

A FRAMEWORK TO DRIVE ADULT LEARNING REFORMS

Advancing lifelong learning in the context of EU accession and neighbourhood

High-Level Round Table, Torino (Italy) 18-19 November 2025

Background

Candidate countries have undertaken significant reforms in education and training over two decades. Adult Learning and Education (ALE) may have not advanced as much as formal initial education and training where most countries have enacted a wide range of reforms. Yet, it has gained momentum in the last five years: in particular, the European Skills Agenda in 2020, the CONFITEA VII Declaration in 2022, and the Union of Skills initiative in 2025 demonstrate a greater consideration for adult learning to be a decisive component of advance lifelong learning.

Political intention has built on evidence that continuous learning is a necessity, due to the participation in the internal market, aging population, digital and green transition. In this light, the EU set the target of 60% of adult population undertaking training at least once per year, to be attained by 2030. Within the EU, the member states that are close to reach the target are less than half; and among candidate countries the rate of adult people that participate in training remains further behind.

Lifelong learning is embedded in the EU “acquis”. The European Pillar of Social Rights has established the access to good quality learning as a right for all and together with the Competitiveness Compass it has created the framework for the Union of Skills strategy. At the same time, lifelong learning often appears as an intractable policy domain owing to outstanding issues. In many countries, adult learning systems are fragmented, an issue that creates obstacles for planners, who must anticipate needs and financial allocations in the medium-term, and for learners, who are not always well-informed about learning options’ availability and quality.

Other complex aspects relate to the diverse nature of adult learning, which takes place in different settings and for different purposes. Adult learning can be formal, non-formal and informal and be motivated by personal development, work-related needs, upskilling or reskilling, legislative requirements, attainment of a qualification, desire for second chance opportunities, etc. Establishing a continuum within an organic system, therefore, has proven difficult and attempts to structure proper systems of ALE have been limited. The standardisation and formalisation may not always fit the diversity of learning environments and learning needs, or the fast pace of the changes that originate the demands for learning. In this context, quality assurance frameworks for ALE remain to be developed.

Responses to the challenges of fragmentation and diversity in ALE have been instead more successful on the side of methodologies that help bridging different learning experiences. Major advances in this respect are represented by the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), the elaboration of micro-certification, the individual learning accounts (ILAs) to structure the financing of adult learning, among others. These methodologies have been elaborated with care and at this stage are mastered by specialised personnel. They however need long timeframes to be accessible, be known and be effectively used on a large scale, and not least adequate budgets – issues that link back to the importance of well-organised systems for ALE.

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How can the creation of lifelong learning systems accelerate, to make a difference in participation of adults in learning processes? Can policies become more coherent and streamlined? Both policies and systems are needed, to underpin strategic planning, involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in governing the sector at the appropriate level, implementation with regular collection of reliable data to monitor progresses to allow timely adjustments, assess the outcomes and review as needed.

There is a consensus that policy makers and stakeholders should take a holistic approach to ALE to move forward, as often underlined in international debates, education institutions as well as community organisations at grassroot level. In a lifelong learning system, citizens active in the labour market and every member in the society should avail of upskilling and re-skilling, key competences, literacy, basic education and personal development, along with highly qualifying learning opportunities. Regardless of age and life circumstances, people should be able to bridge different learning paths, access funding where needed, meet well-trained educators and coaches, have their learning recognised.

Building lifelong learning systems is therefore a long-term perspective requiring multiple changes, along with a diffused learning culture in which everyone has motivation for personal and professional development.

The High-Level Round Table

The European Commission's Union of Skills strategy underlines that learning for skills has no age and should have no barriers. Obstacles to participation in learning are of different nature, they may be linked to the availability of good quality provision to meet needs at all levels, on one hand, and to personal and family constraints, socio-economic reasons, health or disability issues, cultural differences, geographical disparities or discrimination, on the other. These obstacles tend to persist over time, unless policies and measures are deployed to remove them.

The time is ripe for EU, candidate and potential candidate as well as neighbour countries to discuss how to address adult learning with a system building approach, in recognition of ALE relevance for competitiveness and social cohesion, technological transition, inter-generational equity and, more broadly, preparedness for future.

The ETF is the EU agency that supports human capital development in partner countries and DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association. They are committed to knowledge exchange and policy learning among peers in the domain of ALE in the framework of EU external relations, and to that purpose have implemented joint initiatives in partner countries.

In 2024, their Conference "On the Way towards EU Integration: Countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe Shaping Lifelong Learning Systems" was held in Brussels. The Conference material can be found here [ETF-DVV international-EAEA joint conference on the Way towards EU Integration: Countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe Shaping Lifelong Learning Systems | ETF](#) and here [Materials of the high-level event. Brussels 13 March 2024.](#)

In the same spirit, the ETF and DVV International are inviting the 2025 High-Level Round Table to share recent achievements and anticipate future advances. The High-Level Round Table will elaborate on factors that support the formation and evolution of adult learning systems:

- Legal, institutional and governance frameworks
- Current reforms implementation and expected outcomes
- Quality for all and inclusiveness in times of technological breakthroughs
- National systems and local ecosystems
- Priorities for cooperation in the context of the EU accession process.

Date and place

The High-Level Round Table will take place on 18-19 November 2025. The event venue is Hotel NH Collection Santo Stefano - Via Porta Palatina 19, Torino.

Participants

The High-Level Round Table will gather around 50 participants including:

- Ministers of Education, Heads of Department and experts from Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Ukraine.
- Ministers, Heads of Department, experts from EU Member States.
- European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, and Directorate General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood.
- Torino City Authorities and Piedmont Regional Authorities.
- ETF and DVV International staff members.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

AGENDA

Tuesday, 18 November 2025

Chair: Cristina Mereuta, Head of Knowledge Hub for Skills and Jobs Unit, ETF

Time	Agenda
09:00 - 09:30	<p>Official opening and scene setting</p> <p>Michela Favaro, Deputy Mayor of Torino City Pilvi Torsti, Director, ETF Esther Hirsch, Director, DVV International</p>
09:30 - 09:45	<p>Spotlight: Convergence in Adult Learning and Education (ALE): EU-wide policies and benchmarks</p> <p>Manuela Geleng, Director, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission</p>
09:45 - 10:30	<p>High-Level Panel – Legal, financing and governance frameworks for ALE</p> <p>Moderator: Levan Kvatchadze, DVV International</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fikrije Zymberi, Executive Director, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Kosovo - Ivana Popovska, Cabinet's responsible for EU Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science, North Macedonia - Andrej Sotošek, State Secretary, Ministry of Education, Slovenia - Andrii Vitrenko, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine (online) <p>Q&A</p>
10:30 - 10:40 10:40 - 11:10	<p>Group Photo Coffee break</p>
11:10 - 11:55	<p>High-Level Panel – Strengthening implementation and co-creation in ALE</p> <p>Moderator: Siria Taurelli, ETF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Araksia Svajyan, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Armenia - Jasna Jovanović, Director General, Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Montenegro - Maciej Lasota, Head of Research and Strategy Unit, Ministry of National Education, Poland - Vesna Fabian, Head of the Office for Dual Education and National Qualifications Framework, Serbia <p>Q&A</p>
11:55 - 12:35	<p>High-Level Panel – Quality and inclusiveness for all in times of technological breakthrough</p> <p>Moderator: Florian Kadletz, ETF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Klevis Hysa, Director General, National Agency for Employment and Skills, Albania (online) - Zlatan Saračević, President, Council for Adult Education in Sarajevo Canton, Bosnia and Herzegovina (online) - Claudio Maria Vitali, Internationalisation Service, Presidency of Institute for Public Policies' Analysis, Italy - Felicia Bechtoldt, State Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Moldova <p>Q&A</p>
12:35 - 13:00	<p>Directors' Panel</p> <p>Moderator: Bettina Brand, DVV International</p> <p>Manuela Geleng, Director, European Commission Pilvi Torsti, Director, ETF Esther Hirsch, Director, DVV International</p>

13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 - 14:20	Theatre performance: whom are ALE systems for?
14:20 - 15:00	<p>Expert Panel – Bringing ALE from today to tomorrow Moderator: Nicolas Jonas, ETF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ALE systems are changing: progress and bottlenecks, Siria Taurelli, ETF <p>Dialogue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patterns of systems' change, Jan Kalenda, Tomas Bata University - Facing individual, institutional and ecosystem challenges, Heribert Hinzen, former director of DVV International <p>Q&A</p>
15:00 - 15:10	<p>Introduction to the Interactive sessions</p> <p>Through two interactive sessions, participants provide comment and additional input following the key messages emerged from the High-Level Panels.</p>
15:10 - 16:00	<p>Interactive session 1 – Policy and Legislative Frameworks Moderators: Maja Avramovska, DVV International, Lisa Rustico, ETF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What have we learned from the Panels and from expert discussion: are we on track with policy and legislative frameworks? - What are the next steps: how to advance towards more coherent and coordinated policy and legislative frameworks?
15:10 - 16:00	<p>Interactive session 2 – Institutional arrangements and Reform implementation Moderators: Aliona Badiur, DVV International, Ester Hakobyan, DVV International</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What have we learned from the Panels and from expert discussion: are existing institutional arrangements, cooperation and co-creation apt to implement ALE reforms? - What are the next steps: how national and local partnerships can be shaped to reinforce quality and participation in ALE?
16:00 - 16:10	Wrap up of Day 1 and programme of Day 2
19:00 - 21:00	<p>Reception and ceremony Official Dinner</p>

Wednesday, 19 November 2025

Time	Agenda
08:20 - 08:50	Transfer by bus from hotel to site visit
09:00 - 11:15	<p>Two parallel visits to adult learning centres in Turin (English/Italian simultaneous interpretation)</p> <p>Visit 1 – Centro Provinciale Istruzione degli Adulti (CPIA) Torino 1 “Paulo Freire” Moderators: Florian Kadletz, ETF, Levan Kvatchadze, DVV International</p> <p>Speakers: Paolo Tazio, Director CPIA Torino 1 “Paulo Freire”, Giulia Guglielmini, President Fondazione per la Scuola, Sergio Durando, Director Migrantes Torino and Piedmont</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Putting learners at the centre - Continuous cooperation among stakeholders - Public, private and civic partnerships

	<p>Visit 2 – Camerana Learning Hub Moderators: Lisa Rustico, ETF, Aliona Badiur, DVV International Speakers: Stefano Serra, President, Camerana Learning Hub, Cristina Fresia, CEO, Fresia Alluminio SpA, Andrea Morello, Head of Training and Accreditation, Camerana Learning Hub</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adult people's motivation for learning and future of work challenges - Innovative learning environments - Public and private sector cooperation, and role of the employer organisation Unione Industriali Torino <p>Coffee Break included</p>
11:15 - 11:45	Transfer by bus from site visit to Hotel NH Santo Stefano for the plenary session
11:45 - 12:00	Transfer into plenary meeting room
12:00 - 12:40	<p>High-Level Panel: Building policies and system that reach out to adult learners Moderators: Levan Kvatchadze, DVV International, Florian Kadletz, ETF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liudmila Stih, State Secretary, Ministry of Education and Research, Moldova - Nesrin Oruç Ertürk, Continuing Education Center Director, Izmir University of Economics, Türkiye - Iryna Shumik, Director General for VET, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine
12:40 - 12:55	<p>Comments and conclusions from the floor Moderator: Maja Avramovska, DVV International</p>
12:55 - 13:00	<p>Closing the High-Level Round Table Cristina Mereuta, ETF and Bettina Brand, DVV International</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Photo gallery - What next?
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch and end of event

Optional

Time	Agenda
14:30 – 15:30	City Tour