

PRALINE
PEER REVIEW IN ADULT LEARNING
TO IMPROVE FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

WARMING-UP STRATEGY



#WUpS

WARMING-UP STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING A QUALITY CULTURE

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PREMISE

At European level, the strategic framework for cooperation in Education and Training 2020¹ calls for a response to the challenges of **creating a knowledge-based Europe** and **making lifelong learning a reality for all**. This policy orientation has been recently revised² to take into account the urgent challenges faced, as *restoring job creation and economic recovery, bridging the investment gap, enhancing social cohesion and giving radicalisation and violence priority attention*. The process has confirmed most of the priorities and objectives previously agreed, reinforcing, in the case of Adult Learning, the focus on:

- **Governance** – ensure coherence of adult learning with other policy areas, improve coordination and effectiveness and relevance to needs of society, economy and the environment, and increase investments;
- **Supply and take up** – significantly increase the supply of high quality AL provision, especially in literacy, numeracy and digital skills, and increase take-up through effective outreach, guidance and motivation strategies targeting groups most in need;
- **Flexibility and access** – widen access by increasing availability of workplace-based learning and making affective use of ICT; put in place procedures to identify and assess the skills of low qualified adults and provide sufficient second-chance opportunities leading to a recognised EQF qualification for those without level 3 qualifications;
- **Quality** – improve quality assurance, including monitoring and impact assessment, improve initial and continuing education of adult educators and collect necessary data on needs to effectively target and design provision³.

Within the framework of the *PRALINE – Peer Review in Adult Learning to Improve formal and Non-formal Education* project, thanks to the specific competences of the promoters, it has been considered necessary to develop an awareness raising and outreach strategy with the **objectives** of:

- initiating Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Adult Learning providers to Quality Culture and Quality Assurance systems;
- contributing to make lifelong learning a reality for all European citizens, rising adults' participation into learning opportunities as well as adults' awareness about its importance.

In the complex picture of descriptions of Quality and quality concepts, PRALINE partners have agreed on the **definition of the idea of Quality Culture**⁴ as an environment in which quality is not perceived as conformity to standards and requirements, but as an attitude shared by all the involved actors, including learners, that makes everybody within a given organization considering him-/herself responsible for quality. An attitude that could be described as tension to excellence and continuous improvement; attention for the other stakeholders' needs. In order to be effective, such Quality Culture has to be objectified through a suitable Quality Management system, able to sustain the organization in monitoring and evaluating processes and outcomes.

The planning, implementation and assessment of the Strategy is expected to considerably strengthen the cooperation within the adult learning domain.

¹ Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), [Official Journal C 119 of 28.5.2009].

² Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), *New Priorities for European cooperation in education and training* [SWD(2015) 161 final].

³ Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), *New Priorities for European cooperation in education and training* [SWD(2015) 161 final] – Annex 2: Specific VET and AL priorities up to 2020.

⁴ For more extensive picture of the academic definitions of Quality Culture, please consult the Glossary at: <http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/qualityculture.htm>.

The strategy, referred to as **Warming-up Strategy (WUpS)**, has been developed taking into account the fragmented nature of the Adult Learning (AL) domain as emerged by EU-level research and policies, and the country-related specificities highlighted through the analysis conducted by the *Observatory Centre for Educational Development* of the Corvinus University of Budapest⁵ and through the Questionnaires for learners and AL professionals⁶. The **Adult Learning sector** includes a variety of educational opportunities, differentiated for sub-target groups, learning objectives and environment, and becomes even more fragmented while considering, as this Strategy does, the Non-formal and Informal learning. An account of the mentioned research and analysis is given in *section 1.I* and *1.II* of this document.

Specifically, partners have chosen to work at a joint Strategy (see chapter 2) under the coordination of Regione Umbria (IT) and Associazione FORMA.Azione (IT), and then adapt its contents to the national contexts to proceed to its implementation. Specifically, the planning of the WUpS campaigns at national level passes from the definition of Executive Plans (see chapter 5). Thanks to the activation of Stakeholders Committees in each of the countries covered by the PRALINE partnership at the beginning of 2015, both phases have been developed also upon consultation on actual needs with all the main actors involved in Adult Learning planning, implementation and assessment. To this, also has significantly contributed the presence of complementary competences and roles within the partner organizations themselves⁷.

From a **methodological perspective**, this document is based on the approach proposed by the European Guide on *“Strategies for Improving participation in and awareness of adult learning”* based on the best practices identified across Member States concerning overarching strategies for enhancing the impact of adult education on society. It suggests to refer to the following steps for the development of a coherent and effective campaign:

- a. **Set objectives**
- b. **Identify target groups**
- c. **Identify tools/channels**
- d. **Identify partners/networks**
- e. **Identify funding**
- f. **Develop messages**
- g. **Other planning considerations**
- h. **Develop campaign**
- i. **Promote campaign**
- j. **Monitor & evaluate**

For the purpose of the WUpS, some of this steps have been taken forward at transnational level while others have rather been transferred to the national or regional level, as more dependent on the contextual features of the community in which the Strategy is implemented. Specifically, **a, b, c, f, g** and **j** have been defined and agreed on together, taking into account the wider European picture, and therefore are exhaustively detailed in *section 2*. Differently, the campaign development suggested in step **h**, which corresponds to the implementation of the Strategy, has been considered as a competence of the promoters/organizers at implementation level. Therefore

⁵ The Desk Analysis produced by the PRALINE project is available in: <http://www.praline-project.eu/downloads.asp>.

⁶ The PRALINE Questionnaires for Adult Learners and AL Professionals are available in the project website in English, Italian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, French and Hungarian: <http://www.praline-project.eu/news.asp?id=1>, <http://www.praline-project.eu/news.asp?id=2>

⁷ PRALINE partners are the promoters of the Warming-up Strategy and will be responsible for the definition and implementation of the campaign in IT, PT, LT and MT. The Consortium is multi-actor and multi-country, and is made of the following organizations: Associazione FORMA.Azione (IT – private VET and AE provider), Regione Umbria (IT – regional administration), LETU - Lietuvos svietimo profesine sajunga (LT – teachers’ trade union), CECOIA – Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins (PT, VET provider), Europäische Peer Review Vereinigung (AT – umbrella association for European Peer Review), Malta Union of Teachers (MT, trade union), Observatory Centre for Educational Development of the Budapesti Corvinus University (HU – university research centre), C.I.O.F.S. Formazione Professionale (IT – VET provider) and EPLEFPA 08 (FR – school and AE provider).

this document only includes general recommendations on the activities and tasks to be realised for the running of the WUpS, resting on identified good practices, and so to guarantee coherency among strategies carried out in different contexts. Lastly, for the specificities of the proposed Strategy in terms of multidimensional and multi-actor approach, *e* and *i* have required both a common development and a community-specific one. Being part of a EU-funded project activities, the Strategy is already the result of cooperation among partners and stakeholders and for that the step *d* is not separately addressed in the document but rather represents a preliminary and essential task.

The choice has been supported by good practices, such as the NOSTE Programme run by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture⁸, that have experienced “**centralised strategy and decentralised delivery**”. It seems to best suit with the need of addressing common European challenges while allowing for flexible and context-determined implementation, the only able to produce sustainable impact on the target groups and community as a whole.

⁸ More information about existing awareness-raising initiatives can be found in the European Guide, Strategies for improving participation in and awareness of adult learning.

INDEX

1.	PRALINE PROJECT	pag. 7
2.	WARMING-UP STRATEGY	pag. 9
3.	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS	pag. 17
4.	CONTEXT	pag. 18
	4.1. RESULTS OF THE DESK ANALYSIS	pag. 18
	4.2. INTRODUCTION TO THE PRALINE QUESTIONNAIRES	pag. 29
5.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	pag. 32
6.	SITOGRAPHY	pag. 33

ANNEXES

- I. IN-DEPTH DESK ANALYSIS OF NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF THE ADULT LEARNING SECTOR
- II. ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES FOR ADULT LEARNERS & AL PROFESSIONALS
- III. EXECUTIVE PLANS FOR IT – LT – PT – MT

2. PRALINE PROJECT

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

PRALINE **aims** at developing innovative and sustainable initiatives to support Adult Learning providers, specifically those of the non-formal domain, in approaching Quality Assurance in their organization and training provision. Indeed Quality culture, intended as aware focus on learning outcomes, sector professionals' training, resources, models of management, organizational patterns, is a priority in the EU Agenda for AL aimed at ensuring the "possibilities for adults to access high-quality learning opportunities, regardless of gender and their personal and family circumstances".

To do this, PRALINE partners have set up a **twofold strategy** that whilst rises the awareness of the importance of investing in Quality by initiating AL providers through a “Warming-up Strategy for developing a Quality Culture”, calls for a different mind-set offering an engaging tool, based on a bottom-up approach, friendly, able to ensure a focus on learning outcomes and aware of the different/flexible needs of adult learners: Peer Review. It combines self-evaluation and external evaluation carried out by "persons of equal standing" with the persons whose performance is reviewed: Peers. Already implemented successfully in IVET and CVET in previous EU projects by some of the partners it has proven easy to be used and coherent with the primarily informal approaches that characterize AL at large.

The impact on the Quality of Formal and Non-formal AL provision will be realised by implementing the following **activities**:

- Design of the “Warming-up strategy for developing a quality culture”, based on a in-depth desk analysis of needs and challenges of the Adult Learning Sector, also integrated by context surveys and learners needs analysis
- Carrying out of the Warming-up Strategy, throughout the whole project development and by the means of events, marketing campaigns, quality prize, informative workshops, initiation to Peer Review, etc.. (at least 300 AL providers reached)
- Adaptation of the Peer Review Methodology for the AL sectors, by the revision of the TOOL-BOX (Quality Areas and indicators) and the Manual
- Transnational training for trainers, targeting staff of the partners’ organizations who need to acquire specific competences on the adapted methodology as well as on how to transfer it to other AL providers (20 participants)
- Training for Peers at national level as a way to involve and motivate further AL providers (at least 50) in implementing PR in their organizations
- Piloting of the Adapted Peer Review methodology in at least 15 Formal & Non formal AL providers in IT, PT, LT, MT and FR
- Review and finalization of the adapted Peer Review Methodology through qualitative analysis and with the involvement of AL providers, learners, stakeholder and policy makers
Production of Recommendations for developing a quality culture and implementing peer review in formal and non-formal adult learning sector
- Dissemination/exploitation of the results.

Activities will lead to the following **Intellectual Outputs**:

- O1 Warming-up Strategy for Quality
- O2 Tool-Box of the European Peer Review methodology for Adult Learning
- O3 Manual of the European Peer Review methodology for Adult Learning
- O4 Qualitative Analysis on the piloting of PR in AL
- O5 Recommendations

The process of transferring and adaptation of the PR methodology, by producing Quality Areas and indicators adequate to AL sector, represents an innovative contribution to the European discussion on quality in adult learning: it will generate a common framework for QA in AL, coherent with the EQAVET indicators and applicable beyond PR for the assessment of adult learning processes and outcomes.

Last but not least PRALINE promotes an active involvement of Adult learners in two key activities: the Warming-up Strategy and the review and finalization as partners strongly believe that through a participatory process, on one side the developed tools will be more responsive to the sector needs and, on the other, learners will become promoters of a quality provision in Formal&Non-formal Learning, able to impact on them in terms of up-skilling competences and increase participation rate (EU priorities set for the Adult Education).

PRALINE **9-partners multi-actor Consortium** includes organizations from Italy, Portugal, Malta, France, Lithuania, Hungary and Austria. Specifically, the following ones:

1. **Associazione FORMA.Azione** (Project Coordinator), private VET and AL provider with extensive expertise in Quality Assurance in VET and AL – www.azione.com;
2. **Regione Umbria** – Department of Active Policies for Employment Services (**IT**), responsible of VET and AL legislation and planning at regional level – www.regione.umbria.it;
3. **LŠPS - LIETUVOS ŠVIETIMO PROFESINĖ SAJUNGA (LT)**, the largest trade union organisation for education employees in Lithuania with about 9000 members, and deeply committed to influence the education policy of the Government and employers - www.svietimoprofsajunga.lt;
4. **CECOA - Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins (PT)**, a public vocational training centre that promotes educational activities and vocational training, including the apprenticeship in the commerce and services sectors, at national level - www.cecoa.pt
5. **EPRA – European Peer Review Association (AT)**, voluntary, non-profit European association to promote and implement Peer Review across Europe - www.peer-review-network.eu;
6. **MUT – Malta Union of Teachers (MT)**, the largest sectoral trade union in Malta, representing educators and allied professionals across the whole spectrum of education, with over 7.000 members - www.mut.org.mt;
7. **Observatory Centre for Educational Development at Corvinus University of Budapest (HU)**, dedicated to the development of the education sector, with a special focus on vocational education and training (VET) as well as adult training and education - www.uni-corvinus.hu - <http://observatory.org.hu/>;
8. **C.I.O.F.S. Formazione Professionale (IT)**, non-profit association delivering vocational training, guidance and labour-market oriented services mainly to beneficiaries at risk of social exclusion - www.ciofs-fp.org;
9. **Lycée des Métiers du Bois et de l'éco-construction - EPLEFPA 76 (FR)**, public school with a team of 50 teachers and administrators, specialized in professional training for wood-related jobs - www.eplefpa76.educagri.fr [until July 2015]
10. **Etablissement Public Local d'Enseignement et de Formation Professionnelle Agricole de RETHEL (FR)**, VET and AL public school for the agriculture sector [from September 2015].

WARMING-UP STRATEGY

According to the "Developing the Adult Learning Sector - Quality in the Adult Learning Sector" by Panteia (2013), taking for granted the need of a Quality framework for the AL sector, it is said that once the overarching system will have been developed, it will take 5 to 7 years to have it implemented at provider level. What is needed, indeed, is a mind-set change, especially for the non-formal AL providers. By working transnationally, the WUpS intends to contribute to the acceleration of this process, integrating overarching interventions with a bottom-up approach.

The *Warming-up Strategy* is thought as a **multi-actor and multi-level initiative**, which combines promotional and awareness raising activities. The promotional activities, such as slogan for Quality, conferences, seminars, production and distribution of informative materials, stickers, etc. have the ultimate intention of providing learners, professionals and the other actors involved with an idea of **principles and logic behind Quality Assurance practices** (using common EQAVET terminology); whereas of the others is to activate and involve them into the European Peer Review implementation.

SET OBJECTIVES

In order for the Strategy to be comprehensive and result-oriented, it has been necessary to define its overall objectives. Also, to ensure the achievement of the results and guarantee the sustainability of the WUpS, they have been delineated coherently with the policies and initiatives planned at European level as well as in partners' countries. To this regard, it certainly shares the EU2020 target of having at least 15% of adults' participating in lifelong learning opportunities in Member States and the commitments of the Council Resolution on a *Renewed European Agenda for adult learning* (2011).

WUpS' **strategic goals** are the following:

1. promoting quality culture⁹ among all actors involved in Adult learning and Lifelong Learning, through a multi-stakeholder approach;
2. contributing to the development of a common language and a common understanding of Quality in the sector of Adult Education, with specific focus on Non-formal learning¹⁰;
3. activating adult learners (also potential ones) about the personal, social and professional benefits of participating in a Quality learning activity, providing them indications on how to evaluate learning opportunities;
4. engaging the key actors of the different domains of Adult Learning, including new potential ones interested in the sector opportunities;
5. raising awareness among the identified actors, specifically those acting in the non-formal and informal areas, about the importance of ensuring an accountable, transparent, comparable quality Adult learning system at EU level;
6. creating opportunities for AL professionals already involved in Quality Assurance systems to share as peers their experiences and practices to boost continuous improvement in the sector.

The transnational character of the proposed Strategy asks for a more detailed account of specific objectives directly at implementation level, either regionally or nationally according to the organization(s) who is/are promoting and realizing it¹¹. Within PRALINE timeframe, the following transnational objectives have been set:

- to reach out **at least 600 adults**, including both actual and potential learners;

⁹ Please consult definition in the Premise, p. 4.

¹⁰ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Action Plan on Adult learning - It is always a good time to learn /* COM/2007/0558 final */).

¹¹ See Annexes I to IV – Executive Plans.

- to inform and involve **at least 300 organizations** acting as Adult Learning providers, both from the Formal and Non-formal domains;
- to have **at least 60%** of the professionals involved through the WUpS **from the management** of AL providers, considered as pivotal actors for an improved quality in AL;
- to involve **at least 5 ETUCE members** in the implementation of the WUpS.

IDENTIFY PARTNERS

“Adult education is thought to be best promoted if campaign initiatives are developed and implemented through joint stakeholders cooperation networks¹²”

Indeed, the achievement of the goals above mentioned is also depending on the identification and involvement of the key stakeholders, and on the set up of a sustainable network among them. The multi-actor composition of the Consortium who has pushed forward this Strategy has allowed a multi-perspective planning process since the really beginning, bearer also of the territorial differences and specificities. This approach has also been replicated by PRALINE partners at regional and/or national level for the definition and design of the respective Executive Plans, thanks to the Stakeholders’ Committees established.

For the purpose of this Strategy, identified stakeholders are divided into two groups:

1. **actors capable of reaching out to adult learners** through multiple target group-specific intervention strategies;
2. **structural change-makers**, namely those who can bring forward necessary changes in policy structures and produce operational channels¹³.

Below a **list of Stakeholders** that could be activated at local level, with **relative specific roles**:

- *ERASMUS+ National Agencies*, that can collect and maximise efforts at national level, and influence future EU investment priorities in the field of lifelong learning;
- *Social partners*, that have a privileged interaction with target groups to educate them on the benefits of adult education;
- *Enterprises*, whose management has to be more aware of the importance of having dynamic workers participating in continuous learning, and need themselves to be activated as learning promoters and, eventually, providers;
- *Regional and local governments*, that can analyse local needs of the population, facilitate the access to information and learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and in some cases also promulgate adult learning policies;
- *Formal and Non-Formal Education providers*, that have first to be convinced of the importance of a quality provision and of the relevance of their work throughout adults’ lifetime, and then can involve learners and invest on professionals’ competences;
- *Associations and no-profit organizations*, that operate at the grassroots of society, also delivering non-formal and informal learning and can raise awareness among adults on lifelong learning.

The strong efforts made by WUpS promoters to involve relevant stakeholders is justified by experiences as the Adult Learners’ Week in the UK, which organization foresees the participation of representative from national and regional governments. The process requires the mutual recognition of interests that leads to the organizers partially adapting the events considering the agenda of the policy-makers, and to the policy-makers and administrators participating not just as simple listener, but with commitment.

¹² European Guide, *Strategies for improving participation and awareness of adult learning* (2012).

¹³ European Guide, *Strategies for improving participation and awareness of adult learning* (2012), p. 10.

IDENTIFY TARGET GROUPS

The analysis of the Target Groups has been first carried out in the process of identification of the members of the Stakeholders' Committees in Italy, Portugal, France, Malta and Lithuania. Specifically, the Warming-up Strategy intends to reach out to the **following target groups**:

- **General public**, and particularly adult citizens above 18, for which learning represents an opportunity for improving *life skills*, including both employment prospects and social skills to achieve a healthier and more satisfactory life-style;
- **Adult learning providers**, for which their learning provision has to be connected to certain quality standards in order for adult learners to gain the expected impact above outlined;
- **Associations and organizations**, for which the activity as providers of formal/informal learning is not the core mission and therefore tend not to recognise the implications in terms of impact of their activities on participants/members/affiliates and their lifelong learning expectations;
- **Enterprises**, for which adult learning represents an effective way to improve workforce performances and retention, and in turn improve the business competitiveness;
- **Policy-makers**, for which adult learning represents at the same time an opportunity for the development of the community and an expenditure to be justified for supporting the removal of the structural barriers.

The involvement of the different stakeholders targeted is expected to increase the relevance of learning provision, and in turn the impact of ET2020, as suggested also by the most recent policy developments¹⁴.

Even though the WUpS is intended to raise the rate of adults participating in education and training activities, **it is meant to achieve that by pushing forward a quality discussion about adult learning**, in terms of organization, process and impact at provider and individual level.

The Executive Plans developed at country level may choose to focus on some of the potential Target Groups identified, according to the scope of the promoting organization(s), the number and credit of supporting ones such as sponsors, and the state of the art of the context. Generally, however, adult learners, Adult Learning providers and media will be targeted in all the countries. **Adult learners** because, as already anticipated for the Questionnaires in section 4.2, each and every activity can act as occasion for raising awareness and to keep *alive* the discourse over the role of lifelong learning in adults' personal and social development. When detailing the Executive Plans, it is important to research the **specific sub-targets** to ensure that the approaches respectively reflect their needs and take into consideration their preferences to identify the right involvement methods: different between actual and potential learners, between low-skilled and highly-trained people, between young people and over 45, and tailored for marginalised groups, etc. By targeting them, **WUpS is expected to raise awareness about the EU vision on lifelong learning and its potential impact in terms of social, personal and professional continuous improvement**. Indeed, the EU target of having at least 15% of adults on average participating in lifelong learning has not been reached in none of the partners' countries but France, imposing us to facilitate adults' approaching to learning. Also, by doing so, adults from 25 to 64 will be offered insights on what is a quality learning provision and on how to assess (or be supported in assessing) the competences developed. Activities addressed to AL beneficiaries are also meant to transfer them the *coordinates* to be adopted to fully advantage of the learning opportunities. To this regard, **the Strategy includes messages and information about the types of learning environments, the expected impact to be looked for, the key competences**, etc. delivered in a way that make these ideas/concepts easily understandable by every person, including groups at risk of exclusion.

¹⁴ Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), *New Priorities for European cooperation in education and training* [SWD(2015) 161 final], p. 7.

The involvement of **professionals and providers** from Formal and Non-formal Adult Learning is also functional to the **dissemination of the European Peer Review methodology for Adult Learning** that has been developed by the promoters of the Strategy within the PRALINE project framework. Such methodology has been already used effectively in various educational domain thanks to its approach at the same time rigorous and friendly, as well as for its tending towards continuous improvement rather than to inspective evaluation.

Considering one of the specific aims of PRALINE project, that is supporting not accredited organizations in understanding how to benefit from a quality provision of learning opportunities, a constant attention will be focused on guaranteeing the **involvement of providers coming from the “Non Formal Vocational AL” and “Non Formal and Non Vocational AL” segments**. The “Formal Vocational Training” and “Formal Education” will however not be left aside, above all for the role they can play in sharing their experiences and practices with the less experienced (in terms of Quality Assurance) providers, and in testing the adapted Peer Review methodology developed by the PRALINE project.

By targeting **media** or other actors with a high potential for dissemination, the content of the Strategy will be multiplied to the wider public and at community level. Also, by including them since the first steps of WUpS planning, it increases the possibility of receiving their support as active promoters of the Strategy itself.

PROVIDERS	VOCATIONAL	NON VOCATIONAL
Non Formal	Enterprises Social partners, in particular trade unions Adult education centres Centres of lifelong education Adult education centres	Folk high schools People’s universities Centres for liberal studies Centres for popular adult education Centres for senior citizens education Adult education centres Popular or open universities Centres of lifelong education Adult education centres
Formal	Vocational training centres Vocational/professional schools Continuing education and training providers Social partners, in particular trade unions Secondary education schools Centres of lifelong education Adult education centres	Higher education establishments Secondary education schools Centres of lifelong education Adult education centres
Informal		Cultural Institutions (museums, exhibitions, ...) NGO - non-governmental organisations Civil society organisations Associations, Foundations Media Local and regional development organisations Local and regional authorities, municipalities

In summary, the beneficiaries of the actions to be implemented under the Warming up Strategy will be the following:

- **Non Formal Vocational AL providers and Non Formal Not Vocational AL providers** (e.g. manufacturing firms, craft enterprises, enterprises of agriculture and tourism sector, cultural associations, etc.) that consider themselves as occasional or potential provider and that do not recognize the AL as central to their mission, with particular attention to the role of companies with regard to training on the job;
- **Occasional and potential AL users**, especially adults who are unemployed or adult out of the labour market;
- **Expert AL users**;
- **Organizations that provide a stable and continuous AL offer as authorized or accredited** (schools, centres of Adult education and training, universities, training agencies).

A more complete list of relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries for the AL sector can be found in the Glossary of the European Peer Review Manual for Adult Learning [www.praline-project.eu].

IDENTIFY TOOLS/CHANNELS

As emerged by recent experiences of the PRALINE partners and by the research reported in the EU Guide “Strategies for Improving participation in and awareness of adult learning”, to use activities not commonly associated with adult learning or activities that are enjoyed by the specific target group has proven to be successful to engage potential learners.

From a methodological point of view, the WUpS has chosen to encourage the adoption of **peer learning** as basis for the activities to be realised for each of the identified group of beneficiaries. Indeed, it follows from a clear commitment of the PRALINE network to the importance and efficacy of the direct exchange between learners, professionals and other involved actors, which is also at the basis of the proposed *European Peer Review methodology* for Quality Assurance in Adult Learning¹⁵. Apart from accelerating skill acquisition, peer to peer interaction has proven to lead to the development of transversal like skills particularly important in the case of low-skilled and/or low-motivated adults.

Furthermore, the **tools** developed and adopted for the implementation of the WUpS are as much as possible **multipurpose**. Indeed, they should serve more than one target group and have the qualities to impact both on adults’ participation rate in lifelong learning and on the quality of the education provision they have access to. This is the case, for instance, of the Questionnaires distributed to adult learners and to AL professionals that, while asking opinions on the characteristics able to determine a more effective learning process, were also informing the target groups on the different types of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) and on the concept of “learning outcomes” as *unit of measure* of the impact of the activity.

Within this framework, for example, the following types of **activities/events** could be promoted:

- Focus Group for providers of Non-Formal and Informal Adult learning aimed at exploring access barriers of the sector, competences of the sector professionals with regard to QA, Quality criteria, etc.;
- Informative seminars for providers of Formal Adult Education for validating the Peer Review methodology and improving the learning outcomes approach;
- Open Days of the AL providers;
- Bilateral meetings with relevant actors at local/regional and national level;
- *Get Inspired* speakers involved in promotional events and recorded for wider diffusion;
- Candidature to the “Learning cities” programme promoted by UNESCO¹⁶

¹⁵ For more information on the methodology visit: www.peer-review-network.eu/pages/welcome.php?lang=EN. For specifics on the European Peer Review methodology for Adult Learning, please consult also PRALINE website: www.praline-project.eu/.

¹⁶ See UNESCO, *Global Network of Learning Cities*, <http://learningcities.uil.unesco.org/home>.

- Focus Group for adult beneficiaries (either employed or unemployed);
- Social Network accounts and active online presence;
- Quality Coffee – an open debate space for all the participants;
- Board for the promotion of AL opportunities in the region/country;
- Quality Prize in 2016 (*Activity Code: O1-A8*);
- Etc.

In order to meet local and/or National needs, as well as for budgetary reasons, the Warming-up Strategy will be adapted by each partner with the support of the Stakeholders' Committee. For that, as anticipated, the activities are expected to be different from one country to the other.

IDENTIFY SOURCES OF FUNDING

The final identification of funding sources is expected to be conducted at regional/national level but some suggestions are listed below:

- **European Structural Funds** are traditional sources of funding that can be considered the most adequate to put piloting projects into practice. Especially the new programming period 2014-2020 being focussed on Social Inclusion can finance Adult Learning projects aimed at reducing the disparity between high skilled and low skilled people at risk of social marginalization. Moreover, by the easiest combination of ESF and ERDF funded projects it is possible to finance projects aimed at both train adults as entrepreneurs and start-up their own business idea.
- **Solicit sponsorship from private companies as well as consumer associations** which can have a direct benefit from the increased awareness/knowledge of adults, for instance in the field of healthy Food and beverage, Energy Saving products, High performing digital devices.
- **Strengthen the interaction among stakeholders** and set medium-term common objectives to pool resources, avoid overlapping and optimizing expenditures.

Lastly, the reduction of the costs of a similar campaign could be achieved by activating on a voluntary basis retired people, who have competences in teaching and providing cultural activities as trainer/teacher as well as mentor/tutor of adults learning projects. It would also have positive impact in terms of active ageing, by entrusting a renovated role in the community to elderly people.

DEVELOP MESSAGES

Based on the findings of the Desk Analysis and Questionnaires, the main messages to be focused on in the dissemination campaign will be:

To **governments** and **stakeholders**:

- given the diversity, heterogeneity and fragmentation of AL supply, it is essential to establish a common framework and minimum quality standards as well as to collect data in a systematic way both about supply and access.

Towards **providers**:

- given the characteristics of the sector and the fact that many providers do not have training in their primary mission, the opportunity to adopt a flexible approach to quality, practical and able to provide quick input for improvement, as well as a strong focus on learning outcomes, such as that provided by Peer Review methodology;
- strengthen the awareness of the importance for the AL quality that have the competences both of the trainers and of the participants themselves, who bring experience and expertise that strongly influence the learning process and for this reason should be priority valued and recognized.

Towards **users**:

- given that the learners have to pay for their training and considering the impact that the acquisition of higher skills can have on the possibility to stay active in the labour market, it is essential to acquire criteria for assessing the quality of the offer and in order to support a greater awareness of their choices;
- guidance services targeted to Adult Learners could in this way play an important role to facilitate the choice of the best opportunities in reference to their needs, expectations and projects.

OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

It is acknowledged that the success of a campaign depends on its level of **integration into broader initiatives**, both aiming to raise awareness on a topic and to improve policies in its domain. The idea of the Warming-up Strategy itself is the result of a correspondence between missions and activities of its promoters, who decided to join forces at transnational level to expand the potential impact, learn from each other and be sure to hold the relevant background information. Throughout the WUpS planning phase, as well as during the definition of the Executive Plans, **attention has been paid to the ongoing developments in terms of policies and practices in the field of adult education and lifelong learning**. It has been possible by referring to literature, following the activities of the thematic networks and associations at EU level (EAEA, EUCIS-LLL, etc.), meeting the identified stakeholders, having some of the promoting organizations participating at the EQAVET Thematic Working Groups and, last but not least, being such an heterogenic group of organizations.

Also, and thanks again to the transnational cooperation established, the campaign has been conferred a **common identity**, despite the wide geographical coverage and the need of road maps for implementation at regional or national level. The WUpS intends to invest on a campaign's on- and off- line recognizable identity and to work in order to ensure the common communication traits can be carried across the involved geographical areas.

It could be the case **to develop a specific brand** to be used transversally for the whole range of activities, through the design of a logo.

PROMOTE CAMPAIGN

As anticipated, the promotion of the WUpS campaign will not only take place at regional/national level but also will be planned by the organizations responsible at country level and by the local partners. To guarantee the above presented common identity as well as to ensure sustainability to the WUpS implementation and results, key **common principles** have been agreed on by the promoting organizations:

- **Active role of media**, that could be involved as sponsor or, generally, should be asked to endorse the initiative by giving proper coverage through on- and off- line tools;
- Everyone involved has to become an actor him-/her- self in the promotion of the WUpS and has to be **called to action** to achieve its objectives, and for that it is important to implement activities able to effectively involve beneficiaries;
- Regular and professional **use of Social media**, of which Facebook in native language and Twitter in English or French to make the campaign visible at European level and to relevant international stakeholders;
- **Cooperation with EU level associations and bodies** in the field of adult education, lifelong learning, social inclusion, etc. have to be looked for and fostered, to reinforce that integration among different coherent initiatives.

3. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The organizations promoting the Warming-up Strategy, namely the partner of the PRALINE project, are convinced *supporters* of the importance of Quality Assurance in the Education sub-sectors in which they operate. The attention used both in planning and in delivering quality learning opportunities is considered a precondition in the process of achievement of the EU common and country-specific objectives, specifically in terms of participation in lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning. Indeed, the campaign proposed is intended as a *hook* to activate the relevant stakeholders and the final beneficiaries, contributing to the broader objectives mentioned but raising the stakes: to use the activities, initiatives developed to face such challenges also to widely promote Quality, with the idea that it cannot be left for a “second phase”. Similarly, not to vanish the efforts made to design, plan and implement the WUpS, its monitoring and assessment have been taken into great consideration.

In terms of **methodological approach**, the first thing to be highlighted is linked to the nature and multi-stakeholder composition of the group of organizations promoting the Strategy. The fact that the different organizations will be implementing the WUpS campaign in their regions/countries with variations in terms of specific target groups, activities and supporting partners, allows *to test* the validity of the initiatives put in place for each context and conditions. By doing so, it will be possible to transfer additional activities or to include into the Executive Plans further target groups and specific objectives by avoiding to replicate what went wrong, and rather adopting corrective measures.

In addition, the competences of the promoters in organizing and using the European Peer Review methodology for Quality Assurance (now also available for the Adult Education sector), will ensure the **peer evaluation** of the Executive Plans first and of the WUpS implementation then among the organizers in the different countries. Within the project piloting, the role of peers in this sense can be considered as that of *external evaluators*. In possible further implementations of the WUpS, it is recommended to involve similar external experts to better assess the coherency of the activities with respect to EU priorities and their actual impact on the education system to which are addressed.

Last but not least, the **consultation with stakeholders** held in each of the involved countries has been useful to check over the actual expectations of each group and to reduce the risk of not meeting needs and preferences of the target groups. In the same way, the Stakeholders’ Committees are expected to be summoned again throughout the implementation phase, providing so interesting occasions of *external monitoring and evaluating* the intermediate results and the pertinence of the tools selected.

Overall, the following **tools** will be used transversally to ensure the quality of the activities implemented and of their sustainable impact:

- Production of the SWOT analysis by each of the single promoters in IT, PT, LT, and MT;
- Sharing of the SWOT with the Stakeholders’ Committee in the country;
- Sharing of the SWOT with the promoters in the other involved countries;
- Follow-up interviews with representatives of the different target groups;
- External evaluators involved since the really first stages.

For the single activities implemented at regional or national level, specific monitoring and assessment tools will be identified, to build up evidence supporting the benefits of the single action for eventual transfer and/or replication.

4. CONTEXT

4.1. RESULTS OF THE DESK ANALYSIS

4.1.1. SPECIAL FEATURES OF ADULT LEARNING

Provision of adult learning opportunities covers all sub-systems of education and training, takes diverse forms and has a strong non-formal dimension. This draws attention to the fact that **adult learning “requires a comprehensive approach that crosses all education and training sectors”**¹⁷ and that in the long term future developments and EU tools should be planned following a lifelong learning approach.

The **6 main characteristics that distinguish AL from other educational sectors** include:

- **diverse background** of learners,
- significant role and proportion of **non-formal** and informal learning,
- the **‘engaged’** and motivated attitude of learners,
- the specific competences needed for AL (teaching & support) **staff** and
- the need for **flexibility** in terms of duration, time, and place of learning.

Some of the features of AL listed and presented in this report are often identified as challenges, however, some of these **challenges can also be interpreted as opportunities**, e.g., the prior learning experience of adult learners allows learners to become active contributors to the training and QA of the learning process, or the low level of governmental regulation makes non-formal AL providers open to bottom-up approaches as well as to apply self and external evaluation tools such as European Peer Review¹⁸.

Nevertheless, **societal challenges** - which are increasingly present in every country, though to a varying extent – **can be considered as transversal**, connecting to most of the features listed above. Adult participation in learning is lower than expected and declining at European level. The most alarming trend of this phenomenon is that participation of vulnerable groups is especially low, thus **adults with the greatest education and training needs** – elderly population, people with low level basic and transversal skills, migrants etc. - **have the least opportunity to benefit from lifelong learning**¹⁹. Finding solutions for these problems of course requires competences beyond education policy. Nevertheless, provision of learning opportunities for adults can be one of the most effective means of enhancing social integration of vulnerable groups, “breaking the intergenerational cycle of low qualifications” that keeps reproducing itself²⁰.

Special features of QA in adult learning

The main challenge identified regarding national instruments and practices in place in the field of QA of AL is the **lack of overarching QA systems in adult learning**, especially **for the non-formal** part of the AL sector. Further challenges are the **lack of attention to adult learning specific elements** in quality assurance systems for **formal adult learning** (VET and HE), the lack of requirements regarding adult learning **staff**, lack of quality assurance systems and standards for **guidance** and **prior learning assessment** provision, as well as lack of sufficient **monitoring** data.

¹⁷ Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report 24th October 2013. p. 6

¹⁸ <http://www.peer-review-network.eu/>

¹⁹ Eurydice Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities. Eurydice Report 2015 http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/179EN.pdf

²⁰ Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), *New Priorities for European cooperation in education and training* [SWD(2015) 161 final] – Annex 2: Specific VET and AL priorities up to 2020, p. 4.

4.1.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED

In October 2013 the **Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Quality in Adult Learning** established by the European Commission published its final report summarizing the conclusions of a 2-year-long research, mapping and consultation process. One of the key conclusions of the working group is that **a common QA framework has to be developed encompassing all education sectors** while remaining applicable to the specific needs of the single education and training sectors.

This ambitious goal, however, requires development work of long years in an extended cooperation. Therefore, meanwhile, **parallel to this process**, two other “strands of action” are recommended, which can provide valuable inputs into long-term developments as well. One of these “strands” is the **collection and improvement of existing quality assurance models** and instruments in order to enable them to better address the specific needs of adult learning. Another “strand” is the **adaptation of EQAVET to the specific needs of adult learning**.

In 2015, thanks to the comprehensive mid-term stocktaking of the ET2020, the European Commission and the Council have revised the priorities of the strategic framework for cooperation, putting new emphasis on the impact in terms of social cohesion, equality, non-discrimination and civic competences; only possible in the case of high.-quality learning provision.

4.1.3. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DESK RESEARCH FOR PRALINE PROJECT

The **aim of the PRALINE project** is to provide contribution to the first “strand” of short-term goals: to collect and adjust existing QA instruments.

The main recommendations of this study for the actions to be implemented in the frame of PRALINE project are:

1. When speaking about adult learning it is easy to forget that the main difference distinguishing this education sector from the others is not only the age cohort of the target group, but also the aims and types of this kind of learning. Consequently, the main directions and aspects of the **adaptation process of the European Peer Review** method to AL **should be defined on the basis of the principal characteristics of AL**: diversity of learners’ background, non-formal dimension, ‘engaged’ attitude of learners, specific staff competences and flexibility.
2. It is worth to put emphasis on and **exploit the opportunities provided** by some of the **specific features of AL**: e. g. motivation of learners (better involve learners in the process of quality improvement), the necessity of self-financing /co-funding (take into account and build on the fact that providers are interested in ensuring learner-centred and quality training) etc., see Table below for further examples.
3. **Developments have to focus on non-formal types** of adult learning (also because several instruments and frameworks have been developed for formal learning), thus implementation of this aspect should be continuously checked: “Will these changes/issues/tools serve the needs of the very heterogeneous types and aims of the non-formal learning?”
4. One of the increasingly important target groups of AL is **vulnerable people**, so developments in the PRALINE project have to **take into account the needs** of programmes improving basic skills and in general: the responsibility of adult learning in **enhancing social integration**.

The table below attempts to summarise the special features of adult learning compared to other educational sectors on the basis of the main observations and conclusions of the policy documents as well as of some recently published reports on the quality of adult learning²¹

²¹ Primarily on the base of the following two: European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture, Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report 24th October 2013 and Simon Broek and Bert-Jan Buiskool (2013): Developing the adult learning sector. Quality in the Adult Learning Sector (Lot 1) Final report.

1.4 Summary table of the special needs and challenges of adult learning

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p>Diversity, heterogeneity: The learning activities for adults are provided at various levels and through a broad spectrum of contributors, providers, learning forms etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In many countries adult learning is not a well-defined sector with an explicit strategy and it appears as the weakest link in national lifelong-learning systems.²² • Difficulties of categorization, definition of the concept and types of AL (e. g. formal, non-formal and informal learning, see Annex 2) 	<p>Further development of ICT/Digital tools, programmes and software can allow to better cope with diversity, heterogeneity</p>	<p>“While a common approach to quality assurance in adult learning is needed, its application should not be prescriptive but rather adapted according to the forms of adult learning and their intended outcomes. The way forward lies with generic processes and tools from which adult education providers could choose and/or create their own approaches” (Panteia)</p>

²² Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, 2011/C 372/01.

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p>Quality assurance and development in different E&T subsectors seems to remain an autonomous field of action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to promote the acquisition of knowledge and to develop a culture of lifelong learning, notably by implementing gender equality policies designed to make adult learning more attractive, more accessible and more effective? • quality systems used in formal learning (e.g. HE) do not pay attention to adult specific elements (e.g. flexibility, validation of prior learning, skills assessment etc.) • a growing need for a common (core) framework for quality assurance and accreditation is slowly emerging. 		<p>The lifelong learning approach is gradually making the division between the different education and training sectors obsolete.</p> <p>Steps to make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding out whether a common understanding of quality exists and what characterises quality in adult learning (openness between different players, dialogue, participation, freedom of methodology, flexibility, accessibility, experience and freedom with responsibility seem to characterise adult learning) • Linking existing policies and tools in such a way as to create synergies and bring about coherence and transparency in systems that still operate quite separately. • The definition of a common quality framework encompassing all the educational and training sectors should take into consideration both the elements that these subsectors share and those that distinguish them. This could be the response to the growing need for an intelligent structure for the existing approaches to quality assurance and accreditation.

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p>At system level the AL sector is less regulated, often lacking a system level quality assurance system</p>	<p>It is difficult to generalise what quality means in adult learning.</p> <p>According to Panteia report (2013) the main challenge in the QA of AL is “the fragmented approach to quality assurance in adult learning. Fragmentation does not necessarily lead to a lack of quality as such, but it makes it difficult to stimulate quality development.” There is a need for quality assurance and programme assessment & evaluation as integral components of adult learning systems.</p> <p>Though the learning outcome and the participant’s development can be considered as appropriate criteria by which to measure the quality of organised adult learning – there are difficulties in connection with the assessment of the learning outcomes of education, training and learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The diversity of providers and training forms increases the need for applying a learning outcomes approach in the processes of evaluation, certification and QA. • Providers might be more interested and motivated to apply self-evaluation tools e.g. Peer Review in AL (especially in non-formal learning) and to learn from practical experience than in formal education. Such tools provide flexible, practical and quick inputs for quality development. 	<p>The common language for defining outcomes is “competences”. A full implementation of the learning outcomes approach and a clear definition of learning outcomes to be achieved at the end of a learning experience are considered of paramount importance. These should be clear to all involved: the learners, the teachers, the assessors, the education and training providers, the employers, etc.</p> <p>To improve market transparency, governments can set an appropriate regulatory framework for competition among providers and make information on provider quality available to users. They can set quality standards, certify adherence to these standards and disseminate information about adhering providers to the general public.²³ Experimenting exchange of practices among VET providers, AL providers, schools, companies can be also helpful.</p>
<p>Cross-sectoral nature</p>	<p>The provision of adult learning opportunities cuts across all sub-systems of education and training.</p>	<p>This may improve the labour market relevance of the training.</p>	<p>There is an increased need for the involvement of the different stakeholders into the planning, implementation and QA of training programmes.</p>

²³ OECD: Promoting Adult Learning (2005) http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/promoting-adult-learning_9789264010932-en

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
Lower state support compared to general, vocational or higher education ²⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in many cases learners have to co-finance or finance their training • increased competition among AL providers • reduced public funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AL providers are interested in quality improvement because of their financial interests • Adult learners – especially who finance their learning - are often might be more conscious in choosing and more motivated in completing a training course than in the case of state financed trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve market transparency, governments can set an appropriate regulatory framework for competition among providers and make information on provider quality available to users. They can set quality standards, certify adherence to these standards and disseminate information about adhering providers to the general public.²⁵ • ROI (Return On Investment) rate should be defined within the work contracts or other legal frameworks by companies, employers’ associations, trade unions, employees’ associations. • Funding and co-funding arrangements and targeted instruments²⁶
Adults have prior learning and working experiences	<p>Need for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prior learning assessment • validation of non-formal and informal learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the knowledge and experience of the adult are a resource in the learning process • each adult can become an important contributor to quality in the educational process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults’ awareness on prior learning recognition and learning impacts must be increased • Exploiting the experiences of adults by better involving them into the learning and QA processes.

²⁴ also due to the stronger focus of ESF to the labour market and the employability

²⁵ OECD (2005): Promoting Adult Learning

²⁶ Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities. Eurydice Report 2015 p. 117-129

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
adult learning staff : a larger variety of types of requirements in relation to their training and competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient requirements in relation to adult learning staff (in many countries there is no clear view on the standard competences needed to fulfil their professional tasks), • patchy nature of adult learning professionals' initial and continuing professional development, • poor occupational status and career opportunities 	Valorisation of adult learning professionals as key actors to support adults in the labour market (find a job, go-getting, etc.)	As follow-on from the 2008 study on adult learning professionals in Europe ²⁷ , the Commission launched a study on key competences for adult learning professionals. The resultant competence profile is an overarching profile of competences with layers of context that embrace adult learning in all its forms and settings.
Limited availability of guidance	<p>How does one give guidance to an adult in a lifelong learning perspective? How can one assure the quality of that guidance?</p>		<p>Tools and policies should be brought closer to the end users (learners, workers, teachers, education and training providers, employers, guidance counsellors, etc). This requires more appropriate communication, information guidance and training activities.²⁸</p> <p>Planning and setting of support services (guidance, general information, facilities to access to the learning activities, etc.) and related Quality Standards Competences. Exploiting the results of several LLP programmes supporting guidance, e. g. Europeerguid-RVC project²⁹</p>

²⁷ Research voor Beleid (2010) Key competences for adult learning professionals. Contribution to the development of a reference framework of key competences for adult learning professionals. Final report – referred by European Commission, DGEAC (2013), Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report

²⁸ Towards a European Area of Skills and Qualifications. Results of the public consultation. (2014)

²⁹ <http://www.europeerguid-rvc.eu/index.php/en/>

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
no uniform set of indicators to monitor progress & poor statistics	due to the heterogeneity of objectives, delivery modes, funding mechanisms, background of participants and types of learning outcomes monitoring adult learning based on a clear set of indicators is difficult overall, particularly for non-formal adult learning ³⁰ .		<p>Short-term solution: Strand 1 within Conclusions of the TWG on the QA in AL³¹: “strengthening of monitoring and data collection” in AL, particularly in non-formal learning, e.g. in Erasmus+ projects.</p> <p>Longer-term solution: a reformed and extended EQAVET, in such a way that it can support the quality of outcomes of both vocational and non-vocational adult learning</p>

³⁰ “Diversity of adult learning systems in countries is matched by diversity in the number, type, coverage and robustness of data sources. Some countries collect few or no data beyond those required at European level; others have sophisticated survey data systems. Data on the inputs and, to a lesser extent, the processes of adult learning – particularly participation in formal learning and training at work – were found to be the most sufficient at both the European and country levels. In general, data relating to the outcomes of adult learning are insufficient for monitoring purposes.” (National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (2010) Final report for: Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector.)

³¹ European Commission DGEAC (2013), Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning: Final Report

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
<p>Skills shortages of adult and especially older learners</p>	<p>One in five adults in Europe have low literacy and numeracy skills, and one in four lacks the digital skills needed to use ICT effectively. The challenge is to provide learning opportunities for all, especially disadvantaged groups who need them most.</p> <p>Today, in Europe some 76 million 25-64 year olds - roughly equivalent to the combined total populations of Italy, Hungary and Austria - have either low qualifications or no qualifications at all. Cedefop's projections of skills needs for the next decade show that technological change will increase the demand for those with high and medium qualifications at the expense of low-qualified people. Even those occupations that used to require mostly low-level skills are increasingly requiring medium or even high-level qualifications. This means that people with low (or no) formal qualifications will find it more difficult to find a job in the future.</p>	<p>Development of basic skills can be integrated in education and training provision in many ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • programmes dedicated to improve these skills • embedded in programmes that contribute to the same objective without specifically mentioning basic skills • basic skills can be delivered in a range of environments, from education and training institutions to workplace or community settings.³² <p>This means that AL provides an efficient opportunity for skills improvement thus promoting social integration of vulnerable people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting national targets and strategies, • increasing incentives for adult training by companies, • validating skills and competences acquired outside formal education, • setting up access points that integrate different lifelong learning services such as validation and career guidance offering tailored learning to individual learners.³³ • Encouraging training institutions and employers to collaborate, particularly in the training of low-skilled workers who will benefit from approaches where basic skills are embedded in VET³⁴

³² Eurydice (2015) Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities

³³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2012) Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes

³⁴ European Commission (2010): The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
Declining participation in AL	<p>Main obstacles of participation in AL (according to the Cedefop study³⁵ and Eurydice report³⁶):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of intention³⁷ • family responsibilities • time: conflicts between training and the work schedule, • missing prerequisites for study (level of educational attainment) • expenses of the training are not affordable for potential learners 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate early childhood education and care services • flexibility • distance learning • modularisation • credit-based qualifications • validation of non-formal and informal learning • paid training leave • funding and co-funding arrangements and targeted instruments³⁸
Number of elderly population is increasing in Europe	<p>Adults - and in particular, older workers - will increasingly be called upon to update and broaden their skills and competences through continuing VET. This means that an increasingly growing group of people will be effected by AL in the next decades</p>	<p>The potential of information and communications technology (ICT) can be used to boost adult education and training through distance learning.</p>	<p>This increased need for lifelong learning means we should have more flexible modes of delivery, tailored training offers and well-established systems of validation of non-formal and informal learning.</p>

³⁵ Cedefop (2012) Training leave. Policies and practice in Europe

³⁶ Eurydice (2015) Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities.

³⁷ "Within the AES, adults who did not participate in education and training during the 12 months preceding the survey were asked to indicate the reason for their non-participation. On average, across EU countries, more than 80 % of non-participants stated that they simply did not want to take part in education or training. This shows that lack of interest is by far the most common reason for nonparticipation" Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities. Eurydice Report 2015 http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/179EN.pdf - p. 99

³⁸ Eurydice (2015) Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities.

Feature	Needs & Challenges	Opportunity	Recommended solutions
Participation of vulnerable groups in AL is particularly low	Adults with low levels of educational attainment (older and immigrant adults, people with learning difficulties) are less likely to show interest, search for information about learning opportunities and to participate in education and training. ³⁹	Supporting adults in participating in learning activities may serve as an effective way of improving social inclusion.	<p>Co-funding instruments targeting employers and encouraging the participation of low qualified adults and other specific groups in education and training.⁴⁰</p> <p>Improving the guidance services regarding non-formal and informal learning opportunities.</p> <p>Monitoring and assessment of the impacts of AL in terms of social inclusion (to be considered also connected to position in the labour market), by involving companies and HR managers.</p> <p>Awareness of the benefits of AL in terms of personal development and social inclusion should be raised among adults, local policy makers and employers.</p>

³⁹ Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities. Eurydice Report 2015

⁴⁰ Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities. Eurydice Report 2015

4.2. INTRODUCTION TO THE PRALINE QUESTIONNAIRES

4.2.1. GENERAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Along with the research conducted by the Observatory Centre for Educational Development of the Budapesti Corvinus University (HU), whose results are briefly reported in the previous section, PRALINE partners have decided **to question directly the learners and professionals within their networks on the characteristics and quality of the adult learning offer**, through 2 different and specific Questionnaires⁴¹. The idea was to define a general picture in the partners' countries of what learners and Adult Learning (AL) professionals know about the AL provision and its main features related to quality assurance, customers needs, possible impacts on Adults' employability, social inclusion, active citizenship.

Despite the limited number of people consulted in some of the countries, by doing so, promoters have been able to have a firsthand sense of the levels of knowledge and awareness of their direct target groups to serve as **basis for the development of the Executive Plans**. Specifically, the two Questionnaires have been developed in English and then translated into Italian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Lithuanian and French. This analysis cover the questionnaires collected by the partners in Italy, Portugal, Malta, Hungary and Lithuania, even though their distribution has also been initiated in France.

From a **methodological point of view**, the study comprises a **quantitative analysis** based on the following figures:

- numbers and percentages of respondents per gender, country, age;
- total and country-based average percentages;

and a **qualitative analysis** based both on quantitative and qualitative data, specifically collected through the open-ended questions. The results of such investigation, together with the conclusions of the Desk Analysis, constituted the basis for the structuring of the Warming-up Strategy and, specifically, of the Executive Plans to be developed and piloted in the involved countries. These overall have the potential to make respondents reflecting about the concepts behind learning opportunities and consequently to give the researchers the opportunity to find out the **specificities of each target group that can affect the Warming-up Strategy** in each country. The given answers could also be useful to make a comparison with the opinions expressed by learners and professionals in the target groups involved after the Warming-up Strategy implementation, providing feedbacks also in terms of PRALINE impact.

The target number of questionnaires per country has been defined taking into consideration the specificities of partners' organizations and their capacity of easily reaching out learners and professionals. Please find below the expected targets and the numbers of collected Questionnaires that have been considered in the analysis:

Adult Learners – expected questionnaires						
IT	PT	LT	HU	MT	FR	TOT
200	70	100	50	50	100	570
Adult Learners – collected questionnaires						
IT	PT	LT	HU	MT	TOT	
203	373	40	25	60	701	

AL Professionals – expected questionnaires						
IT	PT	LT	HU	MT	FR	TOT
80	25	50	30	20	100	305
AL Professionals – collected questionnaires						
IT	PT	LT	HU	MT	TOT	
74	54	67	30	22	247	

⁴¹ See Annex II for Questionnaires' templates – English version.

Dealing with dissimilar numbers among the involved countries, the **overall percentage rates** are obtained on the total of the collected questionnaires, despite the number per country. It improved the validity of the analysis, guaranteeing that replies from countries with less questionnaires would not weight as much as the other ones, and, at the same time, each response contributes equally.

Following from the structure of the two Questionnaires, a specific analysis on the **open-ended questions** has only been done for the *What kind of impact does it have?* Contained in the one for AL professionals and referring to the impact in terms of development of competences, knowledge and skills of their learning activities on the participants. Answers have been analysed in terms of:

- **Perceived impact** on learners from individual professionals' perspectives and experiences, trying to identify permanent features/approaches;
- **Terminology** used by professionals in describing the impact of the learning activities they are involved in, by checking how many times given specific words occur.

Differently, in the case of the specific **comments** inserted for questions having *Other* as possible option (multiple choices questions), both in the case of Learners and of AL Professionals, it has been decided to report only the more frequent ones, as they could be considered as more relevant (see Annex II).

The approach used to develop the two Questionnaires, however, also implied an indirect – and not explicit – expected role: it has to be considered itself an **information tool** and an opportunity to empower people and increase their awareness about quality assurance in adult learning. By answering to the questions, thanks to the way they had been formulated, people had the chance to come across with **AL terminology** (e.g. concept of “learning outcomes”) and **AL different types of provision/offer** (Formal, Non-Formal and Informal), as well as chance to reflect on the key aspects that make adult learning a social inclusion and employability *enabler*. Despite these common traits, the two Questionnaires have a different structure in terms of number of questions and investigated areas, and adopt partially different approaches. The one targeting learners, for instance, includes less questions and expressed as much as possible through commonly used terminology to facilitate learners in filling them in.

The analysis of the questionnaires shows interesting data for the design of the WUpS and provides specific insights on what is considered a quality factor in adult education, from the point of view of both learners and professional of the sector.

All this will be explained in detail in the analysis of the questionnaires (Annex II). Generally, results confirmed partners' expectations and have suggested peculiarities and trends in line with the desk-analysis performed.

Below, some considerations on the questionnaires results, addressed both to learners and professionals, that suggest elements to be taken into account in defining the Executive Plans of the Warming Up Strategy:

- from the type of activities attended, adult learners seem to have understood the importance of the **key competences** to be equipped for the strong competition in the current labour market. Moreover, it is possible to observe that in the countries with higher **unemployment rates** (above the EU average) adults have mainly participated into learning activities more directly able to impact on their professional development and career. For instance “*Short training courses on foreign languages*”, “*ICT and communication skills*”, and so on.
- The indirect question “Should you give advice to a friend, why would you recommend the learning activity(ies) you attended? (%)”, that was a different way to ask about the key quality aspects of AL, provides very interesting insights. Data suggest that is an important factor a general **trust relationship** that is usually generated **between learners and providers**. Furthermore the answers given to the direct question “In your opinion, which other factors would you consider crucial to

improve the quality of the learning activities for adults?”, confirm the relevance of *Staff competences and communication/social skills* (33% of the respondents).

- The **“Support services”**, meant to be considered as a strategic factor to facilitate the adults access to lifelong learning opportunities seem to be less important than other factors, in both direct and indirect questions.
- Adult education is confirmed to be a sector characterised by the same high level of female workers as the general education sector;
- About the question “What exactly was your role in the organization and implementation of the activities?”, almost all the respondents across countries answered that they play **more than one role within the adult learning providers/organizations**. This means that usually the AL providers have small dimension and consequently Quality Assurance systems need to be less structured and more focussed on easy-to-use methodologies and monitoring tools (such as the European Peer Review).
- Many interesting information could be obtained from the two questions: “Do you clearly state to participants which competences, skills and knowledge (defined at EU level as learning outcomes) they can acquire by participating into the activity?” and “If YES, It is the case because?”. Professionals seems to have a good level of awareness on the impact of the various learning activities on the learners, and also on the importance of sharing information of the expected results of the activity.

Indeed, what the collected **answers suggest to consider in designing the Executive Plans** is:

- to reinforce the **awareness of adult learners on the impact produced by lifelong learning activities** on employability. This could be defined also through a more effective cooperation among the different stakeholders of the labour market and Employment services;
- to **increase competences and attitudes of the AL providers’ staff** concerning customer-oriented approaches and Quality Assurance management in Services, particularly by adopting friendly methodology, like the European Peer Review;
- to reinforce the awareness of the different AL stakeholders on the relevance of the **Support services** as a key factor to increase adult learners’ participation;
- to take into account the **gender gaps** in education, both on the learners and on the professional side;
- to adequate the Executive Plans framework to the specificities of each country in relation with the state of the art of QA in AL sector as well as of the Adults participation rate to the learning activities.

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