help of explanatory cards and mini-games. By reflecting on your emotions, your thoughts and your behaviours, this first aid kit helps you feel better.

[Let's go →](#)



My friend is not doing well

It's great that you want to help your friend who is not doing well. We offer you resources and tools to do so, step by step. We also give you some keys to preserve your well-being in this helping relationship and to avoid causing yourself any difficulties.

[Let's go →](#)

Mini-dictionary

Psychologist, depression, mental health, anxiety, stress, CMP... It's hard to find your way through all these terms, which are often misused and distorted by our representations. This mini-dictionary will help you to better understand these words with the help of flashcards. You will also find resources to learn more.

[Check it out →](#)



Bienvenue sur Tête la Première

Si tu cherches des infos sur les liens entre activité physique et santé mentale, tu es au bon endroit ! Ici, on donne la parole aux jeunes, aux sportive-s de haut niveau, aux amateur-ric-e-s, et aux étudiant-e-s qui te partagent leur expérience et leurs conseils. Alors, prêt-e à y aller tête la première ?



Une minute pour comprendre l'initiative Tête la Première

Plonger, foncer vers la ligne d'arrivée, faire une passe décisive à ses coéquipier-e-s, tête la première.

Et parce que ta santé mentale est aussi importante que ta santé physique, fais passer ta tête en premier !

Découvre ici la nouvelle initiative de l'association Nightline et rejoins le mouvement.

Mental health policy

- a podcast that provides information and interviews with personalities such as KAAVAN

KAAVAN Le podcast santé mentale



Kaavan - le podcast Santé Mentale

@KaavanPodcast · 1,63 k abonnés · 62 vidéos

Bienvenue sur Kaavan, le podcast qui libère la parole sur la santé mentale. ...plus

linktr.ee/kaavanpodcast

S'abonner



Isabelle Carré -
"Secoue-toi" c'est une ...
821 vues



C'est dur de se sentir
tout seul avec son mal...
1 k vues



Noémie Lenoir - Vivre
avec un alcoolique ...
4,9 k vues



Juju Fitcats - Il m'a
offert un shooting de ...
401 k vues

Mental health policy

- **Student health services** : comprehensive student health care. These services offer **consultations with professionals** and support on health issues, including mental health. Additional resources were allocated to them in 2023 to strengthen their teams.
- **Psychological support offices** (BAPU) : some regions have university providing students with enhanced long-term support.
- **Mental health first aid** : a key area of prevention. **More than 6,500 first aiders** have been trained in student environments.
- **Health-promoting campuses** : creating **environments conducive** to student well-being.



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3. EXEMPLARY DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITIES

Call for proposals: *exemplary disability-inclusive universities*



Context:

- Policy measure resulting from the [National Disability Conference](#) (every 3 years)
- A call for projects based [on the preliminary work](#) of the national advisory council for persons with disabilities ([CNCPH](#))

Timeline and resources:

- Projects to be rolled out over [three academic years](#) (from 2024-2025 to 2026-2027)
- [Ministry funding](#) of €10.5 million over three years,
- Additional funding from institutions using [their own resources](#) of €17.5 million over three years

Objectives:

- Identify [exemplary institutions for the inclusion](#) of students with disabilities and for the accessibility of training and student life
- [Initiate structural changes](#) to rethink support for students with disabilities, guarantee their rights and facilitate their students training programme
- [Disseminate](#) concrete and effective measures to other institutions
- Contribute to the [success](#) and fulfilment [of students](#) with disabilities

Map of the exemplary universities

Université
Bretagne
occidentale



Université de Bretagne Occidentale

Université
d'Angers



Université
de Pau et
des Pays de
l'Adour



Sorbonne
Nouvelle

Université
Sorbonne
Nouvelle



Université
de Lorraine



Université Jean
Moulin Lyon 3

Cross-cutting and participatory projects



Inclusive demonstration universities are implementing actions in eight specific areas:

- **Governance** of the higher education institutions involvement,
- Accessibility of **training programmes, transitions and professional integration**,
- **Inclusive pedagogy**,
- Accessibility of **student life**,
- Accessibility of **information and communication**,
- **Staff awareness and training**,
- **Digital** accessibility,
- **Building** accessibility.

Cross-cutting and participatory projects



These projects closely involve **students** in all phases of the project:

- University of Angers: has created an ‘**accessibility collective**’,
- Sorbonne Nouvelle University: has set up a ‘**council for students with disabilities**’,
- University of Western Brittany: relies on ‘**student experimenters**’ to steer projects.

The projects also draw on **excellence in research**:

- University of Pau: in the field of **law** (access to rights and self-determination),
- University of Lyon 3: in **neuroscience** (remedial education and remediation),
- University of Lorraine: in **social sciences** (participation of students with disabilities).

Early findings on the teaching dimension

Supporting change: feedback from the workshop 'Can we find ways to overcome teachers' resistance?'



Resistance and obstacles identified:

- 'I don't think this applies to me (I don't have any students with disabilities or it's not my job).'
- 'I don't have time.'
- 'I don't know how to do it.'
- 'Educational accessibility lowers the standard.'
- 'Educational accessibility is an obstacle to my academic/educational freedom.'
- Lack of recognition
- Status of certain teachers (e.g. external temporary staff who are rarely present)
- Intellectual property/copyright when courses are made available



Types of levers

- Reassure/support
- Communicate/train
- Encourage/make compulsory
- Promote



Pooling solutions:

- **Rely on experts** (scientific backing)
- **Rely on the regulatory framework** (institutional backing)
- **Rely on peers**, share your lessons, teaching materials and experiences (professional legitimacy)
- **Appeal to emotions** (verbatim, testimonials from people with disabilities, role-playing)
- **Use workaround strategies**: take examples from outside the sphere of disability, address disability in more general training courses (pedagogy)
- **Diversify training formats**: face-to-face and group training + self-training modules and materials
- **Develop a human resources training** plan and strategy (target: new teachers) and career development



Austria's SD strategy 2017-2025: mission accomplished?

Evaluation results and next steps

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Federal Ministry for Women, Science, and Research Austria
Dpt. I/13 Evidence-based higher education development

TOC

- Evaluation modules (methodology)
- Evaluation results
 - Quantitative results
 - Qualitative results
 - Recommendations for Relaunch
- Next steps in the strategy development/relaunch process

Evaluation modules (methodology)

- **Module A** evaluates the effectiveness of the National Strategy
 - Desk research
 - Statistical analyses (incl. International data)
 - Online survey among HEIs concerning effectiveness of measures
 - Expert interviews with external stakeholders
- **Module B** gives recommendations for a possible relaunch and/or further development of the National Strategy

TOC

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- Evaluation results regarding
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9 quantitative goals through to 2025

1a	Reduce the recruitment quota/probability factor for admission to higher education to 2.25 (2020), and 2.10 (2025)
1b	Decrease the discrepancy in the probability factors between public universities and universities of applied sciences
1c	Include private universities and university colleges of teacher education in the calculation of probability factors, adapt target values
2	Increase the number of non-traditional admissions (educational residents) to higher education to 5,300
3a	Minimum percentage of 10% men or women in any field of education at any higher education institution (excluding doctoral study)
3b	Halve the number of fields of studies at each higher education institution where men or women comprise less than 30%
4	Increase the entry rates to higher education of 2nd generation migrant students to 30%

5	Increase the entry rates to higher education in all federal states to at least 42% by 2025 and towards the Austrian average with reference to the entire education and vocational education system
6	Increase participation in study programmes abroad by students whose parents have no university entrance qualifications, to at least 18%
7	Increase the number of extra-occupational study places at universities of applied sciences to 50%
8	Increase the number of self-supporting students receiving maintenance grants to 15,000
9	Sustained increase in the percentage of student admissions from homes where neither parent has a university degree on medical and dental courses towards an eventual target of 50%

Evaluation results 2025 – quantitative indicators

- Slow quantitative progress (monitoring of 9 quantitative indicators)
 - Slight improvements for gender balance
 - Slight increase in recipients of certain scholarships
 - Slight improvement in regional balance (BUT: still imbalance urban > rural)
 - Decrease in non-traditional access numbers
 - Decrease in student mobility participation for students from lower educated background (general decrease in participation for all students)

Conclusions from evaluation on quantitative indicators

- Possible reasons for slow quantitative progress:
 - Short time frame (8 years) for implementation
 - Indicators are not in the responsibility of HEIs alone, e.g.:
 - lack of systemic interventions in the previous educational stages (pathways?)
 - Political responsibility for resources for student support, etc.
- Recommendations from the authors:
 - Targeted programmes and financial support for underrepresented groups
 - Virtual mobility formats as part of the quantitative indicators?

TOC

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Qualitative evaluation of the strategy as a whole

- HEIs say that the SD **strategy was useful** and that the **priorities of the strategy match their own priorities** → each > 4 on a scale of 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful)
- External stakeholders see strategy as a **useful steering mechanism**
- Generally HEIs think that there should be a **strategy relaunch** of some kind

Qualitative evaluation of target dimensions and action lines

Success factors for measures:

- target group addressed successfully
- sustainability of measures
- BUT: scalability only plays a role in half of the measures that HEIs regard as „successful“

Factors for unsuccessful measures:

- Lack of innovative potential
- Lack of scalability



TOC

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Recommendations for the Strategy Relaunch

- General recommendation to relaunch the strategy
- Recommendation to extend the strategy to include all educational levels
- Slight adaptation of structure (action lines)
- Focus on whole student lifecycle when designing quantitative indicators
- Longterm timeframe recommended (e.g. 8 years like last time)
- Continuous support through an expert group
- Stronger communication policy to promote strategy
- Tool/platform to exchange HEI good practices

TOC

- Evaluation modules (methodology)
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Next steps

- Networking conference: Nov. 25th, 2025 in Vienna „National Strategy on the SD of HE: Evaluation and next steps“
 - opportunity to discuss relaunch with a broad group of stakeholders and experts
 - international keynote speaker from Portugal & presentation of evaluation results
 - Official kick-off to start a relaunch process
- International PLA and national conference within the relaunch process: Feb. 19th and 20th, 2026 in Salzburg
- ...
- Q4 2026: presentation of draft document of the new National Strategy

Thank you!

I am looking forward to your comments and questions.

Anna Rechberger, anna.rechberger@bmfwf.gv.at

Federal Ministry for Women, Science, and Research Austria

Dpt. I/13 Evidence-based higher education development

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Malta

Mr Jon Vercellono

Malta Further and Higher Education
Authority (MFHEA)

RPL in Malta

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) published the **document *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines in 2021***, in response to increased commitment amongst education institutions to introduce RPL to their programmes of study.

RPL in Malta

In 2024, the MFHEA commissioned the SCQF Partnership (SCQFP) to undertake **research into RPL practice in Malta** and the impact of the previous MFHEA document *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines*, **and to refresh the document** based on the findings.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Guidance for Providers

- This guide supports institutions in developing or reviewing their RPL policies and procedures.
- Programmes of study refer to both awards (micro-credentials) and qualifications within the MQF
- The term candidate is used to describe an individual submitting an RPL claim, distinguishing them from other learners or applicants.

What is RPL?

RPL is the process for recognising learning that has come from experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.

This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations as through life and work experiences [SCQF definition 2010].

Different types of RPL

- **Recognition of Prior Learning** is achieved when an individual can have their learning formally assessed and quality assured to be successfully admitted to or gain exemptions from components or parts of a formal qualification or award using learning outcomes.
- Formative RPL
- Summative RPL
- Credit Transfer

Overarching RPL Principles

1. be learner-centred and fair, and respect the privacy of the individual;
2. take account of Equality and Diversity issues;
3. be accessible and flexible;
4. be given for the learning and not the experience alone;
5. use the MQF in determining the level, volume and depth of evidence;
6. be reliable, transparent and consistent;
7. involve formal assessment for summative claims;
8. be recognised to be of the same value of learning gained in formal learning;
9. be quality assured both internally and externally; and
10. be in line with any Statutory Legislation.

RPL Provider Application Process

- its staff has a good understanding of RPL and awareness of MFHEA guidance; principles and procedures instead of the word guidance.
- it has sufficient staff capacity to manage its RPL processes;
- it has a clear RPL policy in place which adheres to the requirements listed in this document;
- it has completed the MFHEA's RPL Application Form.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers

- RPL Policy
- Accessing RPL
- Support for Candidates
- Assessing RPL Claims
- Completing the RPL Process

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers:

RPL Policy

Institutions must have an overarching RPL policy which outlines:

- *the scope and nature of their RPL activities including:*
 - *the types of RPL service provided*
 - *how RPL can be used to gain access to or exemption from programmes of study within the institution*
 - *what can and cannot be recognised/transferred*
 - *extent of RPL allowed;*
- *the responsibilities for the RPL processes within the institution;*
- *arrangements for staff development and capacity building in RPL;*
- *how the RPL recognition process and use of credit transfer are monitored and quality assured.*

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Accessing RPL

Providers must detail how the use and requirements of RPL are promoted to learners.

These must include, as a minimum, information about:

- how a claim for RPL links to an offer for admission to a programme of study;
- the possible outcomes of a process of RPL including the minimum and maximum amount of credit available through RPL;
- who is responsible for processing RPL claims (e.g., at institution or departmental level);
- how the institution's RPL service can be accessed.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Accessing RPL

Providers must clearly detail the application process. They must include, as a minimum, information about:

- the detail required in a claim (for example, does the candidate need to state exactly what they wish exemption from and how much exemption they are seeking);
- the format of the submission;
- the quantity and type of evidence that will be acceptable (this can include micro-credentials, online learning, e-portfolios, online certifications, digital badges);
- the timescales of the RPL process and the links to the overall timescales of the institutional application process.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Accessing RPL

Providers must detail the fees associated with a claim for RPL. This should include, as a minimum, information about:

- the cost of the process for individuals;
- any impact on any subsequent programme of study fees.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Accessing RPL

The institution's procedures relating to access to RPL should therefore reflect the following underpinning principles:

- learner-centred and fair, and respects the privacy of the individual;
- taking account of Equality and Diversity issues;
- accessibility and flexibility.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Supporting Candidates

Providers must clearly detail the guidance and support that will be provided to candidates. This must include, as a minimum, information about:

- the tools and/or the processes which will be available to enable the candidate to reflect upon their experience;
- the guidance and support that will be available to assist the candidate in matching their evidence with programme of study learning outcomes;
- the amount and type of support that a candidate can expect from the institution staff;
- the timeline for the process and how this links to other institutional timelines and processes.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Supporting Candidates

Providers must detail clear responsibilities for staff for providing guidance and support. This must include, as a minimum, information about:

- key roles in the RPL process and the experience, qualifications and/or training required for those roles;
- which roles will be responsible for guidance and support at each stage of the process;
- the guidance and support provided by each role.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Supporting Candidates

For the benefit of candidates, providers must clearly outline the evidence which will be accepted for an RPL claim. This must include, as a minimum, information about:

— the agreed criteria for evidence in terms of:

1. Acceptability
2. Sufficiency
3. Authenticity
4. Currency

— the types of evidence accepted, especially where these are particular to an individual subject area or profession;

— the acceptance of micro-credentials, online learning, e-portfolios, online certifications, digital badges.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Assessing RPL Claims

Providers must detail the process of assessment. This should include, as a minimum, information about:

- the MQF levels and their link to the assessment process;
- other possible reference points;
- the matching process to learning outcomes.

Providers must ensure that staff assessing claims has a clear and common understanding of the evidence which will be accepted for an RPL claim and this should be in line with what is advertised to candidates.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Assessing RPL Claims

Providers must detail the recording requirements for decisions. This must include, as a minimum, information about:

- the level of detail required in rationales;
- the format of recording decisions;
- the possible decisions that can be made and the criteria for those

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Assessing RPL Claims

Providers must detail the steps in place to ensure that all RPL decisions are made consistently and appropriately.

This must include, as a minimum, information about:

- the process for ensuring the consistency and reliability of decision making (sometimes known as moderation or verification);
- the process for recording the checking of RPL decisions;
- the way this process ties into other institutional internal and external quality assurance systems at subject/programme of study level.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Communicating RPL Outcomes

Providers must have a process for informing candidates of the outcomes of their RPL claim. This should include, as a minimum, information about:

- the level and amount of credit awarded;
- the grounds for resubmissions and appeals;
- the process for resubmissions and appeals (including timescales);
- the guidance and support that will be provided if a candidate needs to resubmit a claim;
- the next steps in the process following a successful claim, including arrangements for entry to the programme of study and timescales.

RPL Policy & Procedure Guidelines for Providers: Procedures for Communicating RPL Outcomes

Providers must record any successful RPL and/or credit transfer. This should include, as a minimum, information about:

- the processes which will be undertaken to formally record successful credit transfer or RPL within the institution;
- a clear description of how and where the RPL and/or credit transfer will be shown/recorded on a candidate's record/transcript/certificate.

Providers must have a process for monitoring and review of the overall institutional RPL process to ensure consistency and fairness of approach. This should include, as a minimum, information about:

- how the monitoring and review of the overall systems will be carried out;
- the responsibilities for that monitoring;
- the reporting structures and how any actions/changes will be followed up.

Support for RPL Providers

- Post-Approval Check-In
- General Support and Capacity Building
- RPL Provider Network
- Annual RPL Conference

Thank you!

**Interactive
session:
Implementing
lifelong learning
in the context of
the EHEA**





Join Mentimeter and define LLL

- <https://www.menti.com/alqsj5nweqqf>

Appreciative inquiry

- Strengths based, affirmative approach
- 3 rounds of 15 minutes in groups of 5
- **Round 1:** What works best for you when implementing LLL?
- **Round 2:** What could work even better in implementing LLL?
- **Round 3:** What should we have for better implementation of LLL?

Reporting in plenary

- One successful approach for LLL
- One potentially successful approach for LLL
- One action you intend to take to make the potential a reality

**feasibility
study on
national
lifelong
learning
platforms**





the voice of education in Europe

we promote a holistic vision to **lifelong learning**, from cradle to grave, by facilitating European cross-sector cooperation among civil society organisations in education and training and voicing citizens' concerns

our network is **45 EU NGOs strong**

- founded in **2005**
- **60.000+** education and training institutions
- **2.5 millions** individuals



our objectives for lifelong learning

build **inclusive and democratic** education systems

widen **access to quality education** for all citizens

increase the **relevance of education** to modern societies

our members represent all education stakeholders and sectors

- learners
- educators
- practitioners
- parents
- volunteers...
- formal
- non-formal
- informal



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL & LOCAL AUTHORITY EDUCATION LEADERS



European Educational Exchanges Youth for Understanding



European Educational Exchanges Youth for Understanding



European Federation for Intercultural Learning - EUIL



European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training



EucA



EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR EUROPEAN EDUCATION



Putting children at the heart of Europe



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION



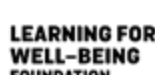
Inspiring History and Citizenship Educators



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF NETWORKS FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING



FICEMEA



Unione delle Università del Mediterraneo
Mediterranean Universities Union
Union des Universités de la Méditerranée
اتحاد الجامعات المتوسطية



Creating a Better World



Youth for Exchange and Understanding

presentation of results

Andrei Frank,
policy and advocacy
manager



feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms



- Study conducted every 7 years (2011, 2018, 2025)
- Focusing on 5 countries: Finland, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia & Spain
- 150 Respondents from different sectors, working at different levels

What is a national lifelong learning platform?



- A representative body that brings together diverse sectors and stakeholders. This platform aims to ensure that learners of all ages have access to opportunities that support their personal and professional development across the entirety of their lives

feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms



- Understanding of lifelong learning.
- Awareness of existing EU policies and initiatives.
- Stakeholder engagement in policy making processes
- Cross-sectoral collaboration and potential for national (or regional) lifelong learning platforms

lifelong learning?



32% ▶

**Holistic
understanding of
LLL**

42% ▶

**LLL as adult education
and learning**

why lifelong learning?



- Jacques Delors' vision, three decades later
- Skills development must go hand-in-hand with fostering knowledge and positive attitudes
- Re-envision education and training as an ongoing process
- Break silos, connect different strategies, maintain policy coherence

why lifelong learning?



- Broaden the focus of lifelong learning strategies to fully integrate non-formal and informal learning opportunities.
- Any broad policymaking approach to lifelong learning strategies requires full understanding and involvement of stakeholders.

why national lifelong learning platforms?



15% - 30%

Awareness of EU policies

39% - 70%

Awareness of EU funding programmes

why national lifelong learning platforms?



- exchange best practices and share knowledge
- meet new collaborators and access funding
- better understand EU, national, and local policies
- contribute more to policy making processes
- provide a valuable way to disseminate information
- more opportunities to work in a cross-sectoral way

why national lifelong learning platforms?



- **Maintain and strengthen hubs** such as Erasmus+ National Agencies for the dissemination of these initiatives across Member States as well as **guaranteeing a thriving civic space** with properly funded organised civil society to amplify communication efforts, ensuring cohesive dissemination of lifelong learning initiatives.

why cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder?



70-80%

Participation in networks and alliances at local, regional and national level

45-55%

Participate in cross-sectoral and/or multi-stakeholder networks

why cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder?



- Success in skill strategy initiatives through cross-sectoral approach & multi-stakeholder cooperation -> expand
- Support Member States in development, implementation and monitoring in a coherent way

why cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder?



- Re-focus the attention to policies and initiatives with development of competences at the centre
- More transparency in selection processes & identify challenges to stakeholder participation
- Put into practice these approaches beyond policy development towards implementation, monitoring and evaluation

the interest on
networks /
alliances is clear

50% ▶

Interest in joining a
national (regional) lifelong
learning platform

how to make these platforms a reality?



4.57 ▶

**Lack of (financial)
resources**

3.92 ▶

**Over emphasis in formal
education at the
expense
of non-formal learning**

how to make these platforms a reality?



- Prioritise strengthening and maximising their benefits where these platforms already exist
- Incentivise stakeholders to come together in a more formalised way, where they don't.
- Explore how different types of administration and legislation affect the engagement of stakeholders in such collaborative platforms

do LLL platforms actually exist?



- 15-30% identifying them at national and regional level
- The numbers diminish based on our assessment of existing networks for collaboration
- The end goal is not a National Lifelong Learning Platform
- A proxy for collaboration

success factors



- **Lifelong Learning Strategy** - Slovenia coming closest, but not renewed since 2007; currently working with a National Skills Strategy
- Institutionalised processes for **stakeholder engagement** in policy development, implementation, monitoring
- **Funding** for activities focused on cooperating cross-sectorally for trust building
- Changing **indicators** for impact in E&T to expand beyond formal education

“Educating the hands without also educating the mind and heart is no education at all”